Australians at War Film Archive

Franz Wolber (Frank) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:41 **We'll start off with the overview that we've talked about so if you can just take me through in brief where you were born, where you grew up, when you came to Australia.**

I was born in Germany in May of 1937 in Cologne. I lived there through all of the war years and

01:00 I started primary school when I was six years old, as all Germans do. You do four years in primary school and then if you choose to, you go to high school or middle school. I went to middle school as it's called where you do six years and I finished that. Then I did an apprenticeship and when I finished that, that would have been in about

01:30 1955, I then went to England and lived there for eighteen months in London where I worked in a bookshop called WNG Foyle's which called themselves the biggest bookshop in the world. A lovely place to work in. We didn't earn much but there was students from all over the world and it was really fun to work there. From there I went for six months to Spain and then back to Germany.

02:00 That was in 1959. I was working there in the office of a large building firm and about the middle of '59 one of the young lads I was working with said, "I finish on Friday." "Why?", "Oh, I'm going to Australia." He was telling me. "How did that come about?" And he told me. So I thought, "If you

02:30 can go to Australia, so can I." And off to the consulate I went and got all the paperwork and so on. By the end of the year, round about November, I got home one day and my mother said, "There's a telegram for you." I opened it up and it said, "There's a ship going in early December can you be on it? Give us a ring." I rung them up and they said, "Yes, [SS] Castel Felicia

03:00 is going from Bremerhaven round about the second December or so. I'll have two weeks to spare to be on it. That was it. I came to Australia, we arrived in Australia round about thirtieth December, landed in Port Melbourne. From there they shipped us up to Bonegilla which was the migrant camp just outside Albury

03:30 on the banks of the Hume Weir; used to be a prisoner of war camp in the Second World War I think. From there, I only stayed there for about three days then I nicked off to Melbourne and two days later I had a job, work. I worked in Melbourne until '62 then I joined the army

04:00 in April '62. I was in the army until April 1984 and after the army, I resigned in April '84, took a year off to build a house in Avondale and once I finished building the house I got an offer of a job with the Department of Defence and I said, "No, I had twenty odd years of army. I don't want

04:30 anything to do with defence anymore." And eventually they offered me a job in the Department of Social Security as it was then still called, now it's Centrelink. I was with them from December '85 until November of last year and then I resigned and that was it more or less.

Tell me just really briefly

05:00 **the different places you were with the army.**

I started off in Kapooka, recruit training in Kapooka and from there I came up to Brisbane to do a course. No, from Kapooka I went to Puckapunyal to do corps training. I got allocated to the Royal Australian Service Corps and you did your corps training at Puckapunyal which was the service corps centre.

05:30 From there I came up to Brisbane to do a course here at Ashgrove and then my first army posting was at Amberley with a unit called 16 Army Light Aircraft Squadron. From there, I stayed there for about a year or so until mid '64 and from there I was posted to Singapore, Headquarters, Far East

06:00 Land Forces, where I stayed about a year and from there I went up to Headquarters 28 Commonwealth Brigade, which was in Terendak in Malaya or Malaysia as it, it was then called Malaya. I stayed there

from ’66. From there I came back to Amberley, 1st Aviation Regiment and from there

06:30 I went to Wacol where I started up a transport platoon, 24 Transport Platoon and then in November ’67 I went to Vietnam to 5 Company in Vung Tau and I stayed there ‘til December ’68 and from there I came back to Canungra, Land Warfare Centre in Canungra.

07:00 Then I got commissioned. I attended, we used to call them knife and fork courses. They used to teach you how to use a knife and fork properly and conduct yourself properly as an officer and a gentleman. Anyway, I got commissioned to the rank of lieutenant and my first posting

07:30 as an officer was the administrative office of 18 Transport Company in Enoggera. From there I went to Swanbourne in Perth where I was the officer commanding of Western Command Trade Training Centre. From there I went to New Guinea, 183 Reconnaissance Flight Aviation Unit. From there I went to

08:00 District Support Unit Enoggera. Then I got promoted to major and went to Headquarters 1st Military District in Victoria Barracks here and from there I went to Puckapunyal as officer commanding the support wing of the Army School of Transport and that’s where I resigned in ’94.

Excellent

08:30 **I’m going to take you right back to the beginning now and we’ll talk about Germany. What’s Cologne like?**

Well, as I said I was born in 1937 and by the time, my first sort of memories are when, I think the war started in ’38 didn’t it, and by the time I can remember things would be

09:00 about 1942, when things really started to turn around and go back for Germany. The first thing I can remember of the war more or less, is the first thousand bomber raids which was on Cologne. That was in late May ’42 and after that it was virtually an every day thing that, you know, you were bombed.

09:30 **What do you remember of the bombing?**

Your mother would come and wake you up in the middle of the night and say, “Come on, up,” lift you out of bed into the air raid shelter. You know, cellar, in Germany every house has a cellar and you’d be dragged into the cellar and all the rest of, we used to go two houses up. My father used to, he was an engineer and was often away from home

10:00 on work jobs. So we used to go two houses to the neighbours and sit with them. You just waited until the all clear came. Then you went back to bed. That was a virtual daily or nightly occurrence. The longer it went into the war towards 1945, the more frequent they used to get and you’d be sitting there and

10:30 hear the bombs raining all around you and shaking and that sort of thing. As children you didn’t sort of grasp the enormity of the whole thing. There always used to be a joke, there was one old lady that was part of the family we used to go into the air raid shelter with and she’d be sitting there doing her rosary beads and

11:00 when things got really bad outside the cat would come in and there she was engrossed in the middle of her rosary beads and all of a sudden she interrupted her prayers and say, “Oh Jesus Christ, there’s the cat,” implying that now the shit really hit the fan and it usually did. I don’t know, these animals must have a sixth sense.

11:30 That’s the sort of thing. On one particular occasion it seemed to be really bad and once the all clear was sounded I remember we all went out, and there was about from here to the opposite side of the street, a big crater, a bomb had fallen and a woman who was just on her way home on the bike was lying there with her leg

12:00 bleeding profusely. Later on during the war you then got it during the day as well. When there was hardly any air defences left from the German side they just came so low on occasions you could see the pilots in the planes, in the Spitfires and the bombers, they were that low.

12:30 Every few hundred metres along the road you used to have these holes about a metre wide, two metres long and two metres deep and your ears used to be that attuned to the different sounds of the different aircraft you could say, “Oh no, that’s a German one, that’s all right.” If it was an English one you’d dive into the nearest one of these until they were gone and then you scrambled out and carried on playing.

13:00 As I said, by 1945 that was just a daily occurrence. Cologne, which before the war was about a city the size of Brisbane now, seven hundred and fifty thousand people and about thirty five thousand buildings and structures, by the time the war was finished there was three hundred and fifty buildings

13:30 not damaged and about thirty five thousand people left in the city. Many killed and the rest just went into the countryside or wherever to get away from the big cities which were bombed on a daily basis. By the end of the war Cologne was just a heap of rubble. All the bridges that had been there

14:00 had fallen into the river. There wasn’t much left of Cologne and most of the other German cities would have been the same.

You mentioned that your mum would pull you out of bed at night, would you hear the air raid sirens?

No, as a child you sleep well. “Come on, get your clothes on, off you go,” and we were gone and the all clear would sound.

14:30 **What did that sound like?**

You know, the big massive wailing and there was two different tones, one which was the warning, and the all clear, which had a different sound and everybody carried on as normal. That was about it.

What sort of things would you do when you were in the cellar?

15:00 **What was it set up like?**

You know, there’d be a few chairs and so on. The oldies would be sitting there doing their rosary beads and others would be contemplating the war and what was going on around them. Us children, as I said, I don’t think children grasped the enormity of it all. I can’t recall

15:30 that you were frightened as a child by that, you just took it, the way your life is.

What do you remember understanding about what was happening about why there were bombings?

You knew the war was on because you know, in my family every Sunday if my father was home we used to go to our grandparents.

16:00 I suppose things haven’t changed since then, the oldies would be discussing the state of affairs, politics, the war, and most of them knew they couldn’t bloody win, but apparently the hierarchy and the leadership either didn’t want to know it or ignored all the signs. The ordinary people seemed to know that the war was a lost cause. You heard your parents and grandparents talk about that sort of thing.

16:30 You were fairly aware what was going on. For starters since we were rationed and things were tough in that respect but even more so after the war from ’45 until about ’48 when old money was devalued, the Reichmark got phased out and they got the deutschmark in. That period from the end of the war

17:00 in May ’45 ‘til ’48 in many respects that was even tougher than what it had been during the war.

When you’d hear your parents talk about politics, did they, perhaps you wouldn’t have noticed this as a child, did they need to support the war openly to be politically safe?

I don’t think they got much of a choice really. In Germany in those days

17:30 if you voiced a dissenting opinion you were here today and gone tomorrow and nobody knew where you were and you were never seen again. So whilst people amongst themselves were dissenting and knew what was going on and didn’t like it, they weren’t game enough to speak out openly because, as I said, you’d be here one day, the next you’d be gone.

18:00 **In terms of that control what are your memories of Nazi propaganda or even just Nazi party influences?**

It was all around you. You know my sister, she was older than me, they had, what were they called, Hitler Youth. They were, I don’t know how old you had to be, I think ten

18:30 or something like that, you joined the Hitler Youth. She had a little white blouse with a little scarf and a blue skirt and they had their weekly, a bit like scout meetings today, they had the Hitler Youth and boys as well. I was too young for it but as I said, my sister. So you got indoctrinated quite early and you know,

19:00 enrolled into the fold so to speak.

What did you think about the Hitler Youth?

I don’t think as a child you saw the political ramifications, wouldn’t get to you, but like children are you either want to be a fireman or an ambulance driver or a policeman or a soldier so you’d

19:30 sort of go into it.

What memories do you have of seeing troops and armed forces around Cologne?

In the beginning you wouldn’t have seen many or any at all unless they were soldiers on leave. But from say about 1944 onwards when the Germans were in full retreat, one minute you saw an army unit there bivouacking at night

20:00 and then the following morning they were gone and retreated and another one would be there the next day. Towards the end in ’45 there was just abandoned army equipment from full blown tanks to jeeps and that sort of thing just left abandoned lying there with weapons and us kids we were playing in tanks

20:30 and things, having a ball.

What sort of games do you remember playing?

Soldiers, you know, that sort of thing. Quite a few got killed and mutilated, that was after the war, because as I said we'd be playing there in tanks and whatever was lying about and some of them blew up. And I remember

21:00 one particular day we were all playing in the school with jeep type stuff and armoured personnel carrier and the rest of us, as good little Germans, you had lunch at twelve o'clock. You would go home for lunch because if you didn't you'd get a smack behind your ears or if you were late, and these two lads said, "Oh no, we don't have to go home until one." And by the time

21:30 we got back the whole thing had blown up and they were dead. Another occasion, there was two others, there was bombs and mines and everything just lying everywhere. What we used to do, we used to take these big 105 tank shells, put them between two rocks and get another rock and break these things open to get at the little bags

22:00 of cordite and sticks of stuff in the shell and then we would put a match to them and they would whiz off like a firecracker. On one occasion two of the group, one lost the arm and one got killed. That sort of thing, there was a lot of that went on.

Do you remember your parents or any school teachers telling you not to?

22:30 Of course they did but have you ever tried to tell a child not to do something like that? But as I said there was not a military type weapon you could think of that wasn't lying about abandoned, and we were playing with it, having a ball.

When you'd play soldiers, just interestingly, who would the enemy be?

The English and the Americans.

What do you remember being told

23:00 **about the English and the Americans during the war?**

I don't know, over there, whilst at the moment there is a veneer of cooperation between the Europeans and so on I think there is always that rivalry between, say the English and the French will never really like each other and the Germans and the French won't. Deep down, whilst on the surface

23:30 **there is much cooperation and all that now, deep down, you say, "In 1871 we gave it to those French bastards." And they'll think, "But we got back at you in 1940 and 1945." So that will, you grow up with that and it's with you for the rest of your life. It's a bit like you barrack for a particular football team,**

24:00 **the Broncos and no matter what happens, you'll always be a Bronco or a Cronulla fan or whatever you want to call it. It's born into you with your mother's milk.**

You mentioned that during the day when the war was on, the bombers started to come over, tell me more about how you'd listen?

Your ears

24:30 were that finely attuned to the different sounds of these air craft engines. Well towards the end there weren't any German ones around any more anyway, so they'd all be either American or English and your ear was that finely attuned to and you knew exactly, approximately how far they were away so that you'd sprint into one of them or find a ditch

25:00 or something to lie low because towards the end, from say the beginning of 1945 onwards they were flying that low they'd be machine gunning anything that moved. From the air I suppose it's hard to distinguish between a child or an adult, so everything got machine gunned that moved so you made sure you got out,

25:30 find somewhere, a ditch or a hole where you'd lie down and then when they were gone you got up and carried on.

Do you remember machine gunning near you?

It happened all over the place, everywhere. It was a daily way of life towards the end of the war.

How about, were there any restrictions placed on when you could go out?

26:00 No. Towards the end of the war, say from about early 1944, I can't remember distinctly when but we didn't even go to school anymore because it just wasn't worth it. You were more in the air raid shelters than in the class room so school was abandoned until after the war, May '45, altogether, because it just wasn't worth having you in school.

26:30 **When you did go to school before it was stopped, what sort of things do you remember being taught?**

ABC's, you know, the three R's, reading, writing, arithmetic and it was virtually a ritual, Fraulein Dinkelbuff, she was an old sort of a maid

27:00 because all the men were at war anyway. She always looked old to us. I dare say she would have been in her early forties or forty-five which now doesn't seem all that old but then it did. It was virtually a daily ritual, you'd start school at half past eight, in winter at nine. By half past nine she would have said, "Wolber, come here, bend over." Whack whack

27:30 and that set the tone for the day. You'd be talking and looking around, instant retribution to get your mind on the job and that was it. It was the rote learning type stuff, two, four, six, eight, ten twelve, the tables and everything else. The reading and writing was the rote method. Which

28:00 in hindsight I reckon it stood us in good stead. If you tell me twelve by twelve I can still say one forty four off the top of my head. If you ask a child these days, many of them, when I was in Social Security hardly could write their own name. Of course, rote learning in this day and age is decried and antiquated but it had it's

28:30 good purpose.

In terms of the class room was there any?

Up 'til about the first year or two, class rooms would have consisted, in the fourth school, you have fourth school, that's the primary school

29:00 I'd say, there were two grades, one and two and there would have been about thirty children, thirty two in the class with little desks and chairs. You would have had Hitler on the wall, Goering perhaps thrown in, a flag and that would have been about it. After when we went back to school

29:30 after the war, most school houses had been damaged as had most other buildings. It was bare bricks, you were looking at bare bricks or walls with plaster broken off, it was very, very basic. If you were to send a child into conditions like that today, there'd be an uproar. As I said, class sizes were always round about

30:00 thirty to thirty two and I don't think that ever had any detrimental effect on any of us.

It might be hard to remember as a child but were there specific things that you were taught that were to do with the war or to do with political party?

No, not really except in history

30:30 no, not really. You would have stood up every morning and said, "Heil Hitler," but other than that, no.

What did that mean to you when you did that as a child?

As a child, or as a German child you wouldn't have questioned any of that. I don't know if children here would question it but we didn't.

31:00 In America I suppose they would salute the flag and we stood up and "Heil Hitler" and sat down and got into it.

I wonder what it means, what children understand about that sort of thing.

I don't think as a child you would have put too much serious thought into it. I can't remember ever doing it and I reckon most of my contemporaries wouldn't have either.

31:30 **Do you remember, obviously there was a picture of Hitler on the wall of the classroom and you said, "Heil Hitler", do you have any memories of who you thought Hitler was?**

Everybody knew who Hitler was, you saw him, I nearly said TV which we didn't have then of course, but you heard him on the radio you know, most days for something or other. Yeah.

What do you remember him sounding like?

32:00 He'd be, he was a great demagogue, was Hitler, and you know, you might have seen pictures of him speaking at the big Nuremberg rally, that sort of thing, he got people in. I sensed he was sort of a bit of a raver really, as a child, you would have thought, you know, normal people don't

32:30 carry on and scream at the top of their voices, as a child you would have, what a wanker, what a raver. Other than that you would have not put much thought into it.

You mentioned as the war was coming towards an end, at that time were you noticing a change in the atmosphere of the morale say of your parents or people around you?

33:00 Always, I reckon our parents knew from about 1942 onwards that the war was a lost cause and, as I said, even talk at the dinner table and all that and discuss the battle of Stalingrad, say or the Battle of

the Bulge or some other victory in the desert, but they knew it was all over.

33:30 The hierarchy obviously didn't want to admit it and carried on. Towards the end you know, in late '45 you had the Germans withdrawing and pushing through. One evening you saw the Germans there and in the morning you woke up and they were gone and then in the

34:00 afternoon you had French or Americans pushing through.

What do you remember of the Allied troops, what were they like?

I can remember in May standing beside the road waving a little flag. I can't remember what it was and the tank columns then coming through. Watching

34:30 them come in and take over. They then declared a curfew and nobody was allowed out. You were made to hand over every atlas, every camera, every weapon you might have had in the house. Weapons, cameras, atlases, maps, that sort of thing. Every WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK in the neighbourhood,

35:00 they had barbies, sheep, barbies, WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, small animals got confiscated and they, then you saw them having barbies.

Why did you have to hand over atlases?

That was the decree, buggered if I know, but they did. Atlases, maps

35:30 anything, binoculars, photo cameras and any weapons, rifles or pistols or whatever you might have had, that had to be all handed over.

Do you remember feeling any sort of fear when the troops came in?

No. For children

36:00 troops seem to have a bit of a, some attraction. It happened to us when we were in Malaya. The locals' kids were standing there waving, that seems to be a world wide phenomena amongst children, they like troops and it doesn't matter whose they are. They did give you chocolate bars or lollies or pieces of fruit

36:30 and that sort of thing, some of which we'd never, I was eight years then and I'd never seen a banana or an orange.

Do you remember a specific occasion when they gave you something?

Yes. Well most soldiers are friendly and kindly disposed towards children and so were they. You know, once they settled in us kids would go in

37:00 they'd be encamped around the perimeter of where we lived and you'd go there and play in wherever they were and they were glad to see us and we didn't mind them.

How about?

I suppose now they'd call it winning the hearts and minds of the population.

37:30 **They obviously had won the kids over but do you remember how adults felt about this occupation?**

Most adults were glad it was all over, no more bombings and no more mutilation. As the Germans retreated and the Allies were coming through there was hand to hand fighting more or less and you saw that happening. I reckon I saw more

38:00 violence and war like stuff as a child during that period than what I ever did in Vietnam or Malaysia as a soldier.

What sort of violence would you see apart from the bombings?

People getting blasted up. I remember on one occasion, the River Rhine, we'd go swimming in the River Rhine in summer and there was mines everywhere.

38:30 The Germans would lay them as they were retreating and this woman, people said she was going to drown herself, we don't know if that was true or not. Before she even reached the water she stepped on a mine and got blown up and that's the sort of thing you saw as a child. In those days there was no counselling or anything, you just saw it and you got on with it

39:00 and that was it.

Was there any violence that you saw after the occupation troops had came in?

No, they generally behaved themselves, and as I said, towards us children anyway. We'd go to there and they'd give us chocolate and things and treated us well.

39:30 **We'll just change tapes there.**

Tape 2

00:39 **Do you have any memories of Jewish people in Cologne?**

There weren't too many where I lived, well, now there was two where I lived, but they were just members of the community, we didn't treat them any differently to what

01:00 we would anybody else.

Did anything happen to them at?

Well, the woman, not she was there till, through the war and after the war, but her husband sort of one day was not seen again and we didn't see him ever again so I don't really know what happened to him, but yes, that was the only family I can remember, the Rosenfounz, their name was.

01:30 And yes, from the point of the local people and nobody treated them any different than what say would their next door neighbour, she was a next door neighbour and that was it. But as I said, her husband was just there one day, the next he was gone and that was it. You know, speculations but, you didn't really know what happened.

02:00 **How did she manage to not get taken?**

I don't know. Don't know, couldn't say that, wouldn't know.

Do you remember any talk about Jewish people?

Not really, no not really. See, they were German, didn't care what you were. But, yeah, of course there were,

02:30 I think us children, we wouldn't have had the understanding to know what Dachau was or Auschwitz was but you heard about them I think but and grownups, I don't know if they really knew what's going on there or not. I couldn't really pass an opinion on that.

What did you hear about them at the time as a kid?

I think

03:00 there was a general tenor of things was that, you know, they were the scapegoats for a sort of phenomena you see, everywhere, like Indonesia, you would say are down on the Chinese and, like because they were foreign and they usually try to intertwine and in commerce

03:30 and all that, and the regime says, you know, if it wasn't for those bastards, you'd have these jobs and you'd be well off too, so use them as a scape goat to take the heat off the regime and blame these people for the woes of the community and that would have been much the same in Germany.

Do you remember this as a child being taught these kinds of ideas?

Sort of yeah, vaguely, you know, as I said, as a child,

04:00 or seven, eight years old, you wouldn't have the sort of understanding but you do, yeah, you did get that.

And I was just wondering what kind of effect does seeing so much violence at such an early age have on you?

Oh you just sort of, you shut it out and you didn't let it affect you. You know, we, as I said earlier we had these two

04:30 friends who got blown up, another thing we used to do, there was these stick bombs, all over, incendiary type bombs that were that long, octagonal and we used to, the country side was pock marked with these bomb craters, all over the place, and in winter we used to light fires at the bottom of the crater

05:00 and throw potatoes in and roast them and that sort of thing, and every so often have, as a joke, somebody would lob one of those incendiary bombs in and say, "Bomb!" and we'd all scramble up the bloody side to get away before it exploded or blew up and started, yeah. And these two, one afternoon, they weren't so lucky and they were dead. That sort of thing.

05:30 Or another one finished up with less an arm here and the other one here. Well we sort of, you know, it got to you and all that but it didn't, not for too long, because it didn't stop you from doing the same thing next week, that sort of thing, so it couldn't have had too lasting an effect on us.

How do you think that kind of childhood affects you later in life?

06:00 Well, as I said, you never waste a thing, not even a bit of toothpaste, or it makes you appreciate things

you've got much more, and I said you wouldn't waste a thing, because it always comes back to, oh, yeah. Not consciously

06:30 but sub consciously it stuck to you and still does.

And after Germany was defeated, was there a sense that you noticed of German pride being hurt?

Oh yes, you would feel, you know deep down, you'd think, oh that can, as I said, it's… In Europe, no matter how

07:00 they're cooperating at the moment, if you were to talk to an Englishman, and ask them how do you like the French, they'd say oh deep down we like them, we hate their little black hearts. Or if you were to ask a German he would tell you the same thing and if you ask the French, he would tell you yes, those kraut bastards. It's a bosch, you know, that sticks with you for the rest of your life, I reckon, if you're grown up, it's a bit like

07:30 in Northern Ireland, you know, if you have the Catholics and you have the Orange and it must come with your mother's milk, more or less, it's with you.

So tell us about what you noticed about the occupying forces?

Not very much kids, we saw them, they treated us well, you go and play in their

08:00 encampments, and occasionally they'd give you chocolates or mother chocolate or an orange or whatever, they treated us well, and we liked them.

And what did the adults say about them?

Oh, they treated them more or less, they were there but they weren't….people were glad that it was all over and that they could start reorganising

08:30 their lives and get back to normal.

What did they think of the soldiers?

They were, I'm sure that none of them would, there wouldn't have been any outright tyrants. None there. And I can, on the other side, like I went to England in 1955, way back then which was only 10 years, seven, eight years after the war,

09:00 and whilst I was there then they treated me you know, nicely. And the war had more or less had been forgotten and you didn't sort of think you're kraut bastards or you Pommy bastard, those feelings were left behind and people, you know, respected each other again and treated each other

09:30 normal, if that's a word to use.

What were the occupying forces where you live?

French and then English. The French came in first and then the English.

Did you notice differences between the two?

Well yes, well the French in the first, they had a lot of African type, Moroccans and Africans in their,

10:00 whatever, oh they would have been tank regiments and all that. They were mainly Moroccans and Africans, blacks, from their African colonies I suppose, yeah. And they went through and later it was the English and they were just normal English.

Was there any talk about the black soldiers?

No, people, the

10:30 divide between black and white didn't seem to exist then.

And tell us what cultural changes you were noticing.

Well, as I said, the de-Nazification was the big thing then. Well during the Hitler period,

11:00 all adult Germans had to be more or less members of the Party. And then there was a big de-Nazification movement. And that was talked about a lot, and then, from '45 till '48, people had enough to do with their

11:30 keeping alive, not to starve to death, anything else was or more or less secondary importance and it was only after the first of July 1948, when things got back to normal. One day there wasn't a bloody thing in the shops, of any, you know groceries, you queued up for your ration of

12:00 bread, meat, if you could get it, and everything else, for hours on end. And on the calendar, the first of July, when the new money, what was it called, the old Reichmark got phased out, and you got, for every ten Reichmark you got one Deutschmark and if

12:30 people didn't have any Reichmarks left and most of them wouldn't, you would have got 40 deutschmark to start off with, per head of household. Like we had mother, father, two children you would have got four lots of 40 marks and that's kicked you off in the new economy.

So you saw a difference on this exact day?

13:00 Shit yes, it was like open sesame, one day shops were empty, there wasn't a bloody thing in the shop window, you couldn't buy an orange or an apple or a banana. On the first of July, it was like paradise it was. You could buy football boots, balls, the lot. It was just from one day to the next, they obviously knew it was coming and, you know, worked the…

13:30 but it was, for the buying population it was, shit, I'm in paradise, everything your little heart desires was there, but everybody only had 40 marks to kick off with, so.

Interesting, you've mentioned before that the years '45 to '48 were almost harder than the war.

They were because while you're in the war, whilst every-day

14:00 necessities were, they still were there, you didn't have to queue up, for your bread or your butter, everything was strictly rationed. You got your, once a month you went and picked up your ration cards, there was, we were entitled to three pounds of, a three pound loaf of bread a week, and all the other things. It's like when you go to the pub

14:30 and the two for ones, they come, you know and tear off and, you know, give you the numbers, that was each…Coupons were a bit like that. You got a sheet like that, it had two pounds of meat on it, a pound of flour, bread and sugar and all the necessities of life and you went to the shop and bought it. Once the war was over from '45, there was just nothing.

15:00 For your necessities you had to queue up for hours and most of them weren't even there, no matter if you had, and so black markets were flourishing. I remember going to, two doors up they used to sell cigarettes, and I used to pay the equivalent of five pounds for one cigarette for my father,

15:30 that sort of thing.

And you found this personally harder than the bombings?

Yeah, because as a parent you might want to feed your kids and give them breakfast or dinner or whatever, and during that period, there was hardly anything they could get their grubby little hands onto and you know, clothing and so on, my mother used to convert blankets into,

16:00 into overcoats for winter and that sort of thing. There was nothing you could buy even if you had the money, unless you went to the black market and many of the things wouldn't even be had there. So it was a battle for daily survival between '45 and '48.

Pause.

16:30 **What were your parents doing for money at this stage?**

My father used to be an engineer; he worked for a company 'Linda'. He was into refrigeration; he did things like the Olympic Ice Stadium in Berlin. He worked for refrigeration plants and he was away a lot on doing this work. But my mother used to go once

17:00 a month and pick up whatever money she needed from his work and that was it.

And so you didn't see a lot of your father?

No not really. From, I reckon from about 1943, '4 perhaps, I can't quite, until about the end of the war we didn't know where he was at all. But that was nothing unique in Germany. There were displaced all over

17:30 the place, and didn't hear from each other. It was chaotic in that respect and you didn't know if they were dead or alive, where they were and that sort of thing, so that was nothing unique that would have been because of this work he was away a lot.

And what about after the war, did you see more of him?

Yeah well he, you know, eventually after the war he came back but then he was, as I said, work wise he was always away a lot.

18:00 So my mother was a, virtually a bit of a sole parent in that respect, and then in, when was that? I was 12 and he was working from home, he was doing a job in a big chocolate factory in Cologne and on his way home from work one night he had an accident and that was it. Or he lived for a week, and then he died

18:30 of his injuries, when I was 12.

What kind of accident?

Traffic accident.

So how did that affect your life having your father pass away?

Well we were in the middle of building a house, it was half finished. Or the first floor was finished and,

19:00 that was a bit of a setback because my mother then had to make arrangements to have it finished and all that but she then got a widows pension and she worked, and she got a pension from his work so financially she was all right. But, yeah, she was 36 then,

19:30 so she was fairly young still, but, yeah so, she was, just her and us.

And so tell us also, were you receiving a kind of new education about what had happened in Germany during the war?

No, not really, that was sort of, no not really. That was lost, over, more or less; well we all knew what had happened anyway, so, no, not of the war really.

Was there any news of

20:00 **what had, the Nazi trials or what had happened to Hitler?**

Yeah we did, well everybody in Berlin knew that he'd killed himself in his bunker towards the end and that Doenitz took over and when Goering poisoned himself, that sort of got a bit of coverage and everybody was aware what was happening along those lines, yeah.

20:30 **And what do think people thought of what had happened over the previous decade?**

I reckon most of them were aware, well I think to begin with Hitler was welcomed by most Germans with open arms because up until he took over the Depression was in full swing, money wasn't worth anything. I can remember collecting stamps

21:00 and they were postage stamps which had three trillion on it, not millions or billions, trillions. And others which had billion originally on it and over printed was with trillions, you know that sort of thing, the Depression was in deep swing, money wasn't worth a thing, jobs weren't…

21:30 I believe the family story, that my mother and father only got married when they did because single men got laid off in favour of married men as far as jobs were concerned, so they decided let's get married now so that he could keep his job and keep on working and that would have

22:00 been, once again, a German white phenomena you know. As I said the Depression was in full swing and money was worth nothing. And all that was, you know, people like my grandparents and my parents, they didn't just lose their life savings once in their bloody life. My grand, see the equivalent of my grandparents lost it three times. First after the First World War, then again

22:30 in the Depression and then again in 1945 when it was devalued one to ten and all that, so, three times in a lifetime they lost everything they had accumulated unless it was tangible assets like real estate or that sort of thing, yeah, which also left a lasting sort of impression on those people of that generation.

23:00 **And what was the impression that you had?**

Well they thought that they were, they didn't waste anything, they appreciated everything they had and knew how easy it could be lost.

And so tell us what kind of education you were receiving and what happened to you?

You do the first

23:30 four years in a school, primary school, flugschule as it's called, everybody starts at six and when you turn ten there's a crossroads, you can either keep going to the flugschule, that type of school for another four years and then you left school and started an apprenticeship, or you went

24:00 to the modern streams, the Mittelschule where you got, amongst other things, English and French and all the other subjects, or you could go to a Gymnasium where you learnt Greek, Latin and English too and went there for the next eight years. So the modern stream was six, if you wanted to be say,

24:30 engineering, architecture that type of occupational stream, you went to there, if you want to say into medicine or law or that sort to thing you went to the gimnazium where you learnt Greek and Latin and that sort of thing. I went to the mittelschule for six years and you come out of that and yeah.

And what work did you get into?

I then

25:00 went and did bookkeeping. Everybody does an apprenticeship in Germany, you know brick lining or painter or sales, you did a three year apprenticeship and that was that and then you finish your apprenticeship and you do whatever you like, and usually in the

25:30 profession you did your apprenticeship in. And when I finished my apprenticeship I went to England, ostensibly to further my knowledge of the English language, that might have been a bit of a failure.

You mentioned it briefly before, but just going on it again, how did you find your time when you first arrived in England, what was it like?

26:00 Oh we had a ball. I was sharing a flat, I lived near Marble Arch, off Actuary Road, Upper Barclay Street it was called. And there was four of us, two English lads, one from Finland and me, we shared this flat and, oh, it was great and I worked in this book shop on Charing Cross Road, WNG Foyle's, called

26:30 themselves the biggest book shop in the world. Oh it was marvellous, lovely atmosphere to work in. But other than work, the English people were all kind, friendly, lovely, England was a nice place to live in those days. It used to cost us 30 shillings each a week towards the flat and we each kicked in another 30 shillings towards food and we, as I said, we lived well and

27:00 had a ball.

What kind of things were you having fun with ?

Oh partying every weekend, there was, we had a lot of friends who lived in the outer suburbs of London in Wimbledon and all that, and they'd be all work in the city and they, we used to call our flat 'the club', they'd call in and chat and a drink and so on and then

27:30 maybe say go home after peak hour had sort of died down a bit, and we had a ball. On weekends we'd have parties and carried on and you used to go to the proms, that was a big thing, and you know. I remember My Fair Lady had its premier and you'd do things like that and there was Odeon's palatial

28:00 cinema on Leicester Square, you'd go to the cinema and plays and things like that. London was a place where a lot of cultural things happened, and there was the British Museum and Kew Gardens and Hampton Court and things like that. I was there for 18 months and still didn't see everything that was worth seeing in London.

28:30 **And what about changes culturally, were you noticing things coming in?**

Oh a different way of life from Germany altogether, you know, much more class conscious in England. Although in Germany they could, you know the white collar workers with the blue collars workers it's very, was then very much entrenched in Germany still. I don't know if it was still when you were there was it?

29:00 Did you notice that? Then it was still very much, and in England it was very much, you know, the upper class and the other classes. But no, England was a nice place to live in those days.

Was there anything changing like rock and roll, or anything?

That sort of only just came in then, it hadn't sort of taken off

29:30 all that big until then. In those days they still had the big bands, you know, the Glenn Miller type and I can't remember all the, but yeah it was that sort of thing, and it was only sort of towards the late '50s that Elvis sort of really started that rock and roll revolution and Bill Haley and the Comets,

30:00 and those, yeah.

And did you have any girlfriends in London?

Oh god yes, a multitude.

Tell us about it?

We used to have a list, the party list, what sort of party do we want on the weekend and you'd read the book, the black book and you'd say okay if it's such and such sort of a tone of the party, these are the girls we want to invite.

30:30 If it's a, that tone of party you'd have the, the A and the B and the C lists, more or less.

What was your favourite tone of party?

Well, the A list sort of.

And what was the A list?

Oh you know, we're half way through the party you'd sneak off into one of the bedrooms and

31:00 did whatever you do in bedrooms.

So when you're making your decision between B and C?

We'd sit down on the Thursday or Friday the four of us and the other people who'd come to the club and say okay, what are we doing on the weekend, oh let's have a party, okay, who's coming, okay.

And tell us about the book shop.

31:30 That was great, they didn't pay us much , it was more or less like a labour more, we earned five pounds a week plus commission on what you sold. That could amount to say 30 shillings or two pounds a week. Which was, as I said, rent was only 30 shillings and food was only 30 shillings, so, you

32:00 had enough money to live, you spent three pounds on your food and accommodation and you had at least two pounds spending money, and more if you got your commission. At Foyles, there was students, young people from virtually every country. Sweden, Finland, Germany, France, Spain, South Africa. They came

32:30 from everywhere, all young, in their 20's, and so all got on well together and all, that's what made it such a good place. And working with the books, you know the shop was divided into different department and the antique department and the modern fiction and music department, depended on what

33:00 department you worked in but this was good.

And, what did it look like inside?

It was two buildings on, one was sort of a very plain looking three, four storey building, the size of, 200

33:30 square metre per floor and then across the road was another part of the store which wasn't quite as big, they had the antique department and the medical section. That was three floors high in the 18 century stone building, yes.

And what was your method of selling a book?

34:00 Oh people, the shop was always chocka block full of people, Charing Cross Road is sort of fairly much central in London and the people milling about everywhere. And they'd come into the shop and they were, you'd see somebody coming in and they'd go up to whatever department they were interested in and you're seeing,

34:30 looking at the shelves, and you'd walk up you know, can I help you, what are you looking for, particular author or title or whatever, yeah. Yes we have it or no we haven't got it. But that shop prided itself, if it's ever been printed, we either have it, or if we haven't got it in the shop, we will get it for you. And that was sort of, so you either had it and you wrapped it up and off they went to the cashier and paid,

35:00 or if it wasn't in stock, you put in an order to get it.

And were you a big reader?

Oh yeah, I loved reading, still do today, yes.

And did you meet many of the, A, B or C list there?

Yeah a lot of them came from the shop. They were all you know, Irish, English girls, lovely people all in their late teens, early mid 20's yeah.

35:30 But no we all got on well together and they all had a ball.

And what did you spend your spare two quid on?

Drinking, smoking, going out, you know, that sort of thing. I didn't save any money. I was always poor in those days; even every so often my mother would have to

36:00 throw in the odd five pounds or so. Yeah, no, I've seen young people haven't changed, if I look at my daughter, she's very much into the, do you need anything, no not really, but here, you know. She'll take it if I give it to her.

And what was your favourite drink?

In those days we used to drink beer mainly. On a Saturday morning we,

36:30 there was the four of us, we used to divvy up the shopping, one would go for the meat, one used to go for the green, you know the vegies, the other one for the general sort of groceries and so on and the other one was for the drinks type one. And then we would all congregate in the 'Bricklayers Arms' and have a few and then we would go home, and beer mainly, and on party nights

37:00 used to, sort of spirits and stuff like that.

Your favourite beer you have?

Oh English beer is not comparable because it's warm and flat looking but my opinion about beer and drinking is after the fifth bucket you wouldn't know the difference anyway. And I think that's fairly true,

37:30 even you know, if you have Four X over Reschs you know, the first one might taste a bit different but after the second or third you really be hard pressed to know the difference.

And were there any other kind of different drugs that you'd have?

No drugs in those days. Even as a young man, in the army later on, we're, you know we were in Thailand and in Singapore and then Malaysia

38:00 Hong Kong on exercises, where you could have had drugs, at the snap of the finger. Never ever entered into any of our minds at all.

So what inspired you to come to Australia?

As I said, I was working with this young lad in the same firm and he said, "I'm finishing up on Friday." And, "Oh why, where are you going?" "Oh I'm going to Australia." "Oh yeah,

38:30 how do you go about that, tell me about it." And he told me he went to the consulate, blah, blah, blah. And I thought, "Shit, maybe I should go." I'd always been into travelling and adventure sort of stuff, "Oh shit," you know, so off I went to the consulate, that would have been about June or July, and filled in the necessary forms, they put it in front of me, and all that and I never

39:00 heard another thing about it until late November, mid to late November one day when my mother said, "Well there's a telegram for you." And there I was, it was the assisted migrant scheme as it was called. You paid 10 pounds towards your fare and you had to sign up to stay for two years and if you went back before your two years was up you had to pay your full fare, so you were, so you were

39:30 here for two years for starters, and it was all settled, you know, two years and I'm still here.

What did you know of Australia?

Not much, nobody, you know you think kangaroos are running down the street, in Sydney. Nobody would have ever heard say of Brisbane for instance, you knew that Melbourne and Sydney existed. You thought that everybody was a

40:00 cattle, you know, baron, and owns a sugar cane cutting or you know, a jackeroo, that sort of thing, that would be about the extent of your knowledge really.

40:30 End of tape

Tape 3

00:35 **Talking about you leaving Germany, what was your mother's reaction to this?**

Well she wasn't happy, and well, in the beginning she thought I'd only be gone for two years, so. Yes she thought well, you know,

01:00 my sister wasn't at home by then, she was married then. And no, I was leaving, so yeah, she was all by herself.

And what did you take with you to prepare?

A suitcase full of clothes and that was all. Yeah that was all, nothing else. And the equivalent of about 100 pounds, roughly give or take a few.

01:30 I think I spent most of that on the ship coming out.

And you talked about what your thoughts about Australia were, but where did you see yourself fitting in, what?

I just liked the fact that it was hot and sunny and see what comes and develops. I hadn't sort of any

02:00 particular place in mind or any particular job in mind, I was going to take whatever came.

And as part of this 10 pound tourist sort of thing, did you think that you have to work somewhere for?

Oh well it wouldn't have entered your mind not to be working. That wouldn't have ever entered your mind.

But would they, did you, would you have been sent somewhere to work?

02:30 The way that works is, they shipped you to Bonegilla, on a train like a cattle train, sort of. Anyway they shipped us off to Bonegilla, we got there late that afternoon, and we got allocated to, it was a place full of Nissan huts, you know what a Nissan hut, four to a room and you got three meals a day, a bed

03:00 and you had your meals in the dining room and you got a pound a week, pocket money. And you stayed there until they found you a job and a place to live and then they'd give you a plane ticket and sent you

on your way. And being Christmas, I remember I went to the office after being there a day and I said, "What's happening, how long do you expect us to be here?"

03:30 And she said well, in those days the country virtually shut down at Christmas time for six weeks or so, not like it is now. And she said, "Being Christmas period and so on, you can expect to be here for about six weeks or more." And I thought I'm not hanging around here for six weeks. And so that afternoon I went into Albury and had a look at the train table, time table and so on and

04:00 I thought well at nine o'clock there's a train leaving for Melbourne and I went back and packed my gear and at five o'clock in the morning I snuck out of the camp. And I didn't have a watch and was sitting there by the, I saw the sun was coming up and I thought it was about seven or eight, and I was sitting by the side of the road

04:30 waiting for this bus that was supposed to come at nine, and it was getting hotter and hotter and the sun was getting higher and higher. I thought shit it's got to be bloody nine o'clock by now. And I did not take into consideration that it was New Year's Day and holiday, so eventually somebody gave me a lift into Albury, and I caught the train and I got to Melbourne late that afternoon

05:00 and I went to, not Flinders, Spencer Street Station and I got off and into a hotel that night. The following day I went and got myself a room in a guesthouse that was in Elwood, Dickens Street, I still remember it and then the day after that I start to look for work. And every, I bought the paper and

05:30 through the job ads and every time I go there, job's gone and having to go on the tram and not knowing where I was going and so on, so I thought well bugger this for today. So next day I went to the CES [Commonwealth Employment Service] and you know, I'm here and I want a job and they sent me to a place and the next day I started work and that was that.

06:00 **And just tell me a bit about the trip on the boat.**

We left Bremerhaven whenever, the last day of November or the first day of December 1959 and we had stops, it was called the Castel Felicia. And where did we stop, we stopped at

06:30 Naples, portside, and you had the choice you could either stay on board ship and go through the Suez Canal or you could get off and go and see the pyramids and Cairo and all that, so I opted to go and see Cairo and the pyramids and caught the ship at Ishmael at the other end of the Suez Canal.

And what was Cairo like?

07:00 Big place, oriental, you now typical oriental place with bazaars and historic buildings and all that. I liked it and the pyramids, that was interesting and all that, and then as I said, back on board and the next stop was in Aden and, yeah, we got off there and went to the camel marches and had a look through the place and

07:30 that was interesting and then we went to, the next stop then was Port Melbourne. And that took virtually the whole month.

And what other types of people were on the ship?

All types of people, families, young people you know, in their 20's, and all that, so yeah, the whole families, and only the young single men got shipped off to Bonegilla, women

08:00 and families stayed. There was a maiden camp in Maribyrnong, they went there, and as I said, the young men, single young men were shipped of to Bonegilla.

And what sort of things would you do on the boat for a month to entertain?

Drinking, playing games and the ship used to, it was like a mini holiday really, it was well organised, and, the ship

08:30 personnel did a lot of entertainment, at night there was a band and dancing and that sort of thing, oh no it was like a mini holiday, yeah it was good.

And how did they organise shipping you off to, no when you got to Australia and they shipped all the single men off to Bonegilla, how did they organise that, how did they let you know?

Oh, on the notice board the

09:00 night before, it said okay, all the single men, you front up to gangway D, or whatever it was at the time and onto the trains, there was people at the bottom of the gangway and saying okay you lot, off you go, blah, blah, and away we went.

And you described what the camp was like,

09:30 **but in terms of?**

It was funny; later on it then became the Army School of Catering. It was an army establishment and I had a fair bit to do with it then, as an officer in the army we had our catering wing there, yeah, it was interesting. But as I said, originally it had been established outside of Albury on the banks of the

10:00 Hume Weir, it was a, you know a few dozen Nissan huts and an administering building and a mess hall and recreation facility and yeah, that was it. That was virtually it. You got your three meals a day and there was four to a room and didn't have to do anything

10:30 work wise, you just lounged about, went for swims and did nothing. But, as I said, only two days of that and nicked off. But what we had to do was, for two years after, whilst you were here, for your two years you always had to, if you changed your job or your address you had to let the Immigration Department know where you were. I didn't do that because I nicked off

11:00 in the middle of the night, I never did that and for the first two years always having a bit of a look over my shoulder, you know, if I saw a policeman or somebody in a black suit with a tie. But it never happened.

In that camp did you feel that you were locked in?

No, you could come and go, it wasn't, sort of, no, you had free access and

11:30 you could come and go as you wanted and go into town Albury, Wodonga, and no, you weren't locked up.

And what were your first impressions of Australia?

Oh, well it's damn hot for starters, but other than that, well, we didn't get to see anything of Melbourne, at all, off the ship, on the train and off we went. But then once I'd left camp and came into

12:00 Melbourne that was a lovely place to be and all that.

And tell me about that first job that you had.

He was a contractor in the building trade, he had mounted, in those days they didn't have big cranes and that sort of thing, like you have now on building sites. He had mounted a sort of, on the back of a

12:30 five ton truck and hoist, a mobile hoist it was called, it was a contraption that could reach three floors up on the building, and there was a rope, a winch up, three storeys high on this contraption with a bucket that held the equivalent of three wheel barrows, big wheel barrows of concrete. And

13:00 he would drive it from building sites to building site, getting concrete, when builders were concreting above ground level, he'd hire this machine out to concrete up, well up to three floors and being Christmas holiday period and slow, he thought he would refurbish the thing and clean it up a bit and refurbish it and get it ready for the next season.

13:30 So my job was, stood there, I was chipping with a hammer, chipping concrete off this bloody thing and then with a wire brush getting it, you know, back to the metal parts and that was my first job, chipping concrete off this contraption and brushing it with the wire brush and with kerosene giving it, and repainting it and he thought

14:00 oh that'll take about six weeks or so, and I think I did it in about four. So he was impressed, and he asked me, "Have you got a driving licence because if you want to you can drive this thing next, yeah, from job to job, blah, blah, blah." Anyway I said, "No, I haven't got a licence." Only a car licence for, I can drive in Germany.

14:30 Anyway so he sends me off and got me a licence and I drive this thing around for six months and then I got another job in Astor's, the firm was, they used to make white goods and TV's and transistor radios, what you call transistor radios, then it was a thing that big and you know, things that big, electrical goods and white goods and, I

15:00 got a job as a TV tester. I couldn't even turn on a TV in those days, let alone bloody test one. Anyway I remember the interview, the fellow said, you know, what do you think, what's your history, blah, blah, blah. And I said, "I used to work for Blaupunkt in Germany." You know Blaupunkt, bit different but, you know, basically

15:30 much the same, just the details are a bit different. Anyway he said, "Okay, start tomorrow." And they put me next to somebody else, on the job training and trying to learn how to use these things, and it wasn't, didn't take long to learn, and there I was a TV tester and yeah, I did that for a few years until I joined the army. Now whilst I was there, there was a few other young people there,

16:00 And they were in the CMF [Citizens' Military Force] as it was called, the army reserve and Melbourne in those days had six o'clock closing and the six o'clock swill as it used to be called, and no drinks on weekends at all. So being in the CMF was really attractive because on parade nights you could go to boozer and everything and there was a,

16:30 they used to call it the Air Force Club, near Spencer Street Station, on weekends, that would be open to five in the morning and if you were in uniform you could booze on till five in the morning. So that was the main attraction to join the CMF really, and then you were camped, which was, you know, quite adventurous, and that then led to

17:00 the army full time.

And you mentioned that Melbourne had that early closing time, how was this after having lived in London?

Oh bloody horrible. Very, not very good at all, yeah, oh yeah, we used to, Astor, where I worked, was just up St Kilda Road towards South Melbourne in Sturt Street and we used to sprint from Sturt Street to St Kilda Road, catch the Tram,

17:30 go to Young and Jackson's at the end of the Princess Street Bridge, have a few, back on the tram and back to work. That would be lunch time and after work you used to, a whole bunch of us, you used to then stay, we'd finish work about four or so, from memory, half past four, you might get there or five and then between five and six, you'd wolf as much down as

18:00 you could and at five to six you'd line up about half a dozen and so on and they'd give you till quarter past to finish them off, and that was, that's, hence the six o'clock swill.

And what would you do after six o'clock?

Stagger home. And that was Melbourne in late '50's, early '60's. Yeah so that was it.

18:30 **And how had you started, what sort of social group had you built up?**

All work, you know, sort of your work colleagues and all that, that's how you made your first contacts and then it sort of expanded from there and then the tennis club and that sort of thing.

And how was the social life compared to London, I mean obviously the alcohol?

There wasn't any really, no there wasn't, no, beach and

19:00 you know, party type, barbies and that sort of thing, home entertainment, go to the pictures, but that was it, compared to London, Melbourne was a bit dead on the cultural side you see.

And, what did you have to do to join the CMF?

Just front up and say here I am, I want to join, and you got, my first CMF unit was,

19:30 we did our basic training. I was first, 1RAR, first regiment, Royal Victorian Rifles, you did, it was, you know, Melbourne, the markets, it was just outside of the market, the depot the headquarters of 1RAR. And we did our basic training there and then I got posted to D company 1RAR at Moonee Ponds where

20:00 I met my, they lived just two doors up. Yeah and you pick your bloody rifle up and you went to parade, you had one parade night a week, I think it was a Tuesday night and you went with your uniform and your webbing hanging off you, and your rifle. Can you imagine wandering on the tram with a rifle, you know. And a 303 or

20:30 an SLR [Self Loading Rifle] under your arm in this day and age. But that's what we did.

How did people respond to you?

Oh, you know, in uniform people, as a soldier you couldn't do much wrong.

And was there ever any question because you were German?

No none at all. Yes, so that was 1 RAR.

21:00 And this friend of mine who I worked with, and how I got into it, he had another friend, he was a sergeant already, we were privates and he was a sergeant already and on parade nights we used to meet Chesty as we used to, his parents were from Russia, Chestpopolov his name was, and we used to meet Chesty in his mess,

21:30 sergeants' mess off, just off Batman Avenue and we'd grog on there until all hours of the night and morning, in the sergeants' mess, he'd take us in there and we'd carry on like pork chops. Yeah, so that's how that, it was virtually a total sort of thing to start off with.

And what sort of things do they teach you at

22:00 **that one night a week?**

Drill, you know, foot drill and rifle drill and yeah that was, foot drill and rifle drill, to start off you know, Attention, right turn, left turn, quick march and slow march and things like that, the basics, the very basics and how to handle your weapon, you know, slope arms, stand at ease and that sort of stuff and then you get your annual

22:30 tan, which was your…I think it was a three week effort where you did your basic training of fitness and shooting and that sort of thing.

And how well did you enjoy?

Oh it was fun, all people of your own age and it was great fun.

And so what led to you thinking of becoming more involved?

23:00 Well after I did that first annual campers, they called it, I didn't mind that, it got you fit and you, and in those days you didn't really have to join the navy to see the world you could see it in the army as well, you know. They had postings in Malaya and places like that I've always been into travel and I thought I might get a posting there or I want to have a posting there.

23:30 And that was, I really wanted to join the navy and the only way I really ended up in the army, in Melbourne the recruiting office was at Albert Park, Albert Park Barracks, and the army recruiting office was on the ground floor and the navy and the airforce were on the top floor.

24:00 And as I was walking into this joint, intending to join the navy, this fellow, I came into the main door and the door opened sort of from the side and I was standing and, hm okay, where to for me and he says, "What are you here for, what do you want?" And I said, "Well I want to join the navy." And he said, "Don't worry about that, come in here, we'll sort you out."

24:30 And there I was in the army.

Why did you want to join the navy?

Travel, adventure.

Was there any sort of rumours or stories about a navy uniform?

No, no, travel and adventure would have been my main motivation for that.

So when this army man grabbed you, how did he make you change your mind?

25:00 Oh I don't think he, as I said, being in the CMF already and having just done that annual camp, it didn't take too much convincing, I sort of jumped the fence and changed uniform.

And so what did you have to do to join the army?

Oh you just joined, you signed here, your enrolment, your enlistment papers, you joined up for either three or six years

25:30 and signed that and then they sent you out to, what was it called the, SCPD [Southern Command Personnel Depot], personnel depot was at Watsonia, near Heidelberg and they sent you there until they had a bunch of say 40,

26:00 which was the strength of a platoon together and then they shipped us off to Kapooka, 1 RTB, Recruit Training Battalion, where you got your basic training.

And what did you do about your job?

I just resigned, I said I'm finishing off, I've joined the army and that was that. And so they said, "Okay, good luck, goodbye".

26:30 **Was there much, I suppose, were you aware of much of the Australian history of the armed forces?**

No, not a bit. No.

Were you aware of things like Anzac Day and?

Anzac Day perhaps, I can't really remember it, but Anzac Day more than likely, but other than that no.

27:00 And you knew that they were, you know, get posted overseas. Malaysia was on at the time, or Malaya as it as then called, but that was about all.

And so tell me about your sort of first day when you went to Kapooka?

Let me tell you about the first day when I went to, oh yeah, when we got to Watsonia to the personnel depot, so that, have a haircut,

27:30 that was the first thing. I had a haircut before I joined because I knew I'd have to, you know, be reasonably short back and sides, so I had a haircut. So at Watsonia they said have a haircut, "I had one yesterday." "Shut up and have a haircut." So another haircut and then when we got to Kapooka, you were woken up and have a

28:00 haircut, "But I have two already." "Shut up. Are you questioning my authority?" "No Corporal." "Have a haircut." So by the time, like three haircuts, there wasn't much left other than a little bit sticking up on top here.

And how was that introduction to discipline and authority?

Oh well having been in the CMF you knew it was fairly similar, a bit stricter, especially in Kapooka, you know, you had to stand by your bed

28:30 every morning and if your bed and everything wasn't spick and span you were, you know, you got all sorts of horrible things happening to you. And you, so you made sure you did things right and the way they wanted it and you kept up on the physical side of things and you couldn't, you know, that was it.

Was this a change, I mean you sounded like, when you were young, someone who didn't necessarily want to be,

29:00 **like when you left the camp at the migrant camp you just decided to leave that sort of thing, did you have any sort of resentment towards?**

No, no. You wanted to do your thing, do it well, get it over and done with and get into a unit. That was your main aim at that point in time.

And was it, amongst the new trainees, were there any people who had

29:30 **problems with discipline?**

Yes some did more, worse than others and others that weren't physically you know, kept up physically, they'd get a bit of a hard time and special attention. Yeah. But if you were sort of, you know, kept up with everything and made sure your gear was spick and span and all that you just, you were right. It was like

30:00 a colony of bees, or an ants' nest, you were one of the group, a multitude and unless you ventured out towards the edge, nobody took much notice of you.

What does it feel like to be part of that kind of a group?

You either adapt or you shouldn't be there in my opinion, because if you

30:30 don't adapt, you did it hard, you know, harder than it was already. It was physically very demanding, and if you sort of didn't conform, you made it even harder for yourself.

And were there any particular instructors that stand out in your mind?

Oh god yes, some of them were very, on the very last day, we'd done everything, all the tests

31:00 and we'd been allocated to our corps and our units, and we were ready to leave camp that day, and corporal, and you used to get up at six every morning and have breakfast about seven, and we were to go at nine or so for the end of the, and I remember saying to Corporal Williams,

31:30 "If we're not going till 10 o'clock why do we have breakfast at seven o'clock. Could we have it at a bit more civil hour like nine o'clock?" "Are you questioning my authority, you supercilious bastard?" "No Corporal." That was his reply to my question.

32:00 **Do you think he was a good…?**

He was a little ratbag really. Who was another one? Corporal Dunn, he was a bit of a you know, there were some who just were hard, but some who really enjoyed grinding people into the deck and making you feel that you were a little recruit and nothing else.

32:30 **And what were the basic things they were training you in Kapooka?**

Marching, foot drill, weapon handling, shooting, map reading, you got some military history type stuff and education, you did, an education, those who didn't have any, or much education just

33:00 primary schooling, you did, it was the Army Education Certificate Grade Three. Yeah, you ended up with that it was basic primary school subjects with a bit of military history thrown in.

Was it interesting to learn the Australian military?

Oh yeah. But it was, at a very basic level.

And you'd done quite a lot

33:30 **in the CMF already so were you learning much new stuff?**

Oh yes, it's at a higher intensity, a level of higher intensity. Like weapon handling and map reading it was just that step above what you had in the CMF and you had to be better at it and it was more intense and physically you know, a lot of things you had to do. A

34:00 nine, a five mile march in a particular time and that type of thing, you know.

And what of the army were you interested in being a part of?

Any, any well, I got eventually to teach, get a choice between, I think you were asked to put down three corps,

34:30 and I got my second one. I think I might have put down infantry at the time and service corps as the thing was and I got my second choice. Service corps, it was then, now they call it corps of transport.

And why was it your second choice, what were you interested in?

Oh I was you know transport, the road officer corps, that was what motivated me you see.

35:00 **So then you were sent to?**

Puckapunyal to do your corps training. They teach you all about your corps history, and what your corps is all about and the type of jobs you get in your particular corps, if you're an infantry man or if you were in artillery or armament corps, they all had their

35:30 specified roles in the overall picture and service corps.

And what did they teach you about the service corps?

Oh the different roles, like in service corps you had the clerical support side, they handle resupply, ration supply system and transport driving, all the driving trades

36:00 and that sort of side and each is a speciality in itself and you get taught the overall role of the corps and then you get allocated into particular jobs and streams. In the service corps you would have had the clerical stream and the supply stream and the transport stream. I ended up in the clerical

36:30 side for starters.

And did any of the people you'd been with at Kapooka go into the service corps with you?

Two or three yeah.

Did they become good friends?

Yeah, oh yeah, you know, you do form a bond and all that, but then you were there and you form bonds with the new group of people, that was, in doing the basics there.

And are there any particular

37:00 **characters or personalities that stand out from your time at Puckapunyal?**

Yeah, well once again you have your instructors have an intimate sort of impact on your day to daily life, the RSMs [Regimental Sergeant Major] of the place, you know the Regimental Sergeant Major, and God, or main of the place, or the CO [Commanding Officer] who's God, and then the next one under him is the Regimental Sergeant Major.

37:30 He would be God Main and you know, he can walk on water more or less and you know it.

How do they let you know it?

Oh, you know if you see him you just snap to attention, smartly to attention for starters and hm, put your earplugs in so that your eardrums don't get blown out when they shout at you and things like that.

38:00 **Why would they shout at you?**

Oh, when you're a recruit or a private, just out of, there's a multitude of sins, your state of your uniform, or your haircut or your smile wasn't just right and anything.

And what was the social life like at Puckapunyal?

Oh you know,

38:30 you do your days work in the classroom or in the, doing a driver's course, you are taught to be a good driver and then after work you go and have a shower and you go for dinner and then you go to the boozers, that would be mainly what happens or on the weekends you might nick into Melbourne or to Seymour and do whatever you do there.

And would you wear your uniform when you went on leave?

39:00 In those days we did, now you wouldn't. They wouldn't encourage wearing the uniform in public anymore, but then you did.

What was the public's reaction to your uniform?

Oh people liked soldiers, yeah and they treated you well and they gave you a bit of leeway more or less, oh yeah, young soldiers, what else did you expect them to be but to be drunk and disorderly.

39:30 Full of you know, piss and bad manners and all this.

And the girls did they like the uniforms?

Well in, yeah sometimes in Wagga, or like when you were in Kapooka the nearest place to that was Wagga and in Puckapunyal it was Seymour, if you go to the local dance or whatever, there you have two types of girls. Those who do

40:00 fraternise with the troops and those who didn't, no you would never had a chance with a girl that didn't but with the ones that did fraternise, yes, so two, there was a distinct partition between them.

Was it easy to tell the difference?

Oh yes, yes. You either get a smile or a scowl if you ask the girl for a dance, that sort of thing.

Tape 4

00:37 **You were just talking about the girls at the dancers. How would they frown at you?**

00:42 Oh they'd say, "No, I don't dance," or "Thank you but I don't feel like it at the moment." And then that would be it, and I say, "Okay," then I'll ask someone else.

00:58 **Was there a commonality between the girls who were less keen on the army guys?**

01:00 Well they all looked much the same in women, but no you couldn't say by just looking at them from a distance from the bar to where they'd be sitting that one will and that one won't dance with you. Wander up and ask, "May I have this dance please?" and if they say, "No thank you,"

01:30 you move on, if they did you'd dance.

01:36 **What about the girls that did, what ones do you remember?**

01:43 I don't think any stood out to such an extent that I would remember any specifics about any of them at this point in time.

01:57 **Was it something the men would talk about in camp?**

02:00 What did we talk about? Sex and booze and I think if you are in a group of young soldiers you might talk about the day's events, your superiors or whatever, and as I said, I don't think in a group of young soldiers you would have

02:30 say, you wouldn't have deep discussions about the political scene in America. No, the day-to-day life of what happened during the day, what you were going to do on the weekend, you know, you were to enjoy yourself and do whatever you were to do.

03:00 I don't think there were too many who would be in to deep philosophical discussions about religion, the state of the arts or whatever, that point of view, no.

03:15 **Now that you've said that did soldiers ever talk about things political?**

03:24 You would, I suppose the day-to-day events, which you would, the headlines in the paper

03:30 you would sort of, but you wouldn't go in to the theory of the Liberal party or the Labour party or any, no not too many. Some might but not many on the general term, no you wouldn't.

03:49 **What about in terms of the cold war and growing Communism?**

03:54 Well that was drummed into us, we were the defenders of democracy and

04:00 the domino theory had, I don't know if you know that term, if we don't stop the bastards up there in Vietnam, Malaysia will fall and then it come closer and before we know it we'll have them on our own shores. So we had to stop them there, rather than let them come here. So the domino, if one falls the others all fall, one after the other and that was fed to

04:30 us and that was the rationale why we went to Vietnam. We were sat down once you had your posting, you were sat down and it was explained to you what our role, supposedly would be and why we went in there.

04:53 **I'm interested to know in that period before Vietnam when you first joined, how much of this domino theory was taught to you?**

05:00 There was Malaysia before then; we were more on the British side still because England was in it we had to be in it. Menzies was an Anglophile to his boots, wasn't he, and that was more or less, but it got a mention there too.

05:30 **Were you noticing cultural changes in Melbourne during your time?**

05:33 Yeah. For starters when I first came to Melbourne, as I said, six o'clock closing and if you went out for a meal you went to the corner café where you would have got a mixed grill, a steak, a chop, a few sausages and some over boiled vegies in a restaurant which

06:00 had bench seats, and that was your night out. As the '60s unwound it become a bit more cosmopolitan, you had your Italian restaurants and St Kilda you had nice cosy restaurants which had a bit of an atmosphere about them and you might have even,

06:30 where they had the violin and that sort of thing. It was then sort of taking off. Yes there was a change towards more cosmopolitan.

06:46 **Were you identifying with the German community at this stage?**

06:50 No, I haven't. No, not for me, I never sought them out specifically, oh I've got to go to the German club, because I want to see a

07:00 German or talk to a German, no. I sort of just mixed in and was happy to do so.

07:12 **What about in the army? Were there any other Germans?**

07:14 No. There were two that I know of. One was a Warrant Officer and another, no not too many.

07:30 And I think I'm the only one made it to officer rank.

07:35 **Were there ever any kind of light hearted jokes about being German?**

07:39 Oh yeah, heaps. But nothing ever sort of serious, they might call me a 'square head' or a 'Kraut' or you know that sort of thing but mainly in light hearted banter. Not somebody really meant it 'you bloody Kraut' or whatever,

08:00 derogatory terms they might have wanted to use, but no, not really.

08:08 **Were there any things you continued on from Germany, like the way you ate or the sport you followed or anything?**

08:16 Not really because there wasn't, soccer we didn't have much of it here. I adopted St Kilda when I was in Melbourne. The first AFL [Australian Football League] game I saw was between

08:30 St Kilda and South Melbourne at Junction Oval, followed St Kilda ever since. Food wise, no I do cook some things here distinctly German but no, I wouldn't, no I never really did. You know, there's things that you miss a bit, like the various type of cheeses,

09:00 sausages and cakes as you would know, but no, you don't kind of lose sleep over it not having it, I never have.

09:12 **And you told Naomi [interviewer] about how you got posted to transport clerical side, how did you feel about being in this section, is this what you would aim for?**

09:22 Yes I was happy with that. I was happy, because being in that you

09:30 could get postings to, you weren't just conscripted to your own corps, you could get non-corps postings in other headquarter type units and other units. I had been in army aviation unit and headquarters unit and that opened the way to get more, if you're an infantry solider you've usually only

10:00 served in the infantry, in service corps or other professional areas, that would open up a whole wide vista of posting facilities.

10:14 **And what were the initial details of what you were learning in this corps?**

10:19 Well you did your course stuff to familiarise yourself what your corps is all about, what's the corps function

10:30 specifically and how the corps fits into the overall army establishment. The corps transport role is to provide transport for other corps in water, air and on the ground so that's their main function. You got taught about that and then that then gets defined in

11:00 to specific jobs. You have drivers of heavy vehicles, or drivers of staff cars or water transport ducks, as we had then, or you have clerical paper things. And in those days you had supply functions where you, that then was taken off and went to ordnance or the supply functions and ended up in

11:30 ordnance and that was how that worked.

11:35 **How were you going with all this training?**

11:38 Oh not much of a challenge or an insurmountable challenge. When you went to a course you did what you're told and tried to absorb it and if you passed or you didn't pass.

11:58 **So take us through where you went after Puckapunyal?**

12:00 From Puckapunyal my first posting was, oh I came up here to Ashgrove and did the clerical course and from then I got posted to the 16th Army Light Aircraft Squadron in Amberley, army aviation had just sort of started not all that long before and they were still in Amberley on the perimeter of the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force]

12:30 and later on they were Oakley, where they still are today. Anyway that was Army Light Aircraft Squadron. They used to fly Bell helicopters and fixed wing aircrafts.

12:53 **What was your day-to-day job here?**

12:55 My first job in, there

13:00 I was in the Quartermaster office doing administrative type stuff in the Quartermaster's office, bookkeeping sort of accounting for stores, stores accounting.

13:16 **So take us through what you would do on a typical day when you started and what your tasks were?**

13:21 You would, your Quartermaster Sergeant would give you a bunch of

13:30 invoices say, or he'd say, "Okay, I want you to indent for this amount." And you would fill in these order forms which came in quintuplet and you'd find out, you know, the code for the equipment the correct denomination of the equipment and the number of items you needed of a particular

14:00 item and you filled them in and you'd register them and then when you got them you received them in, you ticked off, yes I wanted five of that, I got five, you fill in the ledger, that sort of thing. Purely stores accounting functions.

14:26 **How was the social life in this new place?**

14:29 Once again you

14:30 lived in the barracks, took your room, in those days a brick building on the RAAF base at Amberley and you went to the mess hall for your three daily meals. And after work you went into the shower and went to the boozer or went into Ipswich or whatever. You were then free to go unless you were on guard duty, which would come up every so often when

15:00 you had, you stood at the front gate and made sure no untoward came into the base and all that sort of thing. But that didn't happen often, so you were your own person after you knocked off from work.

15:18 **What was Brisbane and Ipswich like in those days?**

15:23 I went to Ipswich recently and I didn't bloody recognise Ipswich from what it

15:30 had been there then, that would have been in '64 and I couldn't recognise what was Ipswich now from what it was then. Ipswich was a little country town, we had a few hotels, the big store, Fennimore's was the big store and it was a Queensland country town. Brisbane was very provincial, the trams were still going

16:00 and as far as nightlife was concerned you had Lennon's, the National on top of Queen Street, and Romano's would have been the only, was it Romano's or, there would have been one or two poshy type restaurants, but other than that it was a backwater really.

16:30 **How did you feel about being in a backwater after being in London and places like this?**

16:40 Oh, I can adapt anywhere really, it doesn't take me long to adapt to a place. I would be happy sitting in the bush with, you know, nobody near me.

16:50 **How are you able to do that?**

16:54 How? I don't know. That's just me.

16:58 **And what would you enjoy to do?**

17:00 Once again we were all up there; we had the Buffalo Lodge, our weekly meetings; that was fun at the time. The Order of the Buffalos, it's a bit like the Masons, not as secretive as what the Masons

17:30 are but yeah, that was a sort of service type, it would raise funds for, you know, for welfare, that type of thing.

17:46 **Did you have to do anything in the Buffalo's Lodge, wear anything?**

17:48 No, no. Only if you were a high functionary, you would have seen the Flintstones, something like that.

18:00 It was a type of service club type thing, like Apex or Lions, that was something in between the Masons and those, you did a lot of drinking after the proceedings were over, and that sort of thing. You'd go to the

18:30 pictures or the dance or whatever, culturally you had Festival Hall and that was about all in Brisbane in those days. We didn't have entertainments and Southbank or anything like that had been invented.

18:47 **I'm just curious to know also what were the proceedings about? What would you discuss at Buffalo Lodge?**

18:54 That was sort of, a lot of it

19:00 sort of ceremonial type stuff.

19:15 **What kind of purpose was it for?**

A sort of a brotherhood of fraternal sort of gatherings. As I said very much like the Freemasons,

19:30 only not as secretive and exclusive.

19:39 **Were you missing the contact of day-to-day female company being with army?**

19:47 Oh no, like in Amberley at the RAAF base, there were heaps of female soldiers in the RAAF.

20:00 There were women everywhere, if you wanted to talk to the opposite sex you just go to the boozer or the cinema or the canteen after work. They had in the RAAF, WAAAFs [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force] as they called them, there was a multitude of women.

20:25 **With some of the work you said you had to have quintuplet forms. What were they all for?**

20:31 Well one would stay on the unit as a file copy, one would go, the other four would go to the Ordnance Depot who would then, when they would issue you with a form, would then keep one for their records. One would go to army audit office, to keep an eye on the overall picture, army picture, and you would

21:00 get one back with the goods when you got them in and then you post that and post the original watch copy. That was it.

21:15 **What kind of filing system would you have?**

21:19 You had your big ledger where all the gear that the unit had in that particular unit you would have anything from complete helicopters

21:30 or fixed wing planes to trucks and spare parts, clothing, field gear like tent, tools and everything. So there was a large range of individual items and you can only have in an army unit as much of each of a particular

22:00 item as the scale, a particular scale allows you to have. You can't just say as a CO 'Oh I'd like 10 helicopters' if you only are entitled to three, so that sort of thing. You've got to stay within your scale and all that. There was a multitude of gear from vehicles and airplanes down to a hammer or a

22:30 screwdriver and anything in between.

22:34 **Would you have to do audits quite often?**

22:36 We would get audited once a year. That would be a civilian component within the defence system that was called Army Audit and they were civilians and they would come and do you once a year and report on you.

23:00 **What was the process for requesting equipment that was extra?**

23:05 If you want you would have to write to your respective headquarters. Later on I was the Senior Logistics Officer in one military district, and you would get say, if you have a staff car for instance and for some strange reason then whilst the car

23:30 was delivered complete with radio, in those days, but because it was an army car ripped that bloody

radio out of there you see, because the average solider, it was too much luxury to have a radio in a car. So a unit would then say, for some reason it would be good to have radio in our staff car because we

24:00 travel twice a day from Oakley to bloody Brisbane, or from Canungra to Brisbane therefore it helps the driver to stay alert. You would then ask to have a radio installed in the bloody staff car, but before that was you would have to have a lengthy submission justifying why you ought to have it blah blah. Or you might have to only

24:30 have an entitlement for radio crystals. In those days in other communication systems in choppers and fixed wing, the radios they had crystals and they were very tightly controlled items for some reason or other. So if you were entitled to 10 crystals of a particular frequency and you wanted 12 you would have to make a long

25:00 submission justifying why you had to have that and send it off to whoever was authorised to say yes or no, that sort of thing.

25:11 **I'm curious to know did the RAAF have the involvement with this?**

25:18 No. We did use, there was their maintenance person, the pilots and the

25:30 many of the maintenance staff and administrative staff were army, with the army corps aviation, which came in about '67 or so, and up to then it was all corps, open to members of all corps and then they formed the Army Aviation Corps. But many of the aircraft maintenance staff, personnel,

26:00 especially the senior ones were RAAF types.

26:07 **Was this a difficulty with the paperwork?**

26:11 No they adapted, they were part of an army unit and they were part of and they worked to the army system and documentation. No there was no conflict in that respect.

26:30 The airforce personnel were part of that army unit and they were only airforce and other than that they were an army unit and part of an army unit and worked to their rules and regulations.

26:53 **What about things like pay and rank?**

26:56 That would be controlled by their own, by the airforce.

27:00 **So tell us where you went from this posting?**

27:07 From there I went to Singapore to Headquarters Far East Land Forces. That was in Singapore in Tanglin barracks as it was called. That was the superior headquarters of all the British forces in that

27:30 part of the world at the time.

27:33 **What where your impressions of Singapore?**

27:35 Oh that was good. That was a fun place in those days. Grubby nation. Lee Kwan Yu hadn't been installed; he came in about towards the end of my presence there, but before that it was just a nation, grubby, smelly but nice yeah.

28:00 **What would you do there for your social life?**

28:02 Oh you'd be out every night virtually, we used to play cricket and do things like that and go out to cultural sort of events and all that and terrorise the bars in Bugis Street if you felt so inclined and if you had any money. Young soldiers don't often have money.

28:30 If it was pay day today it might be gone two days later, but over there it was good. Us Australians used to get paid once a fortnight and our English people in the British Army used to get paid once a week, not half as much as us. So if we didn't have any money they had and if they had spent

29:00 their's already we'd get ours, so it worked in well together like that. There was Kiwis, English and Australians all together in the same environment and we lived together in the same accommodation so, yeah, that was interesting and good.

29:24 **How did you get along?**

29:25 Famously. Usually if there was any, any sort of tiffs, every so often the Poms used to be on that side and the Kiwis and Australians on that side, but generally speaking we all got on well together, very well.

29:50 **What was Bugis Street?**

29:53 Oh that used to be after all the bars around Singapore closed, Bugis Street.

30:00 It was a street somewhere in, not far from the centre of Singapore, which was full of bars and they'd close it off and tables and chairs would come out in the middle of the street, like a mall type thing, and everybody who felt like drinking late in to the night after the bars had closed would congregate in Bugis Street and there would be heaps of prostitutes and transvestites and all sorts of horrible things

30:30 floating around.

30:33 **What was that like?**

30:34 An eye opener. You sort of sit there and think she's not bad at all blah blah very good looking, yes an then when you come down to tin tacks you find out it was a man. A bit disconcerting, to say the least.

31:00 **Were there any stories where this happened to you?**

31:03 Yes it has happened, yes.

31:09 **How did you react?**

31:10 'Goodbye, not interested'. Beautiful looking, you know, what you thought was a woman was a man.

31:29 **What were the brothels like in Singapore?**

31:31 They'd be usually many would be attached to the particular bars, or you pick them up in the bars normally and then they'd take you wherever they lived or there was some establishment, the Tokyo bar or whatever, were known hangouts.

32:00 **What was the process like? Would there be a Madame?**

32:08 Some there would be but many you would, they would come and sit with you in the bar, you'd buy them a drink and someone would then, "You want to go to bed with me?" And if you were interested you would say, "Yes." And if you weren't you'd say,

32:30 "No, sorry not tonight." And off they'd go. But if you went they took you to wherever they went and that was it.

32:40 **How much did it cost?**

32:42 Depended what you wanted, you know. All night, a short time whatever. In those days I reckon an all nighter would have cost you about $35.

33:00 **Were the men told about watching out for…?**

33:05 Oh god yes. That was, in recruit training you got that horrible training picture of, whilst you were sitting through it you would say, "I will never look at another woman ever again." But half an hour later after you sort of been and out and the doctor, medical officer, had given you a spiel about gonorrhoea

33:30 and syphilis and all the other horrible diseases that could befall you, half an hour later and two more beers in the boozer and all that has been forgotten and you went anyway. I reckon it's the same today with AIDS [Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome], you can tell young people about AIDS and scare them as much as you like, you'll never, young people being what they are, we will decide.

34:00 **What did the authorities make of men going to prostitutes?**

34:05 Between the Australian and English armies they had a totally different approach. The Australian Army encouraged us if you went and you were unlucky enough to catch the jack or whatever, come immediately and get treated, there will be no recriminations or nothing, you get your shots

34:30 and that'll be it. The British they used to come down hard, disciplinary, on them. And the treatment they used to metre out in those days, we used the umbrella treatment, was most unpleasant whilst in the other army you got your penicillin shot, three or whatever you got until it was cleared up and that was the end of it. There the old

35:00 umbrella treatment, like an umbrella, goes in then they open it up and do whatever. Anyway that was. So many British soldiers either didn't go for treatment at all or bloody went to local quacks, and some of them were questionable in the least, which our

35:30 army had a much more enlightened approach in that respect. They knew you can't stop the bastards going so let's go with the least possible evil and make them come for treatment as soon as possible.

35:50 **So what is the umbrella implement?**

35:54 I don't know what it is.

36:00 I only go by hearsay here, what other British colleagues used to tell us. But it must have, like you open, when an umbrella is folded up its sort of a thin implement and then when you open it up, when it's up there and pull it back out, it's obviously not a pleasant experience.

36:30 That was the different approach between the British Army at the time and others. On top of that they used to give them, charge them with a military offence and CB, confined to barracks, or whatever they'd metre out according to the circumstances of whoever

37:00 heard the charge. We didn't, you just fronted up for your needles and got it over and done with and that was it.

37:10 **How would the girls operate in a bar?**

37:14 Come up to your table and 'hello' and sit down. You'd buy them a drink. Have a chat. That would be it.

37:26 **What kind of things would they say?**

37:27 Oh,

37:30 "You buy me Saigon tea," or you know, basics. You wouldn't be in to discussing Goethe or Shakespeare or the latest play on.

37:43 **But were there common sayings that they'd say?**

37:46 No well it depends on the girl I suppose. No. The basic technique would be they'd come up, sit down,

38:00 then ask you to buy them a drink because they would get a commission, the more they make you drink, the more there'd be on the bars, the more they'd make you drink, I don't know if they got a commission or whatever, but there would be a financial inducement.

38:23 **Would any of the men go out with any of the women?**

38:27 For the night. But not for, you wouldn't form a lasting

38:30 relationship with them, no. If you had any sense anyway.

38:38 **Did any have no sense?**

38:41 No, not to my knowledge. A relationship like that wouldn't last. The saying was if you were over there, the longer you were there, the whiter they looked. For some reason.

39:00 Once you got them back here their limited grasp of the language, they basically wouldn't fit in. Their past lifestyle and all, stick out like a sore thumb here, they would be most unhappy, they'd miss their family and their natural surroundings and they'd be very unhappy and you'd feel a bit like an outcast. Whilst you were over

39:30 there and all that, that was all, but if you had them over here, no. I know of a few who married locals, but they don't last long. The girls aren't happy because they are like a fish out of the sea and the men then feel embarrassed about them after a while and all that.

39:55 **Were the locals at all resentful of the army?**

40:00 Yes they were. In the end they were. They'd rip us off unmercifully, but to your face they wouldn't show that.

Tape 5

00:39 **Tell me about Tanglin Base in Singapore?**

00:41 That was a big army barracks which was run by the British Army and there was Australian and New Zealand troops as well. That was where the headquarters,

01:00 it was called Far Eastern Land Forces in that complex, and we were just part of that complex. We were from, well all the Australian troops in the Malay Peninsula were, that was their headquarters.

01:24 **Whereabouts were you working from on the base?**

01:29 I was in the

01:30 Australian complex and I was one of the operational clerks and that was it, training and operations and matters that were dealt by them.

01:46 **Can you take me through what a typical day's work would have been like there?**

01:50 There was only, during that time they had riots in Singapore. Students were rioting, that was the only real

02:00 military stuff we got in to there. We had a lot of the wives of soldiers were working in clerical positions in the headquarters and they lived in town. If you were on staff you were escorted home through the disturbances, that was about the only military bit

02:30 we got involved in there. Otherwise it was just normal administrative military type operational paperwork stuff.

02:44 **Was the fact overseas, did that affect the type of paperwork or administration?**

02:49 Yeah it does in a way, your front line units have to put in location reports and situation reports and there are certain things that

03:00 get done every day and map marking operations, map marking on maps, and that sort of stuff, you know where your units were and what was going on and their frequency allocation and that sort of stuff.

03:21 **Tell me about the riots that were going on.**

03:23 At the time students, I couldn't really

03:30 recall what it was all about, but Singapore and Malaya had just formed Malaysia and that didn't last all that long. Singapore then pulled out of that union and when it just became Singapore and it must have had something to do with all that upheaval, at the time the political stresses of the time that was going on

04:00 there then. But students were rioting at university campus and through town, and that was the involvement we had directly, that we had to make sure that our civilian employees got to work safe and home safe and we'd run them home in military vehicles with a shot gun and all that. That was about all our involvement in that.

04:30 **What did you observe of the riots?**

04:34 People out of control in mass congregation, screaming shouting rioting, the normal thing you see in situations like that.

04:54 **How would they respond when the military vehicles went past?**

04:56 They didn't really

05:00 not to us. We kept as far away from them as we could and they didn't really sort of pursue us from what we could see anyway.

05:14 **In terms of the Australian section of the base in Singapore how did everyone get along together?**

05:19 Famously. As I said, the co-operation between English, New Zealand and us was really good,

05:30 on all levels. It was a very well set up complex with swimming pools, recreation facilities, cricket you know that sort of thing. Families, married quarters and it was well set-up and well liked.

05:52 **Was there a lot of sport?**

05:54 In the army you have sports afternoon, or in

06:00 those days I don't know whether it, every Wednesday was dedicated to sport and if you were in a team sport you played or you could go in an individual thing and play squash or golf or whatever you did. It was up to you as long as you played a sport.

06:23 **Were there any major competitions between the international?**

06:27 Yeah we used to have a cricket, you know, one day

06:30 cricket and swimming carnivals and general athletic carnivals and that sort of thing, and inter-unit competitions, football. I used to play rugby and cricket.

06:48 **And who would win the cricket matches?**

06:50 Depends on the day more or less. No predominant sort

07:00 of sides. Fairly evenly matched really because you're talking about physically fit people, fairly sport minded.

07:15 **In terms of the Australian army in Singapore were there any personality clashes?**

07:25 Sort of, in my office where I worked,

07:30 there was one sort of incident, or conflict if you want to call it, one of the chief clerk of the personnel branch he was a staff sergeant at the time and he was a fairly ambitious young lad and he wanted to be chief clerk. And the person who was chief clerk was a lovely man,

08:00 fairly inoffensive, a gentleman. This fellow used to undermine him all the time and plant mistakes around the place, un-actioned files or correspondence which he'd hidden for a few days, "Have a look at this, that Jim is bloody hopeless," that sort of thing. In the end Jim got shifted sideways in

08:30 to the pay office into a position there and this fellow became chief clerk, which was a bit rich we all thought. This fellow, a friend of mine he was the corporal, he let him know what he thought of him. They didn't get on well together, and just because I was friends with this Graham, he thought

09:00 because he had the conflict with him I shouldn't be friends with him. So I thought 'up your arse'. You're not telling me who I can congregate with, talk to and do things with blah blah blah. Anyway eventually he had me, I got posted away from Singapore to Malaya, Malacca. Other than that people got on well together really.

09:30 No real conflicts.

09:34 **Was it unusual to be friends with a corporal?**

09:37 No. I was a private at the time and we had been together in Amberley before that. He got posted to Singapore and I followed about six months later. Anyway I got sent to 'Coventry' so to speak, which didn't really worry me because I didn't mind

10:00 being out in the bush, so to speak.

10:05 **Was there a reputation about the base at Malacca?**

10:08 Well it was always very busy. I was there from, when was I there, mid '65 to the end, towards the end, of '66 middle of '66 and we were always in the bush on exercises or operations.

10:30 Day and night virtually seven days a week. You weren't home much.

10:40 **What sort of operations and exercises?**

10:42 There were, it was called the confrontation at the time. And then there was headquarters for 28 Commonwealth Infantry Brigade in the operation against the terrorists.

11:00 That was made up of a British battalion, Australian battalion, a Kiwi battalion and all the support units that go with it, and the headquarters. If you weren't out, and see battalions used to rotate through Borneo on the six monthly basis, we were in Borneo.

11:30 They used to rotate through Borneo on a six months rotation or roster. If you, we went all over Malaya from top to bottom and criss and cross you were, there were others there, two landings, as it was called, the Indonesian's had landed and we were chasing them all over the place.

12:00 But that was only on two occasions during that year that I was there.

12:08 **And what did you do on those two occasions, what was your role?**

12:11 You'd be in the operational side of it, the headquarters. You'd be out where the landings had occurred and they directed the units, the battalions,

12:30 and units used to flush them out and capture them. There were a few boat loads on one occasion and it took about a week or so to round them all up. Whatever happened to them then, I wouldn't know. It took about a week. It was in sort of central Malaysia a place called Kulim

13:00 but we set up shop and directed the whole thing from there. The second time there was a landing in our temp area and it was a stand to and all that we had to do.

13:20 **When there was a stand to what was your role, your position?**

13:24 Oh you'd show the soldiers how to guard the vital,

13:30 the perimeter of the whole camp and things like water treatment plant, sewage plant, electricity generating station and all the vital service installations, the hospital and all the other vital service installations around the camp. Make sure the enemy doesn't do anything untoward.

14:00 **Did you have a particular, if the camp would come under attack?**

14:04 Only once, as I said there was a landing on one occasion where we thought 'Well they're here'.

14:18 **What would your role be if they had attacked the camp?**

14:20 If somebody shoots at you, you shoot back.

14:27 **What was the main form of communication between the headquarters and the troops?**

14:30 Landline. Landline, radio. The headquarters goes through and selects the suitable headquarter position. We usually, some rubber plantation somewhere and then the main communication is through landline radio set. Or

15:00 one little solider on his two feet taking messages from one to the, but mainly on radio.

15:14 **You mentioned that you'd find a suitable place for the headquarters, like in a plantation, what's a suitable sort of place?**

15:21 Oh you've got to have enough open space to put up your, in those situations you operate out of

15:30 16 by 16 tents where you'd set up your briefing rooms and your office set-ups, your intelligence office, your map room and all of these things, plus kitchen areas, sleeping, ablution facilities and all that. You've got to have a bit of open space where

16:00 you can fit a complex like that in.

16:09 **When you're setting up such a large space how do you keep it well hidden?**

16:14 Camouflage net and, as I said, we usually, Malaya is sort of overrun, or used to be then with rubber plantations and if it wasn't rubber plantation it would be coconut plantations or outright jungle.

16:30 So a lot of coverage and you'd go on a reconnaissance trip. I used often go, the person I worked directly to was the operations officer, he'd leap in to a vehicle and off we'd go and he would say we'll set up shop here and picks the site and makes sure everything you need in a site like

17:00 that is there, then we'd bring in the rest of the headquarters.

17:09 **What's it like operating in a situation like it's jungle, or plantation?**

17:14 Hot and sticky and mozzie ridden. As I said, in the rubber plantations the rubber tappers would still be operating. We would,

17:30 there'd be two things, create as little damage as you possibly could, you wouldn't cut down trees or vegetation, and you don't interfere with the local workers there, rubber tapping and whatever else their daily routines, and we do ours and that was sort of it.

17:56 **Whereabouts would you sleep?**

17:58 Oh you'd have your little hootchie,

18:00 as we called it, a one man tent, two man tent and that was, you were totally under canvas in those operational settings.

18:17 **Can you take me through the typical job you would be doing on a normal day?**

18:30 You would, as I said, you do first of all your roster in a 24 hour day, manned 24 hours a day, and it depends what phase of, often, well we were forever exercising. By exercising you mean to show that you know that you have your,

19:00 we could set up our headquarters and if you were, the commanding officer's, within 10 minutes you'd be sitting there with a phone in your hand on a stool, perhaps with a map on your knee directing that battle. And that would take us 10 minutes to get that going and then you'd build up around it. From the brigadier down to the lowest private you officer

19:30 could say, "Get me a signal pad," and you'd say, "Okay sir," and off you'd go to the trailer you were pulling behind you, Land Rover, put your hand in it, blindfolded, in the middle and say, "Here you are."

That sort of thing, you knew where everything was and it was all marked and all that and everyone was honed to a peak of efficiency from

20:00 the brigadier down to the lowest clerk and each knew what to do when to do it. Day or night, and if you do that, it's a bit like getting dressed in the morning, or having a shave after awhile you just go in to your wardrobes and pull undies out here and your stockings out there and your shorts over there, you know it off-by-heart and you do it in the dark.

20:30 And that's, the more you practice the more efficient you get and that's what used to happen there in the training setting, we'd be forever on rifle ranges, you know, practising your weapon skills that sort of thing. If there wasn't any operating, headquarters would

21:00 administer the whole, the booking of the rifle, training areas and so on so that you haven't go two units at the same facilities fronting up at the same time, "Oh what do you want here?" "Rifle practice." "Oh but we got it booked!" So all that sort of thing was co-ordinated at the headquarters

21:30 setting and the sub-units sort of used to book the facilities, and you'd say, "No you can't have it," or "You can have it," and administer all that side of it. Interesting job it was.

21:53 **Living in the jungle, what sort of precautions were you taking for various different medical problems?**

22:00 The only thing we used to do was we used to take a Palladrin tablet everyday, in those days you took one every day, malaria prophylactic, against malaria and then they used to have a fogging machine going around camp twice a day to get rid of whatever, all the creepy

22:30 crawling nasties were around to kill off as many as they could, by fogging.

22:37 **What was in the fog?**

22:39 I wouldn't know. Like in Vietnam, it was Agent Orange, that sort of stuff. I didn't know what it was in Malaysia, you know, it controlled to a certain degree the little flying nasties that you get in these countries.

23:00 And then you took your Palladrin once a day and by the time we got to Vietnam you only used to take one a week. Different stuff, same effect but you didn't have to take it daily, you only had to take it once a week.

23:21 **How about various jungle related diseases, did they tell you anything about them?**

23:26 No we didn't.

23:30 Well hygiene is very important in those settings you know, you'd boil your water or you'd put tablets in to it to rid it of any dysentery or other nasty tropical things. You keep yourself clean. Hygiene is, has to be of a very high standard and otherwise you can get, in those situations only a little

24:00 scratch of the skin turns and festers and goes horribly nasty.

24:10 **How long would you spend out ?**

24:15 We used to have exercises where you out for just one or two nights and you moved shop about 5 or 6 six nights just to get the hang of it and everybody

24:30 is to know exactly what, you had everything set up to be fully functional at the drop of a hat. And often we'd be away on exercises, like you'd be doing exercise in Singapore, you'd just sit in Singapore and you'd fly, there used to be Changi, Tanglin and, what was the

25:00 other air field, there were three air fields, and Bukit Timah, and you'd just load all your gear on to one plane, whatever they were Hercules, depending on who did, the British or us, the Australians, the RAAF, and you'd just load all your gear on to the plane, unload it at, it wouldn't take 10 minutes to

25:30 fly from Changi to Tanglin, unload set-up shop get operational. Okay we're packing up and going back from there to, 10 minutes flight down the road and just exercising and that'd, you could go for a whole week at a time. And the officers would get to control the battle and all the standing operating procedures

26:00 we'd cracked so that everybody had the facts within their minds at the drop of the hat, in the middle of the pitch black night. We were up and down the Malay peninsula from top to bottom, criss-crossed the whole year. And, as I said, only on two occasions did I come across landings

26:30 where you could have thought keep your head down, you might cop one.

26:38 **What sort of interaction did you have with the locals who were living on Malaya at the time?**

26:47 They didn't, we didn't interfere with them much at the time. They didn't interfere much with us. At the local level when you were in camp you went into town and mixed with them. Yeah.

27:00 **You mentioned back in the beginning, children and troops always get along.**

27:06 Oh yeah you'd drive through the countryside and the children would be waving by the sides of the road, making out they were pleased to see you, which more than likely they were.

27:21 **Would you ever play with any or talk to them in the towns?**

27:23 If you were in town. But we didn't go out in uniform, you

27:30 were always in civilian clothes.

27:32 **Why is that?**

27:33 I don't know why, the orders were if you go to town on social occasions, if you were on duty you were in uniform, but social occasions if you weren't on duty you went into town in civilian clothes. But they knew you were a solider anyway by your bearing, your haircut, your demeanour.

28:00 And the fact that you were a Westerner.

28:05 **In Malaya what was the interaction like between the international troops?**

28:11 Just as well, good, in that headquarters, in that 28th Brigade, as I said, there was a British battalion when I was there, a first battalion officer, Scotch Guards, first there were 3 RAR, Royal Australian Regiment,

28:30 and a few months after they went home, 4 RAR came and then there was one RNZAR [Royal New Zealand Armoured Regiment] one New Zealand infantry battalion, we all got on well together. If there were ever, sometimes a fight would break out in a bar between some drunken troops, it'd be the Kiwis took side with us or vice-versa against the Poms, that would be the normal

29:00 setting. Generally speaking we all got on very well together and it didn't often happen that there were fights.

29:13 **Was there any good natured ?**

29:16 Jokes, all the time.

29:17 **What sort of jokes?**

29:19 Oh the normal sort of palaver. You know Pommy type jokes.

29:30 We'd be the Colonials, that sort of thing. Only, I remember, on one occasion there was one of the big Malay in one of the bars. You came into camp from the main road which went in front of the camp and there were a few bars along that little stretch, and one night there'd been a bit of a blue between

30:00 one drunken solider. And eventually one English soldier died as a result and that was a bit of an unpleasant sort of thing. There were investigations and all that. That was an accident rather than a deliberate sort of thing. It all got a bit out of hand.

30:30 That was about all.

30:32 **How about between the Australian and the New Zealanders?**

30:36 They were always, they always got on very well together wherever we were together, in Vietnam, in Malaysia, in Singapore, they always got on very well.

30:50 **Do you remember any of the banter that would go on between Australians and New Zealanders.**

30:55 Oh you know, 'sheep shaggers'

31:00 and so the normal Kiwi jokes that were around. And they'd have a piece of us and it was all in good humour, well taken on both sides.

31:18 **What did they call the Australian?**

31:19 Just 'Aussies' really. I can't think of any derogatory term, I can't recall any derogatory

31:30 term that they had for us. If they had any I wasn't aware of them or I've forgotten.

31:43 **And with the situation during the confrontation what were you thinking that it might escalate into?**

31:53 Well, as I said, we got involved in that because our political

32:00 masters, Malaysia had retained as part of the Commonwealth and part of the Commonwealth we were there to help protect them. But it didn't take all that long did it? That situation took about a year or two, didn't it? About '67 it was and it was all over.

32:30 Indonesia put their head in I think, after Sukarno was ousted by Suharto, it was then back to normal.

32:42 **Do you remember much fear at all that maybe it would lead to something bigger with Indonesia?**

32:48 No. We didn't fear. We knew we were good and we didn't fear anybody I think from a soldierly point of view.

33:00 **Overall how did you enjoy your time in Malaya?**

33:08 Good. We were always flat out, busy, busy, busy, but it was interesting. You were proud to be part of that unit, because everyone was honed to a peak of efficiency. Physically fit and operationally, as I said,

33:30 spot on, from the highest rank down to the lowest, it was a team and everybody knew their role and could play it perfectly.

33:48 **What year did you leave Malaya?**

33:49 '66. Oh 'round about August or September '66.

34:00 I went back to, where did I go? Amberley.

34:06 **Was it a shock going from somewhere like Malaya to?**

34:12 In the army you did as you were told, most of us anyway. You didn't complain about your postings, or you might have whinged a bit, but generally you say okay. Every two years you could expect to be re-posted and you went where you were sent, especially

34:30 as a single person. Married people might have had children and school, why move and that sort of thing, but a single solider we did, you went where you were sent. When I came back from Viet, before I went to Vietnam I was in Canungra where we were always flat out. we were putting 10,000 troops per year

35:00 through Canungra. They all went to Canungra for their battle training before they went to Vietnam, and 10,000 a year used to go through there which is a hell of a lot. I went from there to Vietnam and when I came back from Vietnam I had said I would like to get to the Brisbane Metropolitan, it's an area. I didn't want to pin them too much, and back up in Canungra I thought, shit I might as well've stayed another year in Vietnam.

35:34 **Were there any major difference s that you observed in working in Malaya and working in Amberley in terms of work?**

35:42 Well different sort of a job. In Amberley I was then, the main role there was to train army pilots. That was, I was the administrative side of that

36:00 in that unit.

36:04 **Can you describe that job for me?**

36:07 Just another office army type, clerical office type, administrative type job.

36:16 **For pilots?**

36:17 Well. There was, you have in a unit like that you would have the instructional wing where the pilot instructors teach

36:30 aspiring pilots how to fly and all the rest of the aviation stuff that goes with it, and they have to have administrative back-up and I would be on the administrative back-up side of things.

36:48 **What kind of administrative jobs were you doing?**

36:50 Pay, organise pay and daily attendance rolls and

37:00 general correspondence and all that sort of stuff. Or make timing programs, that stuff, the administrative side of the, it's a bit like a teacher and a teacher's aide. You have the teacher doing the hands on teaching and the teacher's aide sort of does the back-up type stuff. No, yeah I did live on the base.

37:30 **Working in the army and living on the base was there much of a life outside of that?**

37:46 That depends, up to you. Some people do have a life outside of the army and others don't. I normally did wherever I was.

37:57 **What sort of things would you do outside of the army?**

38:00 Leap in the car and drive to Brisbane and go to the pictures or whatever, a show or some sporting event or party. Normal everyday, if you weren't in uniform you're just like any, like you go, might go home this afternoon and say, 'okay I'll change into different clothes

38:30 and I don't feel like cooking. I'll go in and have a meal somewhere, and off you go. Same thing. Unless you're in the war situation the army is very much like any other city job, only that you, well in your environment you do what you do and you know you might have an office girl, a receptionist in your office

39:00 and it's the same in that situation.

39:05 **Is it hard to get to know the people outside of the army?**

39:08 You can get very insular. But once again that's by choice. The army is a bit like a big family, it's not big enough it's fairly big, it's 32,000 as it was, but you tend after a while, if you've been

39:30 in it long enough, to virtually know just about everybody and if you don't know them personally we get to talk and you say, "Oh the other week I was talking to so and so." "Oh I know him. I've done a course with him." Or "I was posted with him once," you get to know, it's like a big family. You're never alone if you go anywhere, say you might go from here to Sydney and you stand in the officers' mess at Randwick, "Oh

40:00 haven't seen you for years, let's have a beer and have a chat," and that sort of thing.

Tape 6

00:37 **Just tell us about when you would go to Borneo.**

00:41 As I said, he would sort liaison visits, they used to like to call a little 'swan', like that, in the army. On liaison visits to show the flag that headquarters cared and that the battalions

01:00 were well supported and everything was going right. So on two occasions he ended up with 4 RAR, where they were in camp Bau in the province of Sabah, sort of south west part of Borneo, more or less. Then we went to Kota Kinabalu, which is the

01:30 capital of Sabah and on another occasion we went to Jessel which is up in the north west, just liaising, spreading good will making sure that things were going all right and, do you want anything we'll make sure you get it blah blah blah.

02:00 There wasn't much action, not much shooting or that sort of thing going on. You'd do patrolling and make sure that the Indonesians didn't get up to any mischief in their area of responsibility, because they kept them very well under control. That was the extent of that.

02:28 **And when you use the term 'swanning', what does that mean?**

02:30 Oh 'swan' is an army term when you go on something that doesn't really have to be done. You say every winter high ranking officers from all over Victoria or Melbourne would come up to Queensland to get a bit of sunshine for no apparent reason, other than catch a bit of sunshine,

03:00 or catch up with their mates or something and that would be called a swan.

03:07 **And you were doing this in Borneo?**

03:09 We used to do a few, yes. Officially they'd be called liaison visits.

03:22 **What was the purpose of the swanning?**

03:24 To make, officially to make sure the battalion was functioning

03:30 properly they had everything they needed, a bit of moral support showing that headquarters cares about them, and hasn't forgotten them, if you need anything give us a ring we'll sort you out. That sort of thing.

03:47 **What was the set up like in Borneo?**

03:50 Oh, that was a field type setting, there were armed guards arming

04:00 the perimeter, a normal army camp, a unit set up in the jungle, guarding their area of responsibility.

04:15 **Was it a good life for them?**

04:19 Well it'd be sitting out in the bush, better if you're a little digger with your weapon, looking into the jungle

04:30 for your two hour stint. So quite often nothing happening or you think will somebody pop a shot over at me and you just basically have your eyes open and yours ears opened listening for enemy activity. And nine times out of 10 there won't be any, and then, but you have to be alert just in case the tenth time,

05:00 there is one.

05:03 **Did anyone talk about any action which was happening there?**

05:07 There during our involvement they didn't have much enemy contact at all. A few patrols and the enemy had a few probing at the perimeter to see if they could get into do any mischief.

05:30 But no, they didn't get far in those events.

05:36 **Tell us about a posting to Thailand.**

05:40 I never had postings to Thailand, I had a few exercises there. One was called Lok Tran that was a massive logistic exercise with Americans, the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation] troops involvement in

06:00 Korat which is in the centre of Thailand. We were there for about six weeks or so from memory. A big logistic exercise mainly situations comes through on paper. You get a radio message and signal and you have to, paper battle, you run a miliary battle on paper

06:30 to get your procedures ironed out and straightened out, and the cooperation between the different armies, like between the Yanks and us, and the Kiwis and the Poms and the Thais, that sort of thing, to set cooperation and dovetailing in between, going properly.

07:00 **What kinds of scenarios were thought up for the operations?**

07:04 You might have a division being ordered to enter a particular area and take, defend it or move in to take over some military objective and the support troops. How will

07:30 you get food to them, how do you get ammunition to them, how do you get everything else they need on a daily basis how do you, a division needs about 22 tonnes of stuff per day, food, ammunition, sand bags, barbed wire, petrol and everything, oils, lubricants that sort of thing. How do we get that to them in the front line?

08:00 And the planning processes involved in that and see how you do it. You get sent standard operating procedure on paper so when the real things comes, little unit commander can grab in his filing cabinet, take out the standing operating procedures and knows what he has to do, how, when he has to send reports in locations reports, situation reports

08:30 and all that sort of thing.

How do you do that?

08:39 This is, you might get a signal inside, we need a palette of tank ammunition, 105 ammunition blah blah and that then would go to the Staff Officer Logistics of the headquarters

09:00 and he would phone the up supply depot or whatever, to get them moving to get that out there, the transport arrangements. Or he'd send a signal and to run the action as received and another log as information, as if it was the real thing, but only the paperwork and the phone calls and that gets done.

09:30 Rather than grabbing that palette load of ammo it gets done on paper and over the phone and whatever other communication systems are in place and these exercises are designed to make sure everybody knows how to do it, when to do it, if the real thing ever

10:00 comes to pass.

10:02 **How did this operation work out?**

10:05 We all were highly recommended. At the end the American general who was in charge of it gave us all a little certificate. You've done well blah blah blah.

10:25 **Had you received promotions in this time?**

10:28 At that time I was a corporal.

10:30 The dizzy rank of corporal.

10:36 **Did you get some R&R [Rest and Recreation] in Thailand during this period?**

10:40 No, we didn't. I did go to Bangkok on a little swan, from Korat to Bangkok. I had a few days in Bangkok and enjoyed it and all that. Went to the Wat Sai and all that, floating market,

11:00 lovely place Bangkok is. A lot of the cultural sides and a few of the bars at night, yeah, it was good.

11:13 **What was Bangkok like?**

11:14 I haven't been there; I've only passed through there, through the airport on a few occasions since. Bangkok was a nice place. A bit oriental and Asian but basically speaking it was a

11:30 pleasant place, the people were all nice.

11:33 **What were the bars like there?**

11:37 Not bad. Very much like Singapore. I think a bar in Singapore would be very much like a bar in Bangkok, they serve and treat you well.

11:53 **Similar night scene?**

11:54 Yeah. Very much.

12:00 **So tell us about further promotions you had?**

12:08 From Malaya I went back to Amberley, to the aviation regiment, that would have been in '67, round about August '67 and then by about December I

12:30 got promoted to sergeant and I ended up Wacol where I started up a non-existing transport platoon from scratch, there was nothing there, it was being formed, newly formed there. I and another sergeant, and we started that up and got all the vehicles in and all the equipment and the

13:00 soldiers in and everything from scratch.

13:04 **How did you do this? What do you do?**

13:06 You order all your vehicles for starters, 33 trucks, and a few Land Rovers, all the maintenance equipment that goes with it, and all the furniture and everything from the trucks to the screwdrivers and the petrol and everything you got sent in through the supply system. And as

13:30 they were coming in you take them on in charge, and your ledger system, and your logistics system, and make sure you set up a transport compound where you can park them all and accommodation for your soldiers and all that. So we did that from scratch. That took about six months or so and then we,

14:00 the platoon, 24 Transport Platoon, it was called, we were put up to Canungra where we then carried troops all over the countryside, as I said, all the battle efficiency training that went through Canungra in those years, as I said,10,000 troops did three week battle efficiency course

14:30 before they were let loose in Vietnam and that part of the transport platoon was to carry them over the countryside, so a night ambush and that sort of training to prepare them, it was Vietnam see, and that was that.

14:58 **How did you know what amount of vehicles?**

15:00 There is a scale of issue. You know that a transport platoon consists of one officer, two sergeants, 30 drivers, you are entitled to 20 trucks, so many Land Rovers, so many trailers, there is a laid down scale of issue for every unit, for

15:30 both your equipment and your personnel and you go according to what you are entitled to per that equipment scale.

15:46 **So what paperwork did you have to put in?**

15:48 Oh you then put in, we were talking about indenting, before, the five copy thing you raise. Say you want 20 trucks or how many it is,

16:00 you write truck, five tonner, mark 4, 20. Eventually they ring you up and they say you can come and pick up your trucks and by then we had a few soldiers, Central Army Records Office makes sure that the soldiers get posted to that unit, in this case 24 Platoon, and sent your soldiers

16:30 to Banyo, where the vehicle depot was, they went and picked those 20 trucks up and bring them to Wacol and park them in the transport compound. Yes, that sort of thing. From there, as I said, we went to Canungra where we were with the transport unit and we helped them out with the volume of transport that was needed to be provided.

17:00 **How smooth was the set up?**

17:04 It worked very well as a, it took about six months to have it sort of functioning and then we went to Canungra. There were other on the ground transport tasks there.

17:18 **What kind of things were they learning for Vietnam?**

17:24 The used to go, once again,

17:30 they brush up on their battle training, practices, night shooting, and they used to be trained in ambush techniques, setting up night camps, patrolling and booby trap recognition, mine warfare. And they had

18:00 a tunnel, like a Vietnamese set-up there, booby trap and tunnel and all that and the soldiers would be taken through there to show them what they would have to expect once they get over to Vietnam. It was a refresher course in the basic infantry skills and patrolling, ambushing and that

18:30 type of basic infantry type skills and physical fitness was the, there was a hell of a lot of action placed on the physical fitness aspect of things. You had to be in top physical condition. Night marches and you know, full packs, your own pack and your rifle and if you were unlucky another rifle is set and a machine gun

19:00 hanging off your shoulder on night marches and all that.

19:08 **Did you have to go through this training yourself?**

19:11 Oh yes. Everybody who went to Vietnam went through that, otherwise if you didn't pass through there you didn't go to Vietnam.

19:18 **Even if you were in another?**

19:22 No it didn't matter; everybody who went to Vietnam went to battle efficiency training.

19:27 **Were there any conscripts at this stage?**

19:30 Oh yeah, heaps of them. Most of them, I would say about 95% of all the conscripts, as you call them, we used to call them Nashos, National Service, no, they were efficient, happy to be there and wanted to go and did go and did a hell of a good job.

19:58 **What about the 5%?**

20:00 They didn't want to go because of 'miss mum' or 'my girlfriend' or they might have had political reservations, didn't believe in the war and conscientious objectors, then people weren't fit enough. But as I say, I reckon 95% of all the ones would have wanted to go. After Canungra, when I

20:30 got commissioned, 18th Transport Company, and we used to put all the, it was mainly National Servicemen they came through other units before they went to Vietnam, and that's why, and that would not have been unique, that would have been army wide. As I said, I reckon about 95% of all the National Servicemen would have,

21:00 once they knew they had lost the ballot, they were unlucky and got picked out of the hat, and once they knew they had to go they wanted to go to Vietnam. Because in those days there was a bit of an incentive there if you had active war service you were eligible to a War Service home loan, which was a loan that you could get at a relatively viable interest rate, and

21:30 that was a big inducement for most people.

21:33 **How did you and others, who were regular army, feel about these National Service coming through?**

21:39 I had respect for them because I reckon they did as good a job as what regulars did. I suppose the troops had a bit of a shot at them every so often 'nasho'. Basically speaking they were well respected

22:00 and they did as good a job as all the other regular soldiers and that is a fact.

22:08 **How did the 5% manifest their displeasure?**

22:14 They'd come and say I don't want to be in this unit. I don't want to go over there. They just told you, "I don't want to be in the

22:30 army and I hate it," and, "I don't want to go," and, "Stick it up your Khyber [Khyber Pass – arse]," words to that effect. But often that didn't help them, they had to go anyway. There weren't many.

22:45 **How would they be treated if they showed this displeasure?**

22:47 You just, "go and have a sleep", "settle down, have a cup of tea", "settle down and it will grow on you".

23:00 **At first did you want to go to Vietnam?**

23:07 Sure, I go wherever you want me to. You tell me. Oh me? Yes I did want to go.

23:22 **Did you get to go when you wanted?**

23:23 No. There was a bit of an incident when I was in Wacol. In the beginning, Vietnam,

23:30 whole units used to be replaced, you might have been in the transport platoon and you went with your platoon and when your year was up your whole platoon came back en masse and it was replaced with another full platoon en masse. Later during the proceedings, I think from about '68

24:00 onwards it was individual replacement. A solider went there for a year and then your year went up and I came in and took your place on an individual basis. But at the start of this it was on a unit basis and there was, I was in 24 Platoon and the 85 Transport Platoon was scheduled to go and the

24:30 fires in Tasmania, remember the big fire in Tasmania in Hobart, 'round about '67, weren't you born then? Good God. They had massive fires in Tasmania, a hell of a lot of Hobart, a bit like Canberra last December, massive fires this fellow, sergeant in 85 Platoon,

25:00 Trevor Gorman his name is, his family came from Hobart and he would have gone and seen that they were all right and so I said, "Well, you don't really want to go, I wouldn't mind going, we'll swap over," and so off I went to headquarters in Victoria Barracks, blah blah and I wouldn't mind

25:30 going if you sent me in his place. And the long and the short of it the colonel I was talking to said, "Oh well sarge we can't keep everybody happy can we?" He went and I didn't. I stayed behind and anyway that day I got pissed in the sergeants' mess in Wacol when I got back to Canungra the following morning I got charged with 'absent without leave'.

26:00 By Colonel Griff and got reprimanded.

26:08 **What was your reprimand?**

26:10 Naughty, naughty, a reprimand, that's a sentence, if you face a charge the lowest sentence you can be given is a reprimand, and official reprimand, 'naughty naughty', slap it with the feather.

26:30 **So why had you got drunk and missed?**

26:36 Oh, I was pissed off. What would have been easier than to swap me with Trevor, I want to go he doesn't so what would have been easier. A little whinge with all my mates back in Wacol. That was the upshot of that.

26:55 **Why did you want to go to war?**

26:57 As I said, I have always been

27:00 into adventure and travelling and all that and I didn't mind, I would have, you know. Anyway I ended up there, by the end of '67 anyway.

27:16 **You mentioned briefly but what kind of training did you receive before you left for Vietnam?**

27:19 The battle efficiency training, all that training, we went through there.

27:26 **I'm interested to know if you were going to work in a transport unit, why you would learn platoon…why would you learn some of the infantry?**

27:35 Well you can, if you are in a green uniform somebody can shoot at you if you are an infantry man or a transport or a cook or whatever. So you've got to be able to protect yourself for starters. Basically we're all soldiers, your basic role in life is solider

28:00 and soldiering is about infantry work and superimposed on that world is your specific trade, you can be a signal man or a cook or a clerk or a storeman. Basically and foremost you are a solider and superimposed on that role is your trade and that's why everybody has to be, you'd like to be able

28:30 to know how your rifle works, your SMG [submachine gun] works, take it apart and clean it, how to put up a hootchie, what to look for if you're sitting in a shell scrap watching for the enemy. What to do and how to do it is what they taught you, and physical fitness.

28:55 **Tell us before you left what did you think of the situation, politically, yourself?**

29:00 Well, we were all keen to go and we thought we were doing the right thing. The government instilled in us you are defending democracy and our democratic way of life and if we don't stop them up there we'll have them in Darwin before we know it, the domino theory, we talked about it before. And that was, you went for a briefing before you went and you were given that

29:30 spiel, propaganda you might call it, but yeah, we were all fired up, were rah rahing for the cause, the good cause. And we didn't question that.

29:46 **Tell us about your leaving Australia, what was the send off, how did you get there?**

29:53 The send off, you packed your bongos and went without any fanfare, and

30:00 you hopped on the flight. Where was I? In Canungra, I would have flown to Sydney and caught a Qantas jet from Mascot, and we had to stop off in Darwin and Singapore and whenever, about 50 others or so, you land in Saigon at Tan Son Nhut airport. Where

30:30 they herded you off the plane. From there, depended where you got posted to they then put you on another plane and shipped us off to either Nui Dat or Vung Tau, and that was it, and then your unit would come and pick you up in a Land Rover or whatever and took you to your unit.

30:59 **So tell us about the plane journey, was there anything unusual?**

31:00 No. It was like a civilian plane with civilian air hostesses and pilots, just a normal civvies plane. I can't remember if we were in uniform or not, I'm sure it would have been in civvies, it would have been in civilian clothes just like I said earlier.

31:23 **Is that quite strange in itself ?**

31:25 Yeah, well it would have been, but we didn't have the miliary capacity to get us to those far flung operational areas; you had to use civilian infrastructure to get you there.

31:47 **Tell us about those first impressions, sights and sounds, as you got in to the airport at Saigon.**

31:56 Smelly. Hot. Sticky. Humid.

32:00 Aircraft whizzing about everywhere. Saigon at that time was the most, the busiest airport anywhere in the world as far as air traffic, the volume of air traffic was concerned, most of it was for military transport, but there was planes whizzing about everywhere. You'd be met by your

32:30 Australian officer, okay off the plane go and congregate over there and wait, and you're going to Nui Dat, you're going to Vung Tau, you lot over there, you lot over there, you might get off the plane and then you hopped on whatever you were told to get on and from there it was about an hours flight or so to wherever you went to. I remember

33:00 ending up in Nui Dat first which was a dust bowl in the middle of a rubber plantation in Bien Hoa province, south eastern Vietnam, the bottom of Vietnam and from there I went to Vung Tau and that was is it. By that afternoon I was in Vung Tau and

33:30 then okay there's your bed, off you go. An old mate of mine who I'd been with in Malaya came and met me and took me out and under his wing and that was it.

33:47 **What were the noticeable differences say from Thailand or Malaya that you'd been to?**

33:52 There it was warming the soldiers for starters, you knew there was an air of excitement

34:00 in the soldiers and the Vietnamese, the Yanks, they were everywhere, soldiers everywhere and all that air traffic, there was activity everywhere. That was the difference. You knew you were on war like business. That's what struck you for starters.

34:27 **That was your first day, what was your first week or so like?**

34:30 Well then you got taken to the unit you were with. I started off in 2 Transport Platoon and you settled in and then you, they, the person you replaced sort of took you around all the important people it was good for you to get to know and the places which it was

35:00 good to know, other units and to the airport, to Vung Tau, to the city, and to other army units, to the RAAF element and out to Nui Dat, the route that you could find your way around. That you got familiarised and introduced, things you needed to know to do your job properly.

35:30 After that he left and you carried on, business as usual sort of thing. In that unit we used to, that was 5 Transport Company, it was a big unit as big as half a battalion and had headquarters 5 Transport Company. There were two transport platoons, two and a half, two

36:00 transport platoons, 86 Transport Platoon they were general transport units and half a tip platoon, 85 Tip Platoon, they were tip trucks. And then there was a workshop and supply depot, a petroleum depot, they were all part of that 5 Transport Company set-up and

36:30 in the transport platoon we did, to Vung Tau was about 70 odd kilometres from where the… At Vung Tau there was one ALSG, Australian Logistics Support Group, that was near the airport and near the harbour where all the… Everything

37:00 the Australian troops needed landed there in Vung Tau. We then would take it to Nui Dat where the first Australian Taskforce operated, that was about 120 odd kilometres from Saigon, north east of Saigon and that was in the centre of Phuoc Tuy province,

37:30 that was the Australian Taskforce's area of operation and that was at Nui Dat. We would transport all this stuff which they needed for their daily lives in Nui Dat from the harbour or the airport or where we got it in to our own company lines, up in to the Taskforce area, or often

38:00 in to the fire support bases that had been set up all over the place. Twice, two convoys used to go twice a day to Nui Dat and it could be anything from 30 odd vehicles depending, you could have barbed wire or sandbags or ammunition, food supplies, anything.

38:30 **When you were taken around by this person was there any unusual advice or unique advice given?**

38:37 Yeah well, he'd say, I mentioned that he took you into town, Vung Tau, which was beautiful, once upon a time it was. I think they called it, what did they call it, can't remember, it was a French resort town, on

39:00 the, there's a peninsula, and anyway it was Colonial type French flavour little resort town and the other troops had the back beach and VC, Viet Cong, they controlled the front beach, as it's a peninsula

39:30 it sticks out we were on the back beach, the eastern side of the peninsula which we controlled by day and night permanently and the VC controlled the front beach, and we didn't venture into their area, not at night anyway. So that was the sort of useful local knowledge which you got given. So 'don't go to the

40:00 front beach, you're likely to get your throat cut' or whatever blah blah.

Tape 7

00:41 **So in terms of the fact that the VC were controlling the front beach, what did that mean the atmosphere was like at Vung Tau?**

Oh we just didn't go to the front beach, either of you, if you had any sense you didn't go there at all, but

01:00 definitely not at night. They would recognise troops, you could call it, they didn't interfere in our side of the town and we didn't wander into theirs and let them have theirs, that was the unwritten agreement by the sounds of it.

And what kind of town in terms of atmosphere was Vung Tau like?

Well the civilians,

01:30 well they sort of just lived their lives day to day. We had a lot of them working in our units and all that, in clerical positions and in the store houses and so on. They just seemed to live their daily lives and like it would be in Germany, if to a certain degree,

02:00 we were in that situation too. I remember in the first two or three days that I was there, as I said, my predecessor took me around the traps and he took me away from the main route to the airport, he said, "I'll take you through the back roads so you know how to get there through the back streets too." And there, as we were driving along, there was this family

02:30 sitting beside the road outside of their houses, for want of a better term, up to here in slop, they had big 44 gallon drums with we put the slops in, you know the kitchen refuse and scraps and they would then, it must have been a contract to pick them up and there they were up to their elbows

03:00 in our kitchen slops, picking out tit bits and putting them into, onto plates for their daily consumption. Really makes you sick just looking at them but, you know, that's the kind of thing.

And in terms of having civilians working for you, was there any danger of infiltration?

Well

03:30 we put them through a security check but we mustn't have thought there was a, you know, a danger because we did employ them so yeah. And there was never any incidents you know. They might have had connections with the VC and passed on information but we were never aware that it did happen, if it did.

Did you have any working for you?

04:00 Yes, I had three in the office, typists and sort of a secretarial type girl. They did all the typing and then there was a multitude in the food warehouse, they had to be watched a bit because the pilfering was high on the agenda. You know, they'd come in, in the morning flat chested and,

04:30 with their baggy clothes on and in the afternoon you'd think Sophia Loren would be walking out of the front gate. And then, okay, in there, come on and there'd be half a dozen oranges or whatever, coming out of the, that sort of thing.

Did you ever let them get away with it?

Hm, often yes, that'd be sort of up to the troops on the front gate.

05:00 **And would you ever talk to the civilians about the situation, the war?**

To the office girls on occasions, but you know, they just were in it, they didn't have much choice and, many of them you know, they're from, if you can believe what you read and heard, a lot of them, you know the VC's

05:30 were virtually blackmailing, their, you know. Okay, if you're going to be part of the system, we will take it out on your families, so it was a form of blackmail in a way that, you know, by choice they wouldn't have. But many of them would have been a part of the VC set up because if they didn't the family, larger family would have suffered the repercussions.

06:00 **And in terms of lots of troops coming to Vung Tau for R and R, how did this effect?**

R in C [Rest in Country].

R in C.

Rest and recreation centre on the front beach not, sort of about a few hundred yards up the road, it was called the Peter Badcoe Club. R in C and whilst you were over there, during your year, you got

06:30 a week at the R in C centre and you went on R and R for, wherever, there was about half a dozen or more destinations you could choose to go to, Bangkok, Singapore, Hong Kong, Manila, Taiwan, Sydney and you had a choice where you wanted, where you went on R and R. And if

07:00 you were lucky you got your first choice and if you, most of the married people would want to come home to Sydney, and it used to be based on the number of aircraft spaces available where you ended up.

Who got priority?

Well I used to go to a meeting at 1 ALSG, Australian Logistics Support Group, once a month where they would be,

07:30 you went and said, "Okay, I brought a performer to the troops once a month, three months before they were due to go on R and R. Here you give me your choices of R and R, one, two and three," and I would then go the meeting and say, "Okay, I want 20 for Sydney, 50 to Hong Kong, 10 to…" wherever and you'd sort of, and you'd be bargaining

08:00 and see what you come up with and then you'd go back to your unit and say, okay, you can go, and so on. You tried to keep everybody happy and give them their first choice but often you couldn't do that and they'd have to take second or third choice.

And what was the most popular destination?

Well the married people would usually come to Sydney, back home and the single ones,

08:30 that would have been about equally split up between Hong Kong, Singapore and Bangkok.

And what happened, what would were people's reaction if they didn't get their place of choice?

Hard luck, you know.

Did anyone get cranky?

Well, yeah well, but not violently cranky and so, you know, and as I said, you tried to get them what they wanted,

09:00 but for a single person, you know, if you go to Singapore, or Hong Kong, it's really not much difference. So you talk them into acceptance.

Would you try and give priority to married?

Well you know, you would, because you know family and children and all that, yes you would try to give them what they want.

09:30 **Would you ever have people say oh I'll buy you a beer if you?**

Oh well once you do that you leave yourself wide open to all sorts of horrible things. No you just tried to be fair and even and not favour anybody. Although you know if it was a single person who was, who put Singapore, Hong Kong, if

10:00 you could, you'd give them Singapore. But sometimes if you couldn't sorry about that, but you know, take your pick, Hong Kong or Bangkok but if you could you would accommodate it.

And in terms of the troops on R in C to Vung Tau, when there were many troops around the place did it change the atmosphere of the base, of the town?

No, they were,

10:30 the R in C centre, the Peter Badcoe Club was sort of, there was the 1ALSG compound, and next to that was the Korean compound, the ROKs [Republic of Korea] as we called them. R O K, the Republic of Korea, they had their camps there and then next to that was the Peter Badcoe Club with the, you know, the accommodation block and the swimming pool and a bar set up, nicely set up.

11:00 You got away from it and could let your hair down, and it was lying on the beach, a sandy, nice sandy stretch of beach.

Did you get to stay there?

Oh yes, everybody stayed there for a week.

Was it international?

No, that was just Australians, only Australians. The Yanks had a beach club further up on that, where you could,

11:30 it's like a bit of a beer garden set up on the beach front and people would often go there for a drink on a Sunday afternoon when you weren't on duty. Yeah, they all worked in nicely together, because that was on the back beach, that was a long, four or five miles stretch of white long sandy beach and it was a nice set up.

And in your opinion,

12:00 **during the time that you were there, what did you think of the American troops?**

We didn't think they were very professional at all. They were ill disciplined and not all that professional, compared with British soldiers and the Kiwis and us, they didn't get a look in, professionally they were...

In what ways were they unprofessional?

They'd go on patrol and you know, they'd

12:30 amble about, with a bloody transistor earpiece in their bloody ear and high on drugs. And that side was seen and they weren't, like the minute you hit the ground in Vietnam, if you were an Australian soldier, amongst other things you were issued with a weapon, it could have been a rifle, a sub machine gun or a pistol,

13:00 according to your job and rank. Now that weapon did not leave your side for the 12 months that you were there. You took it to the toilet, you took it to the mess hall, you took it to your mess if you were of a higher… That thing never left your hand and it had two magazines on it, one empty, and the other one was strapped, a full one, the empty one was on the weapon and if the

13:30 the poo hits the fan, all you did was take the end and turn it around and you had a full one. As I said, that thing never left you and there were never any incidents. I can only ever recall incidents where a drunken digger went and berserk. You see, Americans, it was a daily occurrence,

14:00 that soldiers either had accidental discharges or used their weapon in other than bloody combat situations. In the end, towards the end, when I was there, if they were not out in an operational setting in camp, they used to take their weapons away from them and store them in the armoury because they couldn't be bloody well trusted to not use them to brass each other up

14:30 or have a few, you know, lights about, that sort of scenario. That sort of thing and that's what I mean when I say they weren't professional. They weren't as versatile as Australian soldiers were because we had such a small army. If you have an Australian soldier who is say a driver in my company,

15:00 he could drive a bloody 10 ton truck, or he could drive a five ton truck or a Land Rover or a staff car. He could drive anything with a petrol engine in it up to a certain tonnage. With the Americans, they were, because it was, you know, half a million of them over there and in the whole army nearly two million, they could afford to be more specialised. If you were

15:30 a driver there you drove a staff car and that was all, all you did you know, in a special, we were more versatile we had more commonsense as you could tell every little thing is okay, and do this and then the other and you could give them basic instructions and they go away and do what you wanted to do and come back with a good result. See Americans, until you took him by the hand and led

16:00 him away and, you know, step by step you wouldn't end up with a result so in that respect that's what I mean by a professionalism. And fragging, towards the end of, they called it fragging, where, soldiers used to either shoot or throw grenades at their superiors if they didn't like the orders they'd been given.

16:30 You didn't have to do something, fragging they used to call it and it was prevalent, especially as the war went on into the '70's and '71 and '69, '70, '71. They weren't game enough, if you were a sergeant or a lieutenant to order a soldier to do something that wasn't, you know, it didn't

17:00 have an inclination to do. Oh, you'd be fragged and that was so prevalent. And that's just, you can't run an efficient army like that.

And you mentioned drug use, did you see any evidence of?

Not with us.

With American, what did you see?

They were just as high as a kite. You know, even in operational settings.

17:30 **What sort of drugs was most used?**

Marijuana stuff like that. With ours we didn't, not that I know of, there was a prevalence of that, but with them it was. See their heart and mind wasn't really in it, in the whole war and the further it dragged on, the worse it became. I mean we were,

18:00 what pissed us off very lightly was that Cairns, Doctor Cairns and his antics here, like leading the moratorium march and all that, we had a saying over there, if you went to Australia on R and R punish a postie, because we were forever beset by post strikes and dock strikes and, things like that. If they had have done during the Second World War,

18:30 marched say through Sydney in favour of the Japanese, then what they did marching through the streets in Melbourne, they would have lynched them on the spot and here it was our bloody politicians doing that to us. And if you have a soldier away from home, what's even more important than his daily can, or feed of beer, is a letter from home and the minute you interfere with that

19:00 you have an unhappy little digger on your hands. And we were really peeved off.

And how do you think, if people didn't agree with the war, how do you think they should have shown their disagreement?

Well, definitely not through marching in the streets in favour of the enemy, that was not, no, if you commit the lives of only one soldier to a

19:30 situation where he could be killed, the country owes that poor bastard the full support they can give him, otherwise they shouldn't have been sending him. And if you talk to any Vietnam soldier, they'll tell you the same thing, there, nothing pissed us off more than that bastard and the antics they got up to.

And how about protests against the government?

20:00 Well go through your normal democratic parliamentary processes. Don't take it on the, you know, the troops in Iraq, we didn't want to send them there, in the last encounter but at least once the government made up it's mind to send them, the community got right behind them and supported the poor bastards, even if they didn't agree with it, but that didn't happen in Vietnam.

20:30 **And you mentioned that you had to have the weapon with you all the time, why was that?**

So that you were ready to, there you had a situation; it wasn't a set piece war, like in the Second World War. You had those Krauts in a few grey uniforms and the Poms and the Yanks in their khaki ones,

21:00 and each other knew exactly what the enemy looked like. Now in Vietnam, we didn't have that luxury. All the little Vietnamese looked, in their black pyjamas and it could be the little mamma san who'd lob a grenade at you, or a little child, or, little poppa san walking up the road with two buckets over his shoulder.

21:30 You just never ever knew, you had to be ready all times for any eventuality, that made it so hard see, whereas if you have troops in conventional uniform, you know, oh that bastard is the enemy. There you didn't know who the enemy was and yeah, it could be a little child

22:00 or you know, and they all looked he same and you didn't know and you weren't allowed to shoot if, even in a curfew situation. Now normally if you break curfew you should be out then you ought to be able to shoot, if you have, you are not well intentioned and you're often shot at. We weren't allowed to do that, you weren't allowed to, our rules of engagement said, you are not to shoot at anybody until they

22:30 shoot at you first.

And how do you deal with that sort of situation where you're almost constantly on edge?

You take it in your stride and carry on, we did.

How does it affect the way you look at I guess the civilian population?

Well I think we Australians, we were fairly easy going, unless you were in the bush, with an infantry battalion.

23:00 You just sort of, you know, you didn't think that it would happen.

And during the time that you were there, what was the situation with the Tet offensive?

That was from February to March, '68, by the end of March '68 it was over,

23:30 and it was a major effort by the North Vietnamese to win whatever they could win and yeah, they brought troops along and supplies along the Ho Chi Minh trail, as it was so called, and tried to reap as much havoc as

24:00 they could in the south and they did that, and yeah. And the Americans and the rest of us, and where we were, the Phuoc Tuy Province, the Australian task force sorted them out and they didn't really get far with us.

And you were mentioning just before about the rules of engagement. Who tells you about them, how are they presented to you?

24:30 The government and your superior headquarters, you know.

When, how do they brief you on this?

Oh before you go, when you're doing your battle efficiency training, that was part of that training and once you get there, your unit commander sits you down and says, this is how we work here, yeah.

And tell me a bit more about the rules of engagement for Vietnam.

Well basically,

25:00 you weren't allowed to shoot at anybody unless they had a pot shot at your first. Other than that you would, you know, if you were in an infantry battalion on a sort of a reconnaissance patrol or whatever, if, you use normal infantry tactics, but unless you were shot at, or you knew that they were the enemy with weapons over their shoulder,

25:30 or whatever, you, you might be killing a civilian. But I remember on one occasion we went on a convoy from Vung Tau to Nui Dat and you passed through a town called Ba Ria, that was the provincial capital. And on the outskirts of Ba Ria was an artillery position and

26:00 every day for months or longer, that was an American artillery position, this little child, I don't know how well, a little child not very, came with an ice cream sort of cart and something, a freezer chest mounted on a push bike, at lunch time, outside of that American base,

26:30 at first there was one buying an ice cream and by the time that had gone on for about a month or so, there'd be a multitude of Yanks flocking around this ice cream cart. And one day the whole thing blew up and killed, I don't know how many but a fair few of them. You know, they, you just did not know who would or, some of my friends were

27:00 in a civil affairs unit. They would hand out food type, rice and food type stuff in hamlets and villages to befriend and help the civilian population. Now, and they used to mark what they hand out, and then they get that bloody bag of rice back three or four times, because, you know,

27:30 I come and give you a bag of rice at lunch time and by five o'clock, here's the next VC comes and takes the bloody bag of rice off you and used it, and takes it away. And in three days time we capture him in a bloody jungle patrol and amongst the things we take off him is the same bag of rice which I gave you three days ago.

28:00 Or you'd be sitting there and driving along, and there'd be some little kid digging a ditch in the front yard of this little shack and you wouldn't know that if you come there after dark, that night, somebody's lobbed a grenade at you. Over that same pit, that sort of thing.

How did this sort of tension, that was around then, a mistrust

28:30 **how did it sort of create the atmosphere of the war and of the country?**

Well as I said, people sort of, well you didn't know who was local populace you could trust, but if you went to town, you went to the bar and if they didn't sort of, if you left it behind and you didn't sort of

29:00 allow it to hamper you, you wouldn't go to sleep with it say.

But if you don't sort of trust, if you don't trust the local population, then in a sense what are you fighting for if you can't build something?

I think it's a bit like that in Iraq now, you know, what the Yanks in Iraq now. They had more casualties since the war,

29:30 officially ended than what they had, you know, they had during the whole time the actual fighting went on. And that was a bit like that there too, you know, that scenario. Although there's a, I reckon the bulk of the civilian population wouldn't have wanted communist rule. And they were on the other side, but

30:00 because of that element of blackmail which the VC used to gain their own people, okay if you don't bloody well help us and support he cause, we come and get your little girls tonight or cut your grandmothers throat or whatever the threat may be. Or your uncle who's still living over in the north, we'll get into them, they got you if you want to or not.

30:30 And that's happened, you know, in a lot of cases.

And we've talked about the domino theory before, but was it this alone that sort of gave you motivation to be?

Well, I reckon the average Australian soldier went over there because it's government told them we had to go and he was posted to a unit over there and you didn't sort of question it all that much.

31:00 You'd been told you were fighting for the just cause and you are fighting to uphold our democratic way of life and that was enough for us.

And in retrospect, what do you think of?

It was a horses ass, because you couldn't, you know, if they had have wanted, you cannot, if you want to win a bloody war, you've got to go in boots and all, and don't dick about the way we did over there

31:30 or the Americans did over there. We had the demilitarised zones, the DMZ [Demilitarised Zone] and in Korea we had the 19 [38th] parallel there, and we didn't go over there and bomb the hell out of Hanoi or whatever. If you want to win the war, you did what they did in the Second World War they bombed the shit out of Germany regardless of how many civilians got killed in the process and went in and

32:00 flattened the joint and finished it off. And in Vietnam and in Korea before that, we didn't, we dicked about as I said, we didn't go over the, and on one occasion where they bombed Hai Phong, or was it, Hanoi, there was an international outcry and they called it off and you can't win a war like that, you got to win a war on the ground and put troops on the ground and you know, control

32:30 the land, with infantry soldiers and their support troops, and if you're not prepared to do that you can't win the war.

Having been a child and lived through that indiscriminate bombing in Germany, do you think that's...?

Well if you're not prepared to win the war, then why are you going to sacrifice the lives of your soldiers, you know. If you don't want to win the war,

33:00 why send your troops in the first place. And I don't know how many Americans got killed but I reckon it's about over 100 thousand, and we lost about 500 odd. If you want to win a war, you know, you want to, if you send a man who's in the boxing ring, you don't tie one hand behind his bloody back and say, off you, and don't give him a

33:30 glove on the other. You have him there, you know, gloved up and ready to go, and do whatever he has to do otherwise it's not a fight and you don't let him go. But that's what this amounted to.

And in that situation how important do you think it is to win the hearts of the people?

That's a very big thing too.

34:00 **Do you think that this was being done in Vietnam?**

Yeah, but you can't buy the hearts and minds, just with material things. You got to give them a bit of ideological, something ideology to hang onto, it's not just pumping in billions of dollars of material aid. You got to have, you know, something, a system where you then follow up and give them stability

34:30 and, that type of thing.

And, tell me a bit more about, you mentioned that you'd take deliveries or convoys into Nui Dat?

Yes we did that, our unit did that twice a day and once a week

35:00 or a fortnight we used to go to Saigon, this convoy dropped of material stuff, and, that was one of the tasks and then we used to go and deliver the material right into the forward fire support bases. It's like Coral and Horseshoe and Anderson,

35:30 and a few of them like that, and we used to go and take ammunition and you know barbed wire. And when we first set up sand bags and barbed wire, building material straight into this forward support bases, as they were called, and just had them up and got them going and then they'd be resupplied with ammunition and food and all that, and drive in there, unload your stuff

36:00 and drive back.

How would you allocate who would take what convoy and?

Oh, the drivers are separate tunes. It'd be, you know, if you were the driver here you needed 20 trucks for the… off you go, and one is the junior officer and senior NCO's, either acted as a convoy commander or a convoy

36:30 second in command and off you went.

And would you ever go on these?

Yeah, we'd go on one about once a fortnight or a week.

What was it, for example, going to Nui Dat or one of those forward.

You'd do that in a day or so. You'd leave in the morning, back by the afternoon informally, but of you went to, from Vung Tau to Saigon, you

37:00 over-nighted, you went along route 15 through Bien Hoa and you over-nighted at Long Binh, which was at that time, reportedly the biggest logistic support base in the world. It was a massive contest and we'd stay there overnight, and the following morning, we'd leave from there and go onto Saigon, so and then we got to Saigon about,

37:30 between nine and 10. But because you couldn't make it, you would have arrived in Saigon after dark, so you stopped off at Long Binh and you sleep there and you parked the trucks and you got allocated a bed and slept there overnight, went to the boozer during the night and on the following morning.

And what did Long Binh look like it was so huge?

38:00 Oh, it was a massive, full of store houses and buildings, wooden type structures. It was massive and you know the accommodation type there was about two or three American battalions allocated to guard the perimeter of the whole set up. But if there was a piece of equipment needed

38:30 anywhere in Vietnam, if it wasn't in Long Binh it didn't exist, more or less. There was just everything there and it was on a gigantic scope. But, as I said, on two occasions that happened when I was on convoy screaming through there, and it reminded me a little bit about what I've seen in films, about Pearl Harbour. We'd be, we had dinner

39:00 and got our gear, next our bed and it was a boozer having a beer, with our weapons at the entrance. And, sirens and an alert went up, and we just, okay, what do you want us to do, where do you do whatever, and it took them at least half an hour to get organised and troops on the ground to repel whatever attack

39:30 was happening. As I said, it reminded me a bit of Pearl Harbour, because they, while they were in a camp situation they weren't carrying any of their weapons, like we did, they had to break open the armoury, the three issue, the troop is there individual weapons and that. But it took half an hour or so to get a troop on the ground who could fire a bloody weapon, that's the enemy.

40:00 You know that sort of thing, that happened to us in Vung Tau, on two occasions it was an alert that people had landed on the beach. Because in five minutes we were lugging in the sand, okay let the bastards come, we were ready.

Tape 8

00:39 Yeah we talked about fragging earlier, I can only ever remember one incident where an Australian soldier went and did the wrong thing in that respect. He was a little drunken digger who stormed into the sergeants' mess at Nui Dat,

01:00 and bailed up two sergeants which he had a bit of a personal issue with and tried to bloody, you know do whatever to them, but nobody got injured so he got talked out of doing anything, and that is the only incident I am aware of that happened in that respect during our, the year I was there.

What was his punishment?

01:30 Oh, he would have been sent home straight away.

And so, tell us, you were telling us just briefly about two kinds of seaborn incidents, at Vung Tau where you, tell us what happened.

Well there was, Vung Tau, we were sitting right on the beach, overlooking the beach and the camp was sort

02:00 of surrounded by barbed wire entanglements on the beachfront and coming up the sides, and there was a, word got out, oh there's been a landing, a boat has been sighted with X amount of, you know, whoever on it, people in dark pyjamas, and stand to and we all grabbed our weapon. Took our predesignated spot, which each of us knew, it's

02:30 a bit like a fire drill in a large building. You know you have the fire warden and you as the deputy fire warden and you all know which door you get out on and where you assemble, where you left the building and all that, there's a drill for that sort of thing. We had a drill in case of an alert, you go there and all the troops, you know, under you, they all go and you were ready, okay and you then

03:00 waited for your orders or if you had seen them then you would have had a pot shot at them. Yes that's what happened and that happened twice during my period there, we had the alerts that people had landed, but it never came to anything that I am aware of.

You didn't see anything?

I didn't see them and no shots were fired and it just sort of, after an hour or two the alert was called off and that was the end

03:30 of that and that happened twice.

And how was your base exactly protected?

As I said, it was a large, it would have been an area about perhaps a square kilometre in size. I've got photos of it over there, barbed wire fence along the beach front, there was

04:00 a, say a metre or two above the high water line, there was this fence and a pill box, you know, sand bank pill box on each corner where guards would have been posted at night, on guard at intervals, and yes that was, one ALSG.

04:30 And with a front entrance where there was a boom gate and a soldier on guard, all the time, 24 hours a day seven days a week and yeah.

Does it affect you psychologically being enclosed in something?

No, I used to have a dream, for years, I haven't had it for a long time, but for a few years after coming back I used to get this dream.

05:00 I'd be stark bollocky naked, and I'd be between, a gap between two houses, about 20 metres back from a mine thoroughfare, which where hundreds of people had been milling about, and I'd be standing there at the end between two houses, stark bollocky naked, without my weapon.

05:30 And I used to have it for a long time, but haven't had it for years, but yes, yeah, that's about the only effect that I can think of that it had on me.

What do you think this dream meant?

Oh, well, you know, you weren't allowed to be without your weapon, you were naked virtually, you were not dressed unless you had your weapon with you. Yeah, that was about it, amounted to, that weapon

06:00 was with you 24 hours a day or it was in reach and there I stood undressed and my weapon missing.

Speaking of dreams, did you have any bad dreams or bad effects from your service?

No, I reckon anybody who went there as a reasonably well adjusted young man, came back, you know, you might have been,

06:30 for the first six months after you came back, you might have hit the grog a bit more than you used to, but after that, no. And I wouldn't be unique in that respect, 90 percent of all the troops that went over there, went there normal, came back normal and readjusted really quickly after this.

07:00 **Now you mentioned the Tet Offensive, what were you seeing of this offensive while you were there?**

Well we used to be a lot, there was then, they established two forward support bases, one was called Coral, that was in May of that year and one was called Anderson and the other one I think, Horseshoe.

07:30 They got established to guard, Coral was established to guard the northern approaches of Saigon and then there was, I think it was called Coolah, that was about 20 kilometres or so north of Nui Dat, to guard the approaches to Nui Dat, the taskforce area and

08:00 Anderson was a fire support base that was established, I think, yeah. Also to guard route 15 as it was called then and I think it was called, a place called, what was it called, Dat Do, something like that. Anyway they were set up in response to keeping the Viet Cong from

08:30 threatening Saigon and our role was to get the, you know, the things like barbed wire, sandbags, timber to build the base as such, the physical structure of the base and such, that kept us very busy.

And do you remember seeing any attacks during the Tet Offensive yourself?

No I don't.

Did the atmosphere intensify?

Well it did because we

09:00 were so busy and every morning you would get American's think they can conduct the war by body count. You know, you'd get, the first thing when you went, not the office, operational office, was last, yesterday's body count. So many killed, so many wounded, blah, blah for enemy, and one thing, I don't think you can win a war

09:30 just by body count. But then you know, that's how they did it.

What does the focus on this kind of talk do to you as a soldier?

Oh well, you sort of. They must have been busy last night, that's about all it amounted to.

Did you ever think of the people which are part of the body count?

No, I don't think it really, personally,

10:00 I can't talk for everybody of course, but it didn't for me and I'm not aware that it did for any of my colleagues either.

And these forward fire bases, how large were they?

Well they might have been 200 by 200, depending what sort of, how large the artillery unit that was occupying and…probably

10:30 about 200 by 200 metres.

Was it dangerous for you to drive to these places?

Well they'd, well yeah, often they'd be under attack and you'd be, or if they weren't one could happen any minute and you'd be there unloading your trucks, if it hits the fence so to speak, or it the middle of it hitting the fence.

11:00 But normally, you know, modern warfare is a bit, you know, you don't look at the, you don't see the white of the enemy's eyes anymore. Someone can bend a finger a thousand metres away and bingo, you're gone, a mortar shell or whatever, it's not a very personal thing anymore. Not like it used to be

11:30 in the Middle East. You just went, you stupid, and showed him one hand and you're shielding the other, or whatever your weapon was. And, you know, you'd look me in the eye and it was the same to me, and it was a very personal thing then. Warfare, these days you can be the biggest coward under the sun, you know, and you see a bit of the movement there and just take a bit of a pot shot over into the distance and

12:00 you bend your finger and if the other bastard is unlucky enough he copped one. You don't have to be a hero for that do you, on the personal level that is. Yes, so that's, you know, I think gone are the days of where you went a fixed bayonet and you went over the top. That didn't happen, not where I was anyway, infantry battalions,

12:30 Mate, you know, an infantry soldier in an infantry battalion mate, sort of come closer to, in contact with the enemy, but I never did.

What about, was there a fair amount of danger driving along these roads?

Yeah, you know, it could mined or I remember on one particular convoy to Saigon one day,

13:00 a helicopter who was flying shotgun as it was called, he got shot down, and I knew the man who was flying very well, a major colonel, because he'd been in Amberley the same as, aviation, one aviation regiment the same time as when I was there. So that was a bit of, I thought oh shit, I know that poor bastard. Yeah.

How do you deal with that?

Well, you know, I

13:30 knew that poor bastard and carry on.

Are you given time to grieve?

No, no grief counselling in those days, that hadn't been invented in those days. In most people, I think in this day and age, we don't give people much credit for their resilience and ability to cope, you know. These days we

14:00 counsel police officers and ambulance people, years ago that, they did their job, just when they came along, horrible accidents, just like the ones they would today but they never got counselling. My partner's father was an ambulance man and you know, and talking to her and her father in law, she was married, he was an ambulance officer too,

14:30 and when you talk to them, they, you know, they'd have a horrible day on the road, and pick up a few bodies or so and then they'd go home and have a beer or two together and talk about it and then okay, that's it. On with it and we were the same in the army, they just, but in today's age, you know, all that is part of the proceedings, you have grief counselling, and all that, but we didn't have that then. And I don't think we really,

15:00 well I didn't seem to need it, and my colleagues didn't seem to need it either, you had a few beers, talked about it and well, that's a bit of hard luck and you got on with it.

How did you protect yourselves on a convoy?

Well, everybody was armed, you know, you had your weapon, you had your jeep, your Land Rover, you had a mounted semi machine gun and you had your personal weapon.

15:30 And, that was all.

What about mines on the road, how did you deal with that?

Well we didn't sort of come across many where we were. I know of people who have been and, but I was never involved in it and I can't recall of any incidents that any of our company's vehicle got involved in any during my time there.

16:00 **Do you remember any close calls where you were shot at or?**

The only, no, not in Vietnam, you know, the odd, no not really, the only close call, I reckon I ever had was in Malaya, one day when there was a stand to and that was from a friendly soldier, rather than an enemy, where I had been in the married quarters area

16:30 in Terendak, the camps was always out of bounds to single soldiers. And I had been in the married quarter area and missed a 10 o'clock curfew time, and I was making my way back to the barracks and I thought I'll take a shortcut through the shit farm, the sewage farm and as I leapt the fence over the

17:00 sewage farm I heard click, and there is nothing more distinctive than the safety catch of an SLR, being taken off in the dark. And shit, don't shoot and this Australian voice, what the bloody hell are you doing here, I could have shot you. Apparently, unbeknownst to me, there was a red alert,

17:30 some landing, one of the landings I mentioned earlier had taken place and I was in the married quarters area and didn't know about it. And on my way home through the short cut, I'm, shit that was close, go home you silly bastard ,and off I went and went to bed and that was about the closest I ever came to

18:00 being shot.

And what about the dangers in Saigon when you'd go there?

Well, every time I went to Saigon, I used to ring a mate and say, "I'm coming." And you'd, when you parked our vehicles and all ready and come and pick me up and go, we didn't really, if there were any, it didn't sort of register. You knew there was a danger,

18:30 but you didn't sort of, but it didn't, it happens to everybody else and not you.

Your impressions of the city when you would visit?

Oh it was a lovely colonial, you know old French sort of colonial in it's day it had been a handsome sort of a city and it still was, only that, you know, there was uniforms everywhere and towards the end you

see a

19:00 little bit of, you know, you always heard the pounding of heavy artillery in the outskirts and at night you see the flashes of artillery fire going off, but it didn't sort of reach into the city itself in my days anyway. It was almost there on the outskirts and you could almost hear it and see it, but that was in the distance. This was not sort of, I don't know what it was like

19:30 in say '71, '70, '71, or '72, but during my time the VC hadn't sort of closed in on Saigon to that extent that you felt, you know, you'd cop one.

So tell us also, with getting supplied, like suddenly that big supply, depot, that big.

Long Binh.

Long Binh,

20:00 **how would it work out logistically with Australian supplies and US supplies, like how would you work this out?**

Oh we got most of our supplies from Australia, there was ship called the [HMAS] Jeparit, that brought most of our supplies from Australia, unloaded in Vung Tau, if it didn't come by ship it would come by air, the RAAF would

20:30 bring it over in their Hercs or so, but we mainly had Australian equipment and only if it was something you couldn't get through the Australian system, we could get something through the Yank supply system. Or if it was something shonky, where you say to your, all your store room corporal, "Shit we could do with a fridge in that boozer couldn't we?"

21:00 Or in the beer garden, and you couldn't get that through the Australian supply system could you? "Come and have a look at what you can see." And off they'd go and, you know, the following day you'd have a fridge on the back of his Land Rover and, "What did that cost you?" "Oh, you don't really want to know that do you?" "No, we don't." "Well done." That sort of thing.

How would you get it, what would it cost?

21:30 Oh you know, some Australian slouch hat or something of Australian origin that was very valued by the Yanks as such, yeah, they would be that sort of thing.

What sort of things were valued?

Slouch hats, and our hat badges and badges of rank and that type of stuff, everything else they had

22:00 more than us of, wouldn't you know. They were really careless with their equipment whilst we were a small army and had to account for everything. Their system used to be a lot looser than what ours was. But if it was something you know, like a rising sun hat badge or other badges of rank or a slouch hat itself, or that type of stuff, that was the thing that you'd go and trade with.

22:30 **How much would a slouch hat get you?**

Oh well it depended on the, your corporal or the person who did your, you sent off to do your trading with you know. Some people were a good haggler and bargainer and others weren't so good, but the better the, you know, you could bargain and haggle,

23:00 or a lot of things we used to do, like we'd use Australian steak, part of our unit was the 25 Supply Depot and we were that sick of bloody steak, it wasn't funny. So we would, and our beer, they used to send pallet loads of beer up to the troops and Four X, just for some reason or other, didn't travel well, we would rather

23:30 pay 10 cents for a can of Reschs or Fosters or VB [Victoria Bitter] or Tooheys, or have a can of Four X for nothing. So we'd have all these cartons of Four X lying about which nobody would drink, even for nothing so we used to go to them and trade them for big boxes of steak or blue movies and things like that. And we'd have a blue movie night in the mess

24:00 and things like that.

And what kind of blue movies would you be seeing?

Oh, you know, I think a blue movie is a blue movie. If you've seen one, there's only so many different versions to a scene and if you've seen one and you've more or less seen them all. But yes, that was one of the things that happened.

24:30 **And would the men talk about sex?**

I suppose.

Well now we talked about trade, I mean was there much pilfering going on?

The Vietnamese civilians that worked for us

25:00 would have done a bit and tried to do a bit.

What about the Australian troops though?

No, you couldn't get away with much really. No not really, because our accounting systems were really fairly tightly controlled, you know, you might have got away with small items in small quantities, but no not on a big scale, no.

What about from the Yanks?

25:30 No, we didn't go and steal, you souvenired a few things or you sent your corporals or your diggers away and you know, if you needed something, come and have a look, you know. And normally they'd have that much initiative and nous, and they'd come back with what goods you needed. But no.

During your time there, was the way you operated in your role, changing?

26:00 No, you knew what you had to do, we had to do it and I had to do it and no, everybody was the same, we were all professionals and did our… And you mentioned national servicemen before, they all, they did as good a job as regulars did and they were good soldiers.

And what about your systems you operated with your paperwork and, was this changing?

Yeah, that was a bit, things were a bit

26:30 more, if you needed a particular item for some particular purpose you would have, the system would have got it for you. But no, otherwise the same in Australia, in the set up as it was then. I think it's changed since then, you had this peacetime scales of issue and wartime.

27:00 I mean, say ammunition for instance, in wartime setting you would much, need much more ammunition, that's what you do in the peacetime ammunition if you go to the rifle range. Twice a year to do, to keep up your skills, to a certain extent. In a wartime setting you get more ammunition because you need more of it or more petrol, or you know, or you might lose

27:30 a vehicle and it gets replaced on the spot, whereas if you wrote off a vehicle here in Australia in a traffic accident or so, it would take you months to replace it. Over there, you'd have another within a week, that sort of thing, yes.

So how did they manage to cut down some of the red tape? What did they put in the processes?

Well you had, adjacent to my unit, 5 Transport Company,

28:00 was one AOD, 1Australian Ordinance Depot. Which had a yard of, I've got some photos, there was hundreds of trucks lined up and other vehicles, just to, and I suppose there would have been store houses they would have had, you know, anything your little heart desired just sitting there waiting to be issued. And rather than say, having to go through if you were a unit say, in the Enoggera area, the

28:30 invoice has to go into the city to headquarters, one minute to the district first, and then out to the ordnance depot at Guyon or Meander, and they'd then get it ready and all that there. It'd be one up there, up the road, here is the paperwork, pick it up okay, it's there, take it, that sort of thing.

Sorry where was this big depot?

That was adjacent to, in Vung Tau, adjacent to the

29:00 that 1ALSG, Australian Logistic Support Group, it was part of that, and there was a military hospital, 1Australian Military Hospital, there was a postal unit, and an engineer, unit, field engineer unit and, things like that.

And so you mentioned earlier R and R, did you have some R and R yourself?

29:30 I went to Bangkok.

And what was that like?

That was fun, you know, you let your hair down for a week and you don't have to have that horrible thing attending, hanging off your weapon and you, and I saw a lot of the, you know the bods, the anchor bod and the other, a few of the other, the gold Buddha, you might have seen him when he was there and there was that sort of thing. And at night,

30:00 you go to a few bars and that sort of thing, the things tourists do more or less.

What was wartime Bangkok like?

It was, oh very busy, I don't know what it's like now, but it was, you know, very cosmopolitan and a nice place.

And would a lot of the men visit the brothel areas?

Yeah, well, you know, everyone probably seemed to

30:30 or the bars, everyone has a bit of, in that respect it was a little bit like Singapore, the bar girls would accommodate you in that respect if you wanted to.

And was that quite a big thing amongst the troops?

Some do, some don't, we didn't talk about it. You did what you wanted to do and nobody sort of,

31:00 if you felt like it you did, but most of them would have, yeah. You know after a night on the town in the bars, the natural sort of progression was there, off you went.

And was it the same sort of sentiment of lectures of things you cold catch or?

Oh no, we knew that, that had been indoctrinated into to us at Kapooka and if you'd forgotten about that

31:30 or didn't take heed and, you were told once again if you sort of, you know, if you do catch anything untoward, make sure you go to the doctors straight away and nothing further will be said.

Now returning to Vietnam, what did you think of your immediate leadership?

32:00 Oh, great, the boss I had, he was a rough sort of a diamond, Major Douglas, Punchy Douglas they called him, but he was, he backed you up through thick and thin if you did the right thing by him he was behind you 110 percent. And the other officers were just, they were professionals and knew what they were doing and were good at it.

32:30 **Did any senior military visit?**

Oh yes. I remember that, I mean I told you about driving back to Canungra before I came home and this, it was General Richardson, he was a man who's background was RACT [Royal Australian Corps of Transport] like mine and he came visiting

33:00 and we had him in the sergeant's mess. And he was spruiking off, he'd say, "You lot up here, we'd do anything for you. We'd go as far if you want a particular job, we go and take the man out of that job in Australia to accommodate you to get you back from here, and give what you want, we stop at nothing. So, keeping that in mind."

33:30 When my time came, three months before you came home, you filled in a questionnaire, telling hem where you would like to be posted next on your return home. So I thought, I won't pin him, I wanted to come to Brisbane but I won't pin them down too rigidly and name a particular unit. I just put Brisbane metropolitan area, that ought to get me somewhere in Brisbane

34:00 and low and behold. Now in the army, the way it was then, I don't know how it is now, Canungra is the town for some purposes like travel allowances and so on, was classified as country area, and for other purposes it would be part of the metropolitan region, and as I said, travel allowance for metropolitan area would be much higher

34:30 than what it is for a country area because, you know, a room in the Hyatt or Marriott would be much more expensive than in the Canungra pub, so for that purpose Canungra was country area and for others it, so I said I won't pin them down too rigidly and then when my posting order came back, the bastards posted me back to Canungra. And I thought oh shit, could have

35:00 stayed, I might as well have stayed in Vietnam for another year, because you know, the workload in Canungra was bloody horrendous in those days. As well as that, we put ten sergeant groups through there a year through BE [Battle Efficiency] courses and other types of courses. Anyway that was that, that was my run in with the visiting dignitary in general.

Why was the workload so high in Canungra?

Well,

35:30 when you have ten sergeant troops going through on a rotational basis, I can't remember how, I think it was three months, three weeks for a BE course you know, if you have one, two courses coming in and two courses going out at the same time, you know, their pay arrangements, their comings and goings and the training whilst they're there, you were flat out, 24 hours

36:00 a day, seven days a week. It was hectic.

And during your time in Vietnam, had you ever had to visit hospital for any injuries?

Yeah, once, that was when I first got there, yes once.

What for?

Oh gee, my colleague, who showed me around town, we ended up in

36:30 one of the, you know, with one of the girls in town, and yeah, bingo there we were. Three days later, oh.

If you don't mind me asking, what did you have to have done?

Oh, you got your three or four needles, till it was cleared up, that led to a joke. While I was there, having had my first needle, I was standing there, pulling up my dacks and so on,

37:00 and there was John Sullivan also, "Oh what's wrong with you?" "Oh I got tonsillitis." And having a look at him and he was getting the same as what I had. And from then on, "What's wrong with you?" "Oh tonsillitis." That's Pauline my partner.

37:30 **And did you have any trouble because of this?**

No, not in the Australian army no.

And so, tell us about getting your order to go home, how did you feel?

Oh, you were happy to leave there and come back here yeah, you just

38:00 waited your turn, you didn't go out on the town for two weeks before you left there and you got your, what was it, Chloroquine or something just to prepare your system to go off the malaria type medication which in Malaya we used to take it once a day, over there you only got one every,

38:30 and then from there, three or four weeks before you came home you got, I think it was called Chloroquine, or something. There was two, once you took one a week off and then you, just before you came home you took them as well and once you were on them, you knew oh you haven't got long to go now. You're off. And I went from there, where did I go from there, back to Canungra.

39:00 **Was there a feeling that you had to be a little bit more careful as those last?**

Oh, of course you did and most all people did you know. Some I know, but there was some people who sort of, who got themselves killed in the last week of being there, that was, you know, you tried to and that's why you weren't sent out on operations anymore or you didn't,

39:30 virtually didn't leave camp anymore, once you got your posting home, you kept your head down and stayed in camp.

Pause there.

Tape 9

00:39 **Tell me about how they brought you back to Australia.**

Oh you packed your gear and some little digger drove you to the airport and from Vung Tau to Saigon and then it was virtually the same as, they took all your gear off you before you left,

01:00 and then it was virtually the same as the way you came on a Qantas jet back to Sydney and from there they, yeah, it was then up to Brisbane and then Canungra.

What were your?

I think we then went on a short spot of leave and then you got back into it.

What were your feelings about leaving Vietnam?

Oh well, you were glad to be back and to come back to Australia

01:30 you know, do all the things you missed around here.

What sort of things do you miss?

The culture and all the good things Australia has, no you were glad to see a white face again and be surrounded by, you know Australians that was about it. And people who had families were glad to get back their family and that sort of thing.

02:00 **And did you come home in uniform?**

No, you travelled in civilian clothes. There was no fanfare whatsoever, you were, felt like a mangy dog more or less in that respect. No fanfare, nothing, as if they were making apologies, you know, for having you back. We weren't very happy about the war, about the treatment that we got from the

02:30 government at the time, and the opposition.

And was there any reaction or response when you got home in the negative?

Not from the general population, you just blended into your background and went back to the unit you'd

been posted to and no, the general population didn't seem to want to know and you didn't dwell on it, and make a fuss about it.

03:00 You just went back to your unit and went back to work and that was it.

And even though you were a bit disappointed about being back at Canungra, what was the base like at the time?

Oh you, if you were on the staff, there was, yeah, the staff quarters were, you know, you had a nice mess, officers' and sergeants' mess. Your accommodation you had a single, it was

03:30 like a motel set up and you got your, the dining room, you got terrific meals and civilian waiters serving at the tables and yeah, it was like living in a luxury motel.

And you mentioned that it was almost just as hard work?

Oh yes, because there was the intensity of it, that was in '68 and

04:00 we didn't, our commitment in Vietnam didn't finish until about '71 around about, roughly, so they were putting through, as I said 10 sergeants, give or take a few, 10 sergeants a year. That was a hell of a workload on the staff.

And what was the work, like what was the workload on you?

Well you had, if you, you would organise their pay,

04:30 you would, and at that stage I was the chief clerk of battle wing. In Canungra it was set up, they had the headquarters, the administrative wing, the officer wing and battle wing. On battle wing, that was divided into the battle efficiency course wing, unit wing where whole units used to be, whole infantry

05:00 companies as a whole, would be trying to, and people who used to go on the Australian army training, advisory training thing in Vietnam, they were trained there, so you were three different wings and at any one time you would have about 900

05:30 sergeant students going through there. And you would have to organise their fortnightly pays and get them there and getting them back, you know, transport arrangements to get them back to their units. And feed them and all that, if they'd go, they'd do a lot of unit training in Lamington Plateau and you'd have to make sure their cut lunches would be there, and everything would be up.

06:00 Yeah and that sort of organisation, administrative back up and logistic back up and, that they could do their training and have their three meals a day and that sort of thing. And that the rifle ranges would be organised when they needed it and the assault course would be allocated, you know, if you were there to be at nine and he'd be scheduled at ten, you'd have to, that sort of stuff.

06:30 **And in terms of organising this from the top down, was there some sort of weekly meeting, or would you?**

Oh yeah, you'd have conferences, and like that, coordinating stuff and all that and you would get your orders filtering down from the headquarters and that sort of thing yes.

And,

07:00 **how did it compare, I mean coming from Vietnam to Canungra?**

Well Vietnam was different because you were on the road often and that sort of thing, but otherwise the workload was as intensive, if not more so than what it had been over there. So you were busy, but then, after, and then I did that knife and fork course as it was called,

07:30 and that would have been in 1970, half way through I got commissioned then, I'd been there about half a year or so, or a year or so doing that and then I did the course and got commissioned.

And what was that course like?

That was bloody hard. That was the hardest thing I've ever done.

08:00 Physically and oh, you had to be on the ball. Very physically demanding and that was, you know, I can't remember how long it was, three months or something like that. I could look it up but anyway, that was mentally and physically, it was full on for the whole three months

08:30 and yes, that was hard.

And you mentioned that it's called a knife and fork course, what sort of manners did they teach you or gentlemanly?

Oh, I think if you didn't have them by the time you got on the course, you failed anyway by then but that, colloquially, that was what it was called.

And what sort of physical stuff would they put you through?

Oh, you got up at about six every morning between

09:00 five and six, you went for a five mile run, you went over the battle assault course and, it was a very demanding sort of thing, up and down the ropes and cargo nets and through the muddy ditches and bloody, off the high water tower, of a high tower into a lake they've got there at Canungra, that's what it was, full on.

How did they train you for it?

09:30 Oh, you were supposed to be physically fit already, that was just to keep it up and if you weren't, you know, you were up against it.

And during that time there, the people at Canungra were being trained to go to Vietnam and you'd already been.

Oh that had nothing,

10:00 this course was conducted in a different wing altogether, as I said, Canungra was made up of Battle, BE, Battle Efficiency course wing and this one was in the officer training wing, so you didn't mix.

But I suppose generally at any of your time in Canungra would you talk about your time in Vietnam to people who were going to go?

Oh anybody, you know, if you met somebody who had been there

10:30 when you were there or, you might say, you know, "What unit are you going to?" You know, and all that and if they asked you questions, you would tell them but other than that, no.

Can you remember giving anybody advice?

No, I don't, no not that I recall, and I don't think anybody would have asked me because anything they would have needed to know they would have been told on the BE course.

11:00 No, I can't recall having sort of taken anybody by the hand, no.

As things like the moratorium and that were in full swing, was there much talk about that at Canungra, what sort of things would you?

We were very pissed off to be frank. It annoyed the hell out of me, as I said, when we were

11:30 over there, the standing saying was, for those who went to Australia, punch a postie or a wharfie because we were really peeved off about them, and it was a very, very demoralising.

Was there any negative repercussions when you were a soldier in Australia in uniform?

No, none at all,

12:00 but that really, for everybody, I don't know, you know, if you talked to anybody else who was there, but I reckon you'd get the same sentiment from each and every one of them who were there at that time. They were, Mr Cairns he was scum, and all the union bosses who were at the time.

And what was your reaction

12:30 **when Australian troops were withdrawn from Vietnam?**

Oh well we, I reckon, and still do, that we lost, we had our bum ripped and severely. But, as I said before, you cannot win a war with that approach, you either go in there boots and all and trying to win it, you can't dick about like we did

13:00 and hope to win a war. We just left there with our tail between our legs and slunk away. And that was the general consensus amongst the troops.

How did the withdrawal of Australian troops affect life at Canungra?

Well, they were closed, you know, the battle efficiency courses weren't

13:30 but by then I wasn't in Canungra anymore anyway. I was there, in '70 in New Guinea, I went, what date did I? I got commissioned and I went from Enoggera, to headquarters, 18 Transport Company, and from there I went to Perth Swanbourne as an officer commanding Western Command Trade Training Centre and from there,

14:00 I went to New Guinea and that would have been about '72. So I can't remember if the withdrawal had taken place already, or if we were still in the process of it.

And do you remember any effects say when you were in Perth of the war?

No, well there you had, I was located with the

14:30 SAS, Special Air Service Regiment, in Swanbourne, lovely base, overlooking the Indian Ocean, overlooking Rottenest Island, lovely anyway, you know, you'd get people oh I've been, I got a posting, blah, blah, blah. To Nui Dat and just have a talk about and yes, I've been there, and you know, and so where the 1 ATF [Australian Task Force] is and all that, but other than that, no.

15:00 **And what was that base like in terms of work in Perth?**

Oh they were very, you know the SAS are specialists and they are really full on, both physically and militarily speaking they are the cream, al la crème. If not the best, they'd be the second best troops in the world, only if the Poms and the marines and their SAS,

15:30 but that leaves the marines, you know, the American Marines for dead. They are professionals to the boot straps and they were forever exercising and timing and honing their military skills.

And what was your interaction with them?

I used to live in their officers' mess, so I'd have daily contact with them, and every

16:00 so often, if they'd let me, I'd do little things, diving or doing things which they did, if they let me come along, you know also, and yeah, it was good. But daily contact because I lived in the mess, in the officers' mess with them.

So tell me about your posting to New Guinea?

Oh that was with, from Perth, I got posted

16:30 to 183 Reconnaissance Flight in New Guinea, that was an army aviation unit they were posted in Lae, the Morobe district which is sort of on the north eastern parts, the right hand side if you look at the map, at the bottom of New Guinea. We used to be supporting

17:00 an army survey squadron who was surveying all of New Guinea, they were putting New Guinea on military maps so to speak and we used to fly them around to do their aerial photography and all that and I was the admin officer of that unit. The OC [Officer Commanding] he was a major and I was, he'd usually

17:30 be out flying with, pilots don't like earthly activities, so he'd be always away and all that and I'd be in charge, left back in Lae running the, doing the day to day things of the unit.

Just describe some of those day to day things in New Guinea.

You know, you make sure your soldiers were posted and they

18:00 were fed and watered and paid and all the stores were on hand when needed and that they were well accounted for, and that type of thing and, you know, the troops were doing their job and were well disciplined and that sort of thing.

And how was the sort of discipline of the troops in New Guinea?

Oh yeah, they were good. Lovely unit, yeah, and every so often when

18:30 you felt you had nothing to do in the office or you didn't want to be office bound, and you'd talk to one of the pilots and say, "Where you going today, have you got a spare seat?" "Yes, off." "Okay, I'll come along."

What was it like?

Oh, it was lovely, yeah it was very scenic but not many surface roads so most of the travelling you did there was by air, and some of the air strips, they sort of flew into, you were hanging off the side

19:00 of mountains like that and not longer than say from here to that across the road, yeah, so they, but they were good pilots and that was interesting.

What was your interaction like with the local New Guinean armed forces?

We did, we were, our aircraft we used to fly, Bell Helicopters

19:30 and Pilatus Porter, fixed wings aircraft. They were adjacent to the Lae Airport and the unit itself, the administrative end the accommodation was outside the town on the fringe of Lae in Igam Barracks it was called and there, we were there, and there was also their officer training

20:00 college was there, so we had a lot to do with the… and we all used the same officers' mess so the staff of their officer training college, and us, we all mingled together, so yeah, we had a lot of contact with them and the New Guineans too they were, bashing into shape to make officers out of them.

What was

20:30 **your impression of them?**

Well they were, you know, sort a standing joke. I don't know if, how far back we'll go, but the sort of standing joke was that if they went to recruit people for their, you know the courses, they used to go into the jungle and shake the trees and those who fell out of the trees last would be suitable

21:00 to come to be trained as officers, that was the standing joke. But no, they were nice people but my opinion of them was always, you know, what it had taken us some 2000 years to assimilate and to achieve as a people and as a race, we expected to assimilate them, we expected of them in less than a hundred. Which was a bit unrealistic,

21:30 but on a personal note they were lovely people.

And did you ever encounter any problems with strikes or with any dissention?

No, not in Lae. No, no, they were nice, you know, they were, simple, local people who did, you know, we all had a house boy and that sort of thing and

22:00 they did their job and looked after, but, you know, some of the anecdotes, yeah, would be sort of quite funny and we thought at the time. Like on one occasion, it happened to a neighbour, he had instructed this house boy, now I want you to wash, the houses there were all high set and all louvres, up to that high they were metal

22:30 louvres and then up above that they were glass louvres. So he went out in the morning and said to the houseboy and, "I want you to go and wash the louvres today." So when he came home, and we all had these cement mixer type washing machines, so when he came home that afternoon he had a cement mixed full of broken glass because the houseboy had put all the louvers in the bloody washing machine,

23:00 and when you say, "Why the bloody hell did you do?" "Here master, you told me I should wash the louvres." That sort of thing. Oh that happened to me, clean the fridge, both inside and out. When I came home for lunch that afternoon he was carting the fridge down the back stairs, what the hell are you doing. But you told me to clean the fridge,

23:30 inside, he had cleaned it inside in the kitchen and now he was going to take it outside to do it again see, that sort of thing. But other than that they were, you know, nice people. And then they got independence, first they got independence and then self, no first they got self government, and then they got independence and

24:00 once they got self government they started to sort of sacking all the white people from, you know, clerical type jobs and all that thing. So it got a bit over ambitious so, which was fairly natural for them, now they had their own country they wanted to run it themselves. And they, but they had over, you know bitten off a bit too much and just couldn't do it by themselves

24:30 and when you look at it now, it's really, gone to pot.

And were you there when they got independence? Were there any celebrations?

Oh yeah.

What were they like?

Oh they were happy to be independent and their self government and independence and they were very happy and celebrated the fact that they were now standing on their own two feet and they, well we left with a terrific

25:00 super structure, you know, the administrative institutions were in place and the government structure was in place and all that. But they weren't just not quite ready to run it all by themselves and after about a year or so, they seemed to realise that and sort of ,you know, got people, invited people back in to their

25:30 into jobs which they thought they had, were able to run themselves, but they sort of realised they couldn't and they needed other help that sort of thing.

And when did you come back to Australia?

'75. Where did I come back to? Enoggera, I was then the adjutant of headquarters

26:00 1Transport And Movement Group, which was a CMF unit, was double unit and I was the senior regular officer.

And were you pleased with your, after you'd been commissioned with your movement through?

Oh yes, yeah.

Was there much of a difference you felt having been commissioned?

Oh well, yeah, no, when your one of them.

26:30 I was a captain then, now when you're a lieutenant not very many people talk to you see, so as a senior

NCO [Non Commissioned Officer], you're views are counted and if you say something people take note and think you know what they're talking about. If you're a junior officer,

27:00 of one or two people, you're no one, you're a subaltern and you're sort of, you go from the king of the shit to the shit of the kings, to coin a phrase. And yeah, then it's only until you get your third pip and you become a captain then people listen to you again and your views sort of count for something again

27:30 and you have a bit of authority again. Yeah so in a way when you get commissioned from senior NCO rank to a junior officer rank, many people would classify you better, especially if you, had there been a say a warrant officer class one, an RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major], as we said, you're god, mine, they're a second lieutenant, or a full lieutenant you'd classify it as a downward

28:00 step rather than a promotion. And it takes you, once you become a captain, then you sort of….

And after you were the adjutant in Enoggera, where did you head then?

I went to district support unit and oh god that was, we had the responsibility of the whole of the Enoggera

28:30 army complex, on the administrative and logistic kind of grounds there, you know, you oversee the domestic contracts, the cleaning the ground maintenance and all that sort of stuff. And kept that running and from there I got posted to, got promoted to major and got sent into headquarters,

29:00 one military district in Victoria barracks. I was the senior logistics officer there at headquarters. That was in 19, was that about '75, roughly, or no must have been about '76.

And had you met your

29:30 **wife at this stage?**

Eh, yes.

And how did you meet her?

That was in, that particular one, I've been married twice, and this is Pauline my present partner, yeah we, we met in Malaya in Terendak, yeah, first

30:00 my wife then.

Was army life hard on marriage?

Well some liked it and others didn't. It sort of, I think you got to have a, from a woman's point of view, you have to, you must like, not mind moving every two years because you're forever

30:30 you know, on the move and your husband gets posted, off you go, pack up your bongos and if there's children, it's sort of, and that sort of thing. And many women are just, it takes you sort of at least a year or 15 months into a community and then you make a few friends and get to know people and then off you go

31:00 and pack your bongos and start the whole process again. And if there's children, it's even harder, they are at school and from one school into another, and once again, if there are children it sort of upsets their little apple cart and some children make friends easily and others don't, so all that sort of thing. Some people like it, others don't.

31:30 **And did you finish up your career at Victoria?**

No, I got from Victoria Barracks, I got posted to Puckapunyal, once again to Puckapunyal, where I was the officer commanding of the support wing of the school and 2IC [Second In Command] of the school wing.

What were your observations of how Puckapunyal had changed since you were?

As an army installation, it hadn't changed at all.

32:00 But yeah, I said, when it was put to me, you know if you're in the army and you've been there for a long time, everybody virtually ends, gets at least one posting to their corps school, yeah, and I said okay, I didn't really want to go to Pucka, but because the black stump isn't

32:30 very far from Puckapunyal, it's hot and bloody freezing cold in winter, stinking hot in summer, 90 odd kilometres north of Melbourne. And Seymour is about 20 minute drive, but not much of a place so people tend not to like Puckapunyal too much, and I said ,"Well I'll go for two years, but then I'd like to come back to Brisbane."

33:00 And so, "Oh yeah, definitely." So when my, about three months before my two years were up, I rang my corps director up and then you know, "Remember what we said before I came here?" And he said, "Yes but we would like you to stay another two years as second in command of the school." And I said,

33:30 “Remember what I said I’ll come for two years and not a day longer.” So anyway, he ummed and ahhed, and let’s just carry it on, there’s nobody better to fill this job than you, we got to have you there and blah, blah and I said, “You got to be bloody joking.” And blah, blah and he carried on and I carried on and when he said, “No, we really need you there, there’s no...” I said, “Stick it up your jumper, I’ll resign.” And I did.

34:00 Yes that was it and then I came up to Brisbane and resigned and got out of the army.

And when you look back at that huge army career, what would you say the most important lessons you learnt are?

Loyalty, camaraderie, leadership

34:30 yeah, and professionalism. You know you did a job and you did it well, you didn’t make excuses for failure. In Canungra I had a boss, Colonel Hoskinson and something went wrong on one occasion when I hadn’t been there. I was somewhere but not there, and something stuffed up and he called me to the office

35:00 after, when I got back and he said, blah, blah, blah and I said, “No, I wasn’t even there.” He said, “I couldn’t give a rats, I got you here to protect me from stuff like that. I don’t want excuses, make sure things like that don’t happen again.” And that’s okay. Yeah so. Yes I reckon these are the main things you would, that would stick to you, with you

35:30 after a long army career like that. What else.

Are there any things about the army that you don’t like?

No. I had my 20 odd years in the army. You know, you have a little whinge here or there and you have a little whinge about a posting you would rather not go to,

36:00 but taken overall, I had a hell of a good time in the army and I wouldn’t have missed a day of it. It’s been, you know, I had a good run, I started off as a private, and I ended up as a major, so.

And having served in the army for so long, what does Anzac Day mean to you now?

Well it sort of, if nothing else, it gives you a chance to

36:30 meet people you don’t see throughout the whole year, just you see them on that one day. We usually hire a room in one of the big hotels, Leonard’s usually, for the last few years it has been Leonard’s, after the march we all end up with partners to go back to and what have you done over the past year, many of them have died and what about,

37:00 yes the poor bastard carked it last month or whatever. Yeah and you keep in touch and you refresh out the memories and spin a few worries and all that, it’s nice.

And I guess as we come towards the end of this tape, do you have any final words that you want to add to sum up?

Well I reckon, as far as I’m concerned the Australian army is one of the best in the world.

37:30 As far as professionalism is concerned and the quality of the young men that serve in it and I reckon, you know, if I had to sort of rate them against other countries I reckon of anybody, I would only rate the British army as more professional than what we are, because they’ve had hundreds of years practice

38:00 and they haven’t been out of operational situations you know, since Waterloo, more or less. If they haven’t been in action in one part of the world it was in some other part. And that makes them very professional, but we are sort of not far behind, if at all. Australian soldiers are very inventive, they are very, they are self reliant,

38:30 this is where ours is even better than the British Army. They have to be, they are yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir, and don’t display much initiative to the same extent as if you’re, as I said earlier, if you tell your corporal, “Go and organise it.” You can depend on him he comes back with whatever you wanted him to do and he used a bit of nous and initiative

39:00 and gets it done. We are more, because, that’s because we are such a small army, you have to be more, you know, multi faceted so to speak, you can’t afford to be specialised to the extent that they can be in, but the British by nature, they’re armed forces are, they have that officer structure and their senior NCO structure and

39:30 like in Malaya they are, that’s where I came in contact, their officers would address a soldier by their family name, Smith or Jones, or you know, whatever, do this that or the other, whereas we would say Private Smith or Corporal Jones. I remember I was on duty one night

40:00 in Malaya and Major Bouser, he was a pompous British major at the time, he ended up a general. Anyway he said, I was on duty that night and he said, “Go and make my bed.” And I said, “No I’m not, that’s not part of the duty statement of the, you know, the duty. No go and make your own bed, we don’t, not

40:30 here to make beds. I'll do everything else, you know, I'll type up anything you want me to or mark a map with whatever you order to, but bed making isn't on the agenda." And he was most peeved and complained the following day, and, our, brigade major who was an Australian man, he said, "No, that's not on, we address our soldiers by name and rank and not just, 'Wolber, go and make my bed'." So that's the difference between them and us.

INTERVIEW ENDS