

Australians at War Film Archive

Donald Cameron (Don) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:32 **Can you tell me a bit about what it was like growing up in Mornington Mills?**

Well my parents moved from a place called Treesville, which was

01:00 further out into the jarrah country and that was a bigger, there were two mills operating there. I was under, I was just on - starting school at this stage. To me, what I can remember was just all the noise from the mill itself, the trains bringing logs in from out - what we called - 'in the bush.' And the horror of having to start

01:30 school. Permanently. I went to school up until in those days, the seventh grade. Then I moved from Mornington to the city and I went to junior technical school in West Perth in Newcastle Street.

Because Mornington Mills sounds like quite a small country town.

Well really, in those days to me, it was a giant of a place, after Treesville, that was a very small place but

02:00 there were two mills at one stage operating there and it probably would have been the biggest Jarrah mill in Western Australia. It was owned by Miller's Timber Trading company and you've probably heard the song about owned by the company store. Well that's what happened there. They owned everything, butcher shop, bakers, the store itself, had their own meat works, or abattoir. Once you got in there you were stuck.

02:30 And that was how a lot of people stay there. No electricity, the old sanitary system with the pans. Water from dam if they'd been built there which was pretty reasonable. The facilities themselves, there was a hall, two churches, Catholic and Church of England. Small oval, which we called, 'the flat,' where you could kick the football around there was a football

03:00 field about a mile away from the mill. There was also a cricket pitch which was on a hill overlooking the mill itself. They were just about all the - oh, in the hall, where they had concerts and dances, there was a portion of that was set up as a gymnasium. Actually my father was a gymnast and he used to teach the kids gymnasium but he couldn't teach me. I probably couldn't learn it.

03:30 But anyway. We're at loggerheads [in competition] and I never became a gymnast I'll put it that way.

Is Mornington Mills around about near Pemberton?

No, you go south-east of Harvey. Up over the Darling Ranges and it's approximately ten miles from Harvey itself. That was our biggest centre.

Because that's not really

04:00 **timber country any more is it?**

Not any more because they cut it all to bits. They gave - they used to give concessions in those days, to people that put in the infrastructure, in other words the railway line, the engines, build the mill itself and so on and they cut out the best of the timber. They had inspectors who were paid by the government and they had special hammers where they'd mark all the logs when they were coming out

04:30 and the stumps where they were cut from. When I first - my first recollections were those huge big Clydesdale horses, on a machine called a 'whim,' two big wheel - giant wheels up to about seven foot high and they had one end of it was sort of shorter than the other and they'd put chains on this and around the logs and then when the horse took the tension on the front it lifted the log off

05:00 the end of the log off the ground. And that's how they were snigged. Later the caterpillar tractor, took the Clydesdale's place because I always remember when they had holidays, they'd bring the horses in and spell them in the paddocks around the mill itself, while the holidays were on and the kids delighted in hiding up in the side of the hill when all the horses were being brought in and bowling down if you

could get a hold of a tyre

05:30 of a car, cars were very unusual, we'd bowl them down and reckoned it was great when they bolted around the place. Of course we were caught, we got the usual kick in the backside. And it - it's one area I think we've lost, they should have had that somehow sort of in the archives, the way these great horses, and they never used reigns, they spoke to the horses and they used weapons, not on the horse, just a cracker to get their attention

06:00 and that is lost. Even when the caterpillars they were war caterpillars came in and they naturally the were cheaper to run than all these horses so it was better financing for the company to have them.

I think I've actually done a story on the place that you're talking about. Is it a ghost town now?

Yeah. Nothing there now. Police, the police have it for their kids

06:30 and we often have a - not often, we go back there every few years and have a return to Mornington. Then we find out how old we are.

That's an interesting piece of West Australian history because there's just no timber around there now.

There's bush there but they've cut the heart out of it see. But still it's quite a while, it's closed down in the '50s and a lot of regrowth must be coming back although it's a long, long time for a Jarrah

07:00 tree to become, big enough to cut and mill. Or so the - some of the rubbish they're using today we used to put over a fire chute and they had a fire going all the time and any of the waste timber went straight into it. And of course, there was great sawdust heap, it was like a hill to us. A lot of that was because they didn't have the expertise in those days to handle the sawdust and stuff like that, that they've got today.

07:30 The wood itself, well they don't like you using wood in any case in the fires.

Did the Depression affect Mornington Mills very much?

I think that's how it got a real permanent sort of population there, because my people worked in the city and work became hard, my father was a motor driver and my mother worked in one of the big shops in town and

08:00 they - we moved down and sort of got a permanent job at Treesville and the same mill was own by the people in Mornington. But once when the war started and they started to manpower people well they couldn't leave in any case. But maybe really the people moving in and starting those mills, even though they cut the heart out of the country, even as a kid I can remember

08:30 working in the mill and they were cutting Jarrah blocks out of good timber. These Jarrah blocks were if I can remember rightly about four inches thick by about four inches by eight inches long and we were told we had thousands of them. They were going to go to London for under the paving in the roads. So if they haven't got white ants over there they've got permanent Jarrah timber in the bottom of their roads.

09:00 I quite believe they did this. They used to have great heaps of these blocks and they'd keep for a certain time, probably when a ship was available then they'd load them onto trucks on miller's line and take them down to Wokalup where they had a yard and they stacked all the timber at Wokalup which is on the main Bunbury - Perth line.

What sort of jobs

09:30 **did you have in the mill?**

Well, the infrastructure in other words, the butcher the bakers and the people in the shop they were more or less divorced from the work at the mill itself. But in the mill you started off there at about 14, and the big amount of money you were paid were 15 shillings a week. Then it went up progressively as you got older. And you went into a different job.

10:00 Most of it was, as I mentioned, working on the blocker, cutting the blocks and stacking those. Then on the picket bench, I started on the picket bench, what they call, 'tailing out.' You had a saw man in front and you tail out behind him, pulling the timber through then some went up one grade higher onto what they called a docker, as they docked the timber into lengths, they -the pieces that were useful were thrown

10:30 into the chute, they had an endless chain and cleats going up into a tower with the timber which went down into a fire. Then there were trucks that came in, I'm talking about steel trucks, they were manhandled by the people who were working on them and the timber was taken out into a yard. If they were sleepers, they went out and they had a treatment, each end, to stop them from splitting. And if there was any work for the government, in other words,

11:00 arms for the telephone lines and things like that, they were inspected, by an inspector and people had to be there and turn them over so they could see both sides of these, before they'd accept them. Then

you progressively went from there up to the bigger jobs and older people and bigger people, working on the sort of rip benches then the big benches they call them, and the twin saws, there was two

- 11:30 saws working on a trolley, effect and they sort of cut the big logs into flitches, which went down to the big bench where it's cut up into lengths and progressed right through. The best of it was cut into the bigger - as big as they could - then the rest of it went back through the mill, till you got it right down through, what they called a 'fruit case bench,' which in those days they cut these fruit cases and they
- 12:00 were used somewhere round I think in our apple area. Round Mount Barker and places like that. All the timber itself would go on the - what we called, 'the rake,' that was our own trucks and that down through pretty hilly country to Wokalup, and before I ever went to the mill and about the turn of the century, there was a big engine, called the Jubilee,
- 12:30 and it was the dead spit of what you see in the movies in the west, with the big bell on top and the funnel and so on, well they had a big rake on this and apparently it got away and it crashed at a place called, Hayward's Crossing. There were people killed there and a lot of those lucky that - and one chap in particular he tried to - running late and he tried to get on the last carriage or truck and he missed it. And he was very lucky about that.
- 13:00 That's down in history somewhere about the Jubilee crashing at Hayward's Crossing.

What sort of subjects did you enjoy when you were in school there?

None. Probably history. As most kids, we were brought up on the old Anglo-Saxon doctrine, or brainwashing as I

- 13:30 like to call it and they were the only ones in the universe. Which I disagree with, having a anti-British grandmother, Irish at that. And of course when a few things started to happen during the war and that, the Brits [British] at one stage weren't very popular. But at that stage my father was over there in the army.

What was he doing?

The government recruited

- 14:00 all the timber men they could and they formed an engineer company and the called it Forestry Company. And they thought they were going as engineers but they finished up going over to start a mill in Scotland. And they kept them there for bigger part of the war, until they decided this was when the Japs [Japanese] were into things, to bring them back and they went up and worked in - round Itaipe, in the engineers.
- 14:30 They recruited, every mill sent people in they volunteered for this and there's not too many of them left, but I think there was about six went from Mornington in the one bunch.

How long was your father actually away for?

Round about three and a half years. When they brought them back and they went to the islands

- 15:00 then they (UNCLEAR) got leave and they came back. But for a start they were away for probably the longest of anyone that served away. Even longer than the people that were in the desert that didn't come back with the 9th Div [Division], even they came back and they were the last out of the desert.

That's interesting, I've not heard that before that's quite extraordinary.

What's that?

Well the fact that they were recruiting people out of the timber industry.

- 15:30 Oh yes, yes they formed this kind of - the 1st Forestry Company, probably be the 2nd Forestry Company, the Second World War. But anyway it was a branch of the engineers and that was primarily their job. A lot of them volunteered to go as gunners on ships coming back to get back to Australia and then get another job in the services. But the majority
- 16:00 were kept there and that was it. A point of interest is, when they came home, my father had come home before this, they marched through New York in America, they went via America and back to Australia.

As part of that Forestry Company?

That's right. In the group of the unit itself come back as a unit. I don't know what ship they were on or anything like that.

You mentioned earlier that you moved to Perth, when did that happen?

- 16:30 Oh I came down to go to school and I didn't like that very much either. Anyway, I finished up going back to the mill then I worked in the mill for a while, had a couple of jobs there and then I decided, one way or another I was going to get into the services, same as everyone else. I might add that I had two uncles. My grandmother

- 17:00 as I said, she didn't like the Brits, like a lot of Irish and - but she told her three sons, two of my uncles and my father, to go down and enlist and fight for their country. They didn't want any pushing but they all had her blessing. One finished up in Crete, he was captured by the Germans, or he was away the longest of the lot, Jerry [Germans] and then the other brother who was
- 17:30 in the 7th Division he was in the WA [Western Australian] unit, the 2/16th Battalion. And I sort of always looked up to the 16th. Was my ambition to get into it. But on advice from my uncle and a few other people and it was too late then because the war was just about shot and I didn't get into (UNCLEAR) '44 and by the time we went through our training and that, most of the people weren't sent to the islands then, they even stopped going
- 18:00 to the jungle school because they reckoned they didn't require them.

Do you think the history of your family being involved with World War II, influenced your decision to get into it?

Oh yes, for sure. But it went back before that. My grandfather was in the 1/11th in the First World War and he was wounded. My grandfather on my grandmother's side

- 18:30 or her father, he was in the British army in India. And I think this is where my father become a gymnast, from his (UNCLEAR) sergeant and he was physical training instructor. And they came from India, direct to Australia after he'd finished whatever years he had to do. And they only came back to Western Australia because of the gold finds up round Kalgoorlie. And they followed the gold.
- 19:00 Until they eventually finished up in Mount Hawthorn in WA.

Well there's not a lot of gold in Mt Hawthorn.

No I think they might have got a bit where they were but it was illegal in those days, to have gold.

Really?

Oh, my word, you couldn't have gold, you'd finish up in The Peter. But that's...

Well how would you unload it if it was illegal?

Oh it had to go through the system, through the mints and so on. I mean there was

- 19:30 if you've ever been round Kalgoorlie you'd hear what they call, 'glim,' that's gold illegally mined and they could always get rid of that but if anyone was caught with gold in Kalgoorlie immediately they got six months jail. It might have been to a prison farm or something like that but anyone in Kala [Kalgoorlie] was caught with gold stealing they weren't looked down on them they only looked down if they got caught. But that's a
- 20:00 pretty hard practise even when the bar's open in Kala in the early days. But I think my grandmother sort of, she was oriented towards business and that and she had tea rooms and that sort of stuff and apparently she was a pretty good cook but the grandfather he was the bushman, he actually had three brothers, I think they came out - his parents came out
- 20:30 to Australia I think with a weight on their leg and one of the chaps who my father was named after and in turn I was named after and my son was named after, Donald, he was with Kidman, the cattle king. And decided to go their own ways, but that's how he first started and he never came to WA. Was only the grandfather came here. And that's about their history.

I'd like to find out how

- 21:00 **the manpower affected you.**

Nearly put me in jail, that's how it affected me. At the time, there was trouble for the family and there was a split up there and I decided that I was going to get into one of the services. I tried for the navy and of course they woke up and sent me back to the mill. And then when I got away I was called up before the man found - I always

- 21:30 remember a chap in there throwing his weight around and abusing me and telling me he was going to put me in the jail and every other thing, I think he had an audience outside of young office girls. But in any case I went my own way and got a job up in the bush and then when I was just about 18, or three months off, I came back to Perth, once again they caught me but I got a job working around
- 22:00 in one of the army kitchens, for a couple of weeks before I turned 18 and they swore me in the day I turned 18. And that was the start of my army career. Funny I went back to Harvey, that's out from Mornington which I mentioned and there was a rookie camp there, been taken over from the - not Japanese - German and Italian prisoners. It used to be a prison camp. And they'd
- 22:30 moved them, I think to a place called Cowaramup. Anyway, the recruit training company I was in, that's where we did our training prior to being sent to Cowra in the Eastern States, that is after the Japanese had escaped from Cowra and we did our rookie training over again. Wasn't very happy about that. Then we went to Bathurst and we had, this is infantry chaps and they had advance infantry training.

23:00 From there anyone that was under 19, the rule was you couldn't go into an operations area, this is strange really, unless you were 19 or over. But that didn't apply to the navy, there was a lot of navy kids on ships and that, they were 17. Anyway, with us you couldn't go anywhere until you turned 19 or within three months of 19. So we went to Singleton

23:30 where they had what they call, 'The Young Soldiers Battalions.' I went to the 33rd Battalion and the 41st and the 2nd Battalion were there. We had a brigade strength.

I need to rewind you a little bit. When you've signed up where do you get sent to immediately from there?

You,

24:00 Karrakatta was the depot we went to and had sort of your medicals and every other thing and once you were sworn in, I might add, at the same time as the volunteers, there's also the CMF [Citizens' Military Force] chaps who were called up. And they had to go with us and had to do the same training and everything else. And the only difference at the time was, if you were ever out

24:30 on leave or anything, the Australias were worn on your shoulder in those days metal. They weren't allowed to wear them. Because the Australia designated you were AIF [Australian Imperial Force] and your number from WA was WX for AIF and if you were enlisted it was W. And that X apparently indicated that you were able to be sent overseas anywhere. With the militia only allowed in Australia and

25:00 capital territories and so on.

I'm wondering where, after you've been signed up, you go into Harvey for training, because this is unusual.

Well as I say, we took over the old prisoners of war camp. And they were normal army huts in any case, the

25:30 long huts with a palliasse on the floor full of straw and all that sort of business.

Were the facilities all right there?

Oh they were average army ones. Because in those days, anything in the army is all right as far as I was concerned.

What sort of things did they get you to do first up in Harvey?

Well they learned us to 'shun and unshun' [slang for attention and at ease].

And what would that be?

That's standing to attention or standing

26:00 at ease. And the usual things and they got you out in the parade ground and kicked your tail for a while and plenty of PT [physical training] we used to run down the road toward Waroona and not as far as Waroona then back to camp. Everything was split up into 45 minute lessons and so on like right through the training.

What sort of lessons?

Mainly in those days, was weapon training and the only weapons we were using there at the time

26:30 were the rifle and the Owen gun and the Bren gun. Bren gun is a light machine gun the Owen gun is our own, nine millimetre sort of submachine gun, made in Australia an invented by an Australian and a pretty good weapon. It's a pity it didn't have a bit more calibre. That was most of the time, the usual thing, hygiene in the field, in the camps, bayonet training we got a hell of a lot

27:00 of that.

What do you learn as far as hygiene in the field is concerned?

Well the main thing is just common sense, cleanliness. If you're out in the bush, it went right through even from then where you burn bash and bury, they say, you don't leave stuff laying around. Mainly it's for hygiene as I stated but also for intelligence. If you - and if you leave stuff behind that the enemy can use, if they're

27:30 short of food and stuff like that, well that's a no-no. So they used to bash up anything that was left, probably bully beef and biscuits and stuff. Weren't allowed to burn them in the scrub but then you'd bury them. That was taught right through the jungle training in Canungra in Queensland and any other place where you were trained. It's common sense and certain places in Malaya you'd booby trap anything that was left behind

28:00 that looked a bit attractive. In other words you'd put a grenade down underneath this stuff without a pin in it, held down by the weight of the stuff on top and anyone that came along and lifted the weight,

if you knew what you were doing, you could make an instantaneous grenade or you had three seconds to get out of the way before it went up but some of us had a method of altering a

28:30 fuse. Which immediately the cap went off in the igniter instead of a grenade and the fuse ran quickly and then it ignited the detonator which set off the explosive charge. That's jumping a bit ahead and you don't do that until you know what you're doing.

What other basic training did you learn in Harvey?

Oh you had the normal PT, boxing, we had a fella there that we

29:00 what did we call him? Something 'flea' anyway. He was a short thick set chap. And unarmed combat, a lot of that. And we had a pretty good boxing instructor there. Bill Ivy, I think he's still alive too. He came from Bunbury, I met him years later, Bill, but we had quite a few good boxers with us too. From the city.

29:30 I can still remember a lot of their names.

How many fellows were actually in this?

It was a company. A company is roughly three platoons of - from 30 to 35 people in a platoon, so you got a hundred plus your staff.

Quite small.

That's right. It was only a company, it was the 35th ARTB. Australian

30:00 Recruit Training Battalion - Company, C it was, not battalion it was a company. Our company commander was ex- 2/28th battalion, Captain Lovegrove, I hope he's still around. And one of our instructors was a corporal actually, I was sorry to see recently where a chap tried to drown himself in Busselton, and he packed all his clothes along side him and jumped into the drink and

30:30 somebody jumped in and pulled him out. Anyway, the next time he did the job, he must have been very sick, but he was a first class instructor. And why I mentioned his name, he was decorated in the Middle East too, this chap. We sort of - in those days, you looked to your instructors and all the rest, they weren't the enemy, they were there to teach you something and actually I found that right through my army career,

31:00 everyone'd kick about, the generals and all this sort of business, and the colonel and the company commander but when it got down to the crunch if they didn't have the men's respect anyway you were in a bad unit. And I've never known anyone being up to my company commander and battalion commander that didn't go over well with the troops.

Sounds like you're really enjoying this training time.

31:30 Well you had, in those days all we wanted to do was well it's true, kill Japs. And we were just unlucky that we were a bit too late. But that's why everyone threw everything in to loading weapon training, throwing grenades, the usual recruit, what they have to be taught. And I also learnt a lesson there, that years later,

32:00 I disagreed with and I still do. It's discipline and if you get a drill pamphlet on discipline and parade ground work, it states, 'the basis of all discipline is taught on the parade ground.' Well I don't agree to this. We had plenty of it and later I had more than plenty in Japan. And years later, when I came across the NVA [North Vietnamese Army] in Vietnam and the war's

32:30 over and they did victory parade through Saigon or Ho Chi Minh City, they were all in trucks. And it was queried afterwards, why were they in trucks? And the answer was, they'd never been taught parade ground work. They were taught battle manoeuvres, weapon training but not how to shun and unshun. And no one can sort of say

33:00 well they weren't good soldiers, they were. Whether they like it or not they beat the mighty USA [United States of America] and everyone that supported them. I'll probably get 'sent to Coventry' [silent treatment] for saying this, or put in the Tower of London.

I can see your point though.

Oh yes, and I thought, that's funny you'd think they'd be strutting down there, you see North Korea they're goose stepping and all that, well not these fellas.

So how long did you actually spend in

33:30 **Harvey?**

Probably about three months. I can't remember exactly. All I know is that at different times the old police sergeant out of Harvey, I'd been dodging him for things, and anyway,

What were you getting up to?

All larrikins. One of our tricks was, we'd ride a horse, or I had a horse and I'd ride it down to Harvey, we'd go to dance or the pictures and where the

34:00 police station was, was right in the main street and it was the only one that was sort of bituminised. So when it was over we'd get outside and get a handful of gravel and throw it like mad past the police station and throw it up on the roof. Anyway, one day the sergeant and I'll keep his name quiet was waiting for us. And I'm just digging the heels in to throw this rocks up and he put the little light on the horse and the horse put the four feet down and propped.

34:30 And I became airborne, hit the ground and bounced and lobbed right at his feet. Frightened the hell out of him, he thought he'd killed me and he went to grab me and I jumped up and took off. And he's yelling out 'stop!' I got on the horse and got the hell - so later he got me and got me by the ear hole and told me what a nice boy I was and just when we were leaving, we were all in the single sort of dogbox things they used to use in those days, and

35:00 I looked along the platform and the whole lot of the unit was moving in one heap and here was the sergeant. And anyway I heard him yelling out, "Any of you people know where young Cameron is?" And I thought, "Cor, what have I done now?" And I thought, "Well I can't remember doing anything." So a couple of, "Oh he's over so and so," and the blokes thought they were doing a great thing, I was going to be in trouble see. And he came down there and he says, "Well young fella,

35:30 I just come down." And I said, "What is this?" He said, "To wish you luck." And he shook hands with me, the old devil. So I can't swear about him now. Yeah, I'll never forget him, I thought, 'oh I'm in big trouble here.' The other blokes said, "How do you know the sergeant?" I said, "Oh get on (UNCLEAR) a bit on side." "Oh we're mates you know." He never mates with a sergeant in the police force. Not young soldiers anyway.

So where are you heading off to now as part of your training?

36:00 Right we went to Cowra via through Vic [Victoria] and into New South and the camp was usual place, out with a big hill to run up and down. And over from us was the Italian and Japanese prisoner of war camp. And one of our instructions then was if there was any breakouts they'd fire these red, a very pistol flares and we were then to go to a certain spot

36:30 not to go over and get involved in it.

Because this was after the breakouts?

After the breakouts, yes. And, be just about probably eight or nine months. Usual thing there. We did our training over again.

Was there anything different in your training?

No, none at all. The only thing is when we- in the west we used to wear a puggaree, that's a band on your hat, and when we got over there they took off the made us take them all down

37:00 and put this green band they used to have around the hats a bit of cloth around your hat and we weren't allowed to wear that until we left the - went to Bathurst to the infantry training when we completed our infantry training. I found it all right, the usual camps, you get your bloomin' crook meat at times, crook tucker and then you get your good stuff.

What was the weather like over there in Cowra?

Pretty hot. Yeah, pretty hot we were there in the summer months and so it was pretty hot there.

37:30 **Well that's got to make training hard?**

Yeah, but in one way it sort of toughens you up a bit. Well a lot actually. A lot of work was done on the ranges there, we just did preliminary stuff in Harvey on a miniature range. Sometimes we went out to the rifle range and you check your weapons, you - to see, you have an armoury and it's to see they're firing correctly according to your eyes and so on.

38:00 I don't think I ever went into the town. We never got very much leave there in any case, to Cowra and from there we went to Bathurst.

So were you in Cowra for about three months again?

It's probably about the same time but there, instead of a company there were bloomin' a brigade of people being trained. And they went up into oh I suppose close between five and ten thousand people.

That's a lot of people.

That's right, they're all young fellas

38:30 and because they had to keep a tight reign on them and same when they went to Bathurst. Once again at Bathurst there wasn't much difference in your training. Probably more on the ranges, more using a light machine-gun but anyone then who sort of - they thought they could use as the vicars gun just a sort of a heavy machine-gun, the mortars,

39:00 anti-tank, stuff like that, they'd take them and put them into those special units, where they'd train

them in the using the - I think it was tank attack in those days. It was anti-tank, we were on the offensive, not the defensive, and most was centred around everyone knew enough to handle those weapons but you weren't a specialist in them you didn't specialise.

Was it - as far as the weapons training is concerned, is it a little bit more

39:30 **intense in Cowra than it was in Harvey?**

No, not really. We had sort of the same syllabus that we trained to and the recruits, I forget what they called us, DP3 or something in those days, Defence Priority so you were right at the end of the list then you went up to two and then one was equipment and so on. Then you were ready to go to a reinforcement holding unit in - I think it was in Lae in New Guinea. And then allocated to different units.

40:00 Well that didn't eventuate with us, seeing we were under 19 we went to young soldiers battalion. Which was just the place to go to have trouble when you've got a bunch of 18 to 19 year olds or just under 19 running around. I can always recall that a lot of them shot through Sydney and when they came back they had a brigade parade and the old brigadier got up and told us what nice fellas

40:30 we were and he said, he'd give us something to occupy our minds and bodies. We were going on a route march. We said, "Oh stand on our head." He said, "Yes, not the normal route march, you will do 200 miles." Dead silence. And he said, "And you will do it as quick as possible, you will go out in battle order half an hour at the slope, of a morning and when you go into wherever you're going to bivouac for the night, back at the slope with all your gear on." And we went round the Colo River area in New South and first time I ever struck a bullock wagon pulling logs was in that area. That's one of the things that stuck in my mind, apart from the pack on my back digging a hole and in the morning filling it in again. But

What sort of things are you carrying around in your pack?

Your bedding, we had the big pack and your normal dixies, water bottles and so on, always had to be full. You're on water sort of restrictions most of the time they'd check your water bottle to see that it still had water in it. Oh and either you had a pick head or a pick helve, handle or a shovel. And that because it's pretty gravelly up around there and you wouldn't have dug in with a small entrenching tool. Anyway, in those days we didn't have them. We had a salvation -

Tape 2

00:31 The Salvos [Salvation Army] truck, actually it had the coffee and biscuits and stuff but he had this loudspeaker on the side and if we were going up a bit of a hill, and had it, specially last thing in the evening, before we sort of stood to and dug in and that sort of business. It always played 'Superman' and we'd absolutely

01:00 had it and as soon as that thing come on you'd hear the boys, all along the line, "Tell him what he can do with his Superman," and so on. But it gave you just a little bit of a kick to finish up on and why I'm mentioning this, later on when we completed this punishment, we got to the camp gates at Singleton and who's waiting there, the guys that didn't go with us, enormous brass band and somehow, I don't know how they wriggled out of it, they were part of the unit.

01:30 And they said, "You will now march to attention behind the brass band." Well all the boys decided they would sit down. They weren't going to go and - you right? Weren't going to march behind the band. So they said, "As a compromise, take the band back and we'll march behind the Salvos truck." And that's exactly what we did.

02:00 He put on a marching tune and we marched in pretty raggedly I might add. And dirty after all that. But they didn't like the band, because that was Reveille there, as soon as six, it was just before six, our band'd start up and you had to wake up and they'd march through, we were in tents, and on the other side of the hill from us was the 41st and 2nd and they had a pipe band, that was worse. You couldn't sleep.

02:30 That's one of the main things I remember about Singleton and the young soldiers battalion.

What was the kind of training you were doing there?

Normal. It was the advance training, taught some tactics, quite a bit of tactics.

What kind of tactical training?

Platoon level and section level and once again the people that were in with the support mob and the mortars and so on they carried on with their work. We had

03:00 certain people allocated to transport and they went away and did driving courses. But basically they could have taken that brigade and sent them anywhere and then with a new equipment and like the greens they wore then, we didn't have greens. We had khaki, they had to be ready to put into a unit. But I mentioned this before but at that stage, the big bang went and the war

03:30 finished.

How did you receive that news?

Well in actual fact, there was a lot of animosity against the Japanese and right through and of course you got a little bit of a reminder every now and then. And when the boys knew about that march at Sandakan and what was happening on the Burma Railway, the Japanese sort of weren't very popular and what was

04:00 stated was, 'they should drop more.' And then we heard about Nagasaki afterwards and the general opinion was, wipe them off the face of the earth. And in any case, I've got to admit a later stage when I was in Japan I still had my thoughts about the army and so on but not about the population and the kids. I held altered my

04:30 ideas about that.

What happened once it was all off for you?

Right, the war's over and we were sent back to WA and they put us in all sorts of work units and things like that just basically doing navy work and cleaning up the camps and moving gear and so on.

05:00 Then they called for volunteers for Japan. And the only ones that could volunteer was the AIF, the militia fellas, they were still with us actually, they couldn't go unless they enlisted in the interim army. And that was a two year stint after the war finished and they still gave them an X number. But without that they couldn't go to the occupation force. Well, from - when we went to Bathurst

05:30 they sort of had all the people they wanted, the original people had been taken from to Morotai from the 6th, 7th and 9th Division. And they formed the 65th, the 66th and the 67th Infantry battalions. Which in 1948 were changed to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment.

06:00 Anyway, we were put on infantry transport ships. [HMAS] Westralia, Manoora, the original Manoora.

Whereabouts did you embark on those?

From Sydney. We went to New Guinea to Finschhafen and we stayed there I don't remember how long, it was two or three days and we were there at an anniversary of a big battle on Scarlet Beach,

06:30 where the Australians were involved and while we were there all the fuzzy wuzzies [Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels - New Guineans who aided Australian troops on the Kokoda Track] came down out of the hills, you could see them light some fires when they coming out of the hills and they had a big sing sing in from Langemak Bay. That's where we were tied up at. From there, after that was over, back on the ship and we stayed on the ship and slept there. I can remember malaria precautions there.

07:00 Then we went to Japan the original occupation force landed in Japan in February of '46. The ship I was on, we landed there in April of '46. A couple of days before Anzac Day and seeing - we were the Bathurst Bees they called us, they wouldn't let us off the ship so we just - so we didn't disgrace the parade.

07:30 The day after Anzac Day, we went to a place called Kitarchi. It was a holding depot and from there we were allocated to the three different infantry battalions, engineers and whatever required people to make up the unit strength. I was allocated to the 65th Battalion, they were the furthest north of the Australian's 34th Brigade. Our

08:00 unit was of the 7th Division originally. The headquarters was at a Jap seaplane base called Fukuyama. When I went to headquarters they then put us on a train and sent us to D Company of the 65th Battalion to a place called Onomichi, Fukuyama was the seaplane base, Onomichi was a dry dock. And

08:30 we lived in Japanese warehouses. That's stretchers and stuff like that. The food and everything was quite good there, most of the work was done by the Japanese. We had our own guards but we did patrolling around the place and anything that came up like if there was a suspect boat or something around the place, we had to go aboard there and sort of, hold them while the intelligence

09:00 went through and did what they normally do. We did one raid in the dry dock, another one at a ship out to sea. It was a big wooden ship, supposed to be Korean. The aim - at the time the main job for the battalion was escorting the Japanese, the Koreans from the south of Japan up to where they handed them over to be taken back to Korea.

09:30 And was to protect them from the Japanese. Well it was the reverse. The boys who were on these jobs said that you had to stop the Koreans getting out and thumping the Japs. And of course, as soon as they come to a station and pulled up, they put the guards on the door so they couldn't get out. And that was my first introduction to Koreans.

What impression did that make on you?

I wasn't very impressed with them at all. And

10:00 they'd sort of get out in a mob and someone would happen to be grabbed by them and they give them a good old belting up. Something I forgot to mention. Our company commander at the time was a bloke called Col East. Later on he was the captain, he was the first Australian I knew that did an American para [paratrooper] course. And later he was demonstrating his - what he'd learnt at the para school, standing up on top of one

10:30 of our lockers. Which was roughly six foot high. And the locker gave way and he fell down and he was going to give us a demonstration on parachute landing force. Well he didn't, he broke his leg. So he didn't give us any more demos [demonstration] on how to jump out of an aeroplane and land.

His first and last was it?

Actually he went to Korea, Eastie, with a lot of our boys plus he also served in Malaya. But

11:00 not with the battalion I was in at Malaya.

What was the main role of your patrols in Japan.

Well they had a lot of stuff that they secreted under hills and so on. I remember one place I went to, 12 months later, and they had lays, bit lays and they were covered in grease and so on and they were in these, side of hills in these tunnels. And

11:30 that's actually what we were looking for, tunnels and we're supposed to be looking for arms and equipment well you found none, but we found a lot of food, mainly Japanese salmon. The red salmon. And I can tell you it's first class tucker. But then we got sick of it so we decided we'd do something with it and we got it back to the civilian population, I'll put it that way.

Did you have much to do with the civilian population while you were there?

12:00 Very little. Some worked in the camps they - we had no problem with them. I think I may have mentioned it. What really stuck in my mind was the fact that any stealing done around the camps was very seldom, if not ever done by Japanese, was some of our own people. One of the reasons I think is because of the penalty for stealing, it's pretty high in Japan and on top of that

12:30 I just don't think they're make up was to steal. I think it's part and parcel of our mob but still, that's how I found them and I was never in love with them but that's one of the good points they had in any case.

How were the Japanese treated during that time?

If they were in a uniform and by our people, not too good. They terrorised the police

13:00 for a start. They used to carry a little sword and a couple of boys'd get together and they'd go, one little fella would go up and one either side of him and they'd bow and say, 'good morning, good afternoon,' or whatever and then naturally he'd bow back and when they did, they'd grab him and pinch his sword. And throw it from one to another and of course the poor old Jap when he got back he get a bashing at the police station for losing the sword. Pull a lot of those tricks.

13:30 I think I said before, the people who came in from Bathurst, they sort of gave them a bad name and it all went back to, there was some show in Bathurst - oh Chifley was the Prime Minister in those days, (UNCLEAR) and headlines in the paper were, 'these Bathurst bloomin' unruly so and sos, have knocked over Chifley's wife.' But what had happened, someone had bumped her at this local show or whatever it was

14:00 anyway from there on we were banned from going into Bathurst, well there's nothing there anyway. Couple of pubs but with all the people there you couldn't get near the pub. Anyway, these people still played up a bit, well everybody played up a bit out there but something that might be of interest. A chap wrote a poem about the chaps in the occupation force and the - if you'll let me I'll

14:30 give you a little bit of this. It goes:

\n[Verse follows]\n Papers scream the headlines, 'Aussie's stick up train,\n Bathurst Bees hit Kure,\n Ned Kelly rides again.\n

I won't go any further but it goes on for quite a bit. Telling you what these people had done and they actually stuck up a train. They go into (UNCLEAR) and as long as you're signed you could get a free beer and all that and no doubt Bob Menzies, Ben Chifley and all that written up and no one

15:00 ever queried it.

They sound like a wild mob.

Mostly young blokes and they hadn't been any action or had it real bad like the old diggers that were there and shooting off steam and I thought they reckon all right, this is the way to go. After about 12 months it sort of died down, we were getting people from the interim army up there and people who'd just joined to go to Japan, being the interim army and

15:30 of course everything was a lot quieter then.

Did you stop at Labuan on the way up to Japan?

Yep.

What was the purpose of your stop there?

Gee I've missed that haven't I? Before the war finished, there was a friend of mine called Batty and he was a UK [United Kingdom] evacuee and so was his brother and anyway, he was I don't know if he was one of our mob or one of the militia but he came to

- 16:00 see me, must have been Singleton, after the war had finished and he had a letter from the government saying his brother had been killed in action. The last battle of the war with the 9th Division, was at Tarakan, up in the islands. And anyway, yeah, we had a bit of a talk and then I lost track of him and on the way to Korea I was with the ex 2/28th Battalion chap
- 16:30 Peter Gulliver, he's up in the [Northern] Territory now, good friend of mine and Peter said, "Oh the cot [aircraft] we're on had some engine trouble and they said we'll be here for a while. So you can go and occupy..." there's not too much on Labuan you can occupy yourself with and Peter said, "We've got a big cemetery here of his old Battalion the 28th, 2/28th." He said, "Let's get a ride out there and have a look at it." And I never
- 17:00 thought anything about it. I went with him and I might add it was in a terrific setting, well looked after and everything else. If a cemetery can be that way. And I walked up to the first grave and when I looked at it, it was Private Batty. This fella's brother. And Peter took a photo of it and I got it back and later on I moved round Perth and I gave him the copy of the small photo, but the funny part about it was
- 17:30 all - I walked along this row and there row after row of these lads. Nineteen years of age and I always remember saying to Peter, "Jeez, that must mean something." And he said, "Yes, it does, keep your so and so head down." Always remember him saying that to me. But that just shows you the sort of coincidence that occurred.

It's uncanny that he'd be the first grave.

That's dead right. Yes.

What was the general populous like in Japan

18:00 when you were patrolling there.

They never interfered in any way. Got out of our road and even, they had very little at this stage and of course if you went into a rural area and they had different types of this was something, they'd offer it to you and stuff like that. We didn't seem to have - they weren't really sort of against us. And I

- 18:30 think they - the emperor had given them the word that they were to cooperate with the occupational forces and all that sort of thing, it's just as well for us that they did. I've never known - even we had people working in our camps and that and I've never known any trouble with them. But in those stages it was out so they could get something to eat, food. That was everything.

Was there a black market operating?

Well, you could call it that,

- 19:00 but anyway I've told this other chap that interviewed me too this, I got off the [HMAS] Kanimbla or Manoorra or Westralia whatever it was, and I had ten shilling note. That was in 1946 and April. The end of 1947, I got back on a ship going to New Zealand with the 22nd New Zealand Battalion and our people going home for discharge and I still had
- 19:30 ten bob note. In other words, it cost me very little in Japan for two years. We were only on six bob a day, you didn't save too much. Yes it was rife. Right from the top down. Being away and a company on our own sort of we employed a few people round the place but we didn't have access to anything unless we found it, on these
- 20:00 patrols and so forth. In the south where they had, like Kure, round Kure and that, just a point of interest, when we went in there, it was 12 months after the war had finished, close to, it was still burning and all the way through on the inland sea there was scuttle ships, ships that had been bombed and everything else. It was a mess. And it was still burning in at Kure in the dock, big naval docks there. And those people there were virtually starving.
- 20:30 So where anyone could get stuff sent up like saccharine tablets, wool anything like that in a parcel, they could demand anything for it.

How did the black market operate?

You didn't have to worry about trying to get someone to buy stuff, you had to worry about getting away from them. You'd come out of a camp and people would be waiting by the camp gates and wanting to buy stuff from the troops as they went

- 21:00 out. A lot of the military police looked the other way, well they were in it too, but they'd be asking you

for chocolates and cigarettes and biscuits or anything like that. Whatever you had, you could sell. And the other thing was too, in our canteens, the Japanese beer was pretty good and still is I believe. But the Germans had moved in early in the

21:30 century and built breweries there and it was the beer, well all the boys, well I know I used to drink it then and I reckon it was great stuff. And we used to get a big brown bottle not these little things you get today, but the big one, for thruppence, three pence. And of course, you'd sell something and then all you'd have to pay out was something for a beer and cigarettes and stuff like that and that was at cheap prices so that's

22:00 virtually how the black market operated. They changed the - while I was there - the currency three times. First time they put stickers, they had these stickers with some sort of a scroll and it put onto the notes, you had to hand your notes in and they'd put this on and they'd give them back to you. But you could only put in so many. Well, one of our fellas, a bloke called, Tommy O'Connor was pretty good with a

22:30 pencil and pen. And he made out one of these things and then he got a lot developed he probably had the old gestetner, or something like that, something working and at a price he'd hand out all the tickets and you'd put them on your money that you weren't supposed to have and it was still local tenure. But there was nothing to buy. Out on the street, there was nothing to buy. At a later date they brought new currency completely and then we found a method of getting what they called British

23:00 Commonwealth vouchers, this was a type of currency that you used in the canteens. You could buy that too with Japanese money. And that's why it made it so no one really had to draw from their pay book.

Why do you say that there was nothing to buy?

Well they had nothing outside in the shops. There was nothing in the shop windows. The - what they were virtually doing, anyone who had something in the home, they were

23:30 selling it. Sort of to get a few extra yen to try and buy and their rice and everything was sort of rationed, the whole lot of it but I noticed the difference when I went back years later and I'd been in Tokyo a couple of times and when I went back there in the Korean, during the Korean business, I thought I was in New York. The way that Tokyo had altered and then there was

24:00 everything to buy. And on sale all over the place.

What were the BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Force] made up of?

There was British see, British Commonwealth Occupational Force. Righto. Our own 34th Brigade, the Kiwis [New Zealanders], British brigade, an Indian brigade, the Ghurkhas,

24:30 they were part and parcel of the British. There were no Canadians there. Oh they had a ligation in Tokyo but there were no Canadian troops apart from people looking after the ligation. And of course the Americans, they were predominantly controlled the place. They split the countries up into areas and they gave Australians a certain area, the Indians a certain area and so on. And the Brits.

25:00 And they all had just about similar roles, you know sort of, find out if they've got any dumps of the - you know the mass destruction thing. We never found them anyway, and I think they'd already - and also which I missed they confiscated all the swords around place. And they had 40 gallon drums with the tops cut out full of Japanese swords. And of course our people could go through it and one that looked a bit good, you'd hang on to. The rest went out onto landing barges and dropped out in the

25:30 inland sea.

Anything else taken as souvenirs?

Anything you could get your hands on, normally. I can always remember finding some fire suits and we didn't - they were pretty rough looking fire suits they were, I think they were a yellow colour. But anyhow, I can't remember but anyway, I don't know what made me, I went over and I just pulled one and there's something metallic was in the front of it and I opened it up and it was a pistol. Then we all went through and souvenired a pistol

26:00 out of the flying suits. Of course they were immediately sold around the place, mainly back to the Americans.

So how did you all get along?

Pretty good really. Oh yeah, you'd have your odd argument and fight and things like that but really pretty good. The only time there was any real controversy was in the south and I wasn't involved in that, it was between the Indians and the Australians.

Really?

Oh yeah, just about an

26:30 an incident with India and Australia over it, there was a few shots fired round the place. And all the rest

of it but it quietened down.

How long was that brewing?

Well that was probably - now and then we'd go down south and we'd do a month's work on guard duties round the place. And we'd stay at place called, 'Camp Point.' And that was mixture of Brits, our water transport people, and the infantry blokes doing the work there.

27:00 And those sort of, all together in this camp and that's where the trouble started and but it was after we'd gone back to our units. I found we got on pretty good. Oh they had the what I should have said before too, the Scottish were there too. I forget the - I think it might have been the Camerons, but anyway they had a Scottish unit there as well. And that was the first time I had anything to do with

27:30 the Ghurkhas. They - a lot of people say they were in Korea and they weren't. There was no Ghurkhas in Korea but they were in Malaya, while we were operating there, in the - round '55.

What did you think of the Ghurkhas?

What I saw of them, well disciplined, looked great. That was as far as I could see and they sort of, they kept to themselves, but you could go and have a yarn to them or have a beer with them and things like that. Mainly they drank rum.

28:00 That's a little bit strong for me. But we had taken over from them at one stage at (UNCLEAR) on the Palace Guard and I always remember when they used to march out, they all seemed the same height and they wore two hats, one inside the other, like our slouch hats, but never turned up. But the brim was turned up in the front and back and they wore it on the side of their head. And when they marched out of their camp they'd give some sort of a yell, if you didn't

28:30 weren't awake up it would frighten the devil out of you. I also had a bit to do with them in Malaya at a later stage. I was in Taiping, I think it was, yeah Taiping Hospital I had a broken snout. I'd run into something that I shouldn't have and anyway they were straightening my nose up for me with a warning not to come back or it'd stay like it.

29:00 When and where would stoushes break out between Aussies and other forces there in Japan?

The Americans would stop it quick smart. They sent snow drops in with a big hickory stick and wherever they saw a head they'd whack it. They sort of stop any blues very quick.

What would cause one of these blues?

Oh, anything. Could be anything at all, someone would say something about, I'm going over

29:30 from Japan to Korea now, someone'd say something about an American unit and they'd tell us we're a bunch - our blokes didn't like being called, 'Limeys [English].' And they'd say, "Well what have you got that Union Jack on your flag for if you're not Limeys?" And of course that'd start a blue [fight]. Or we'd ask the Yanks [Americans] what they did with their horses and things like that, because they had a big horse head on a 1st Cav [Cavalry] Division. And they had a bit of a story on that, that would start a fight.

30:00 Normally, it never lasted long.

Did you ever see Hiroshima or Nagasaki?

Yes, but I was never there stationed there. I just - everyone sort of made sure they had a look at that. I didn't go to Hiroshima no. Only Nagasaki - sorry, Hiroshima, not Nagasaki.

What did you witness there?

Was just the devastation of what happened. And mainly I think we all

30:30 well I know now, that that was only a toy. So God knows what'd happen now with these new things they've got, hydrogen bombs and the rest of it, I think they'd have a chain reaction and destroy the whole world. If any - you can go on anything that happened at Hiroshima, it was - it was like someone had got a big bulldozer and just gone through a city and pushed everything out of the way. Some things were standing and something did stick in my mind.

31:00 Where the factory areas were the factory chimneys were in tact. You go along and there'd be nothing but the factory chimney sitting there, brick chimney. So somehow or other they withstood the blast. Don't know whether it's a way they're made or what it is but there were quite a few around where all the big brick buildings had gone. There was one there over where they reckon it had been detonated above this place and there was still left

31:30 it was a memorial and I think it's still the same today.

I was told by another veteran that he witnessed silhouettes against a wall after the blast.

Yeah, well I never saw anything like that. I've heard of it. They reckon they were impregnated into the bricks, the bodies of the people and so on. Oh I suppose it's understandable.

Were there any precautions taken for the radioactivity or the fallout there?

32:00 Well they kept them out of the actual city itself, but I know a lot of people that did at later date go through there. But I don't think they knew a lot about the radioactivity of the area at that stage. But with the burns that some of the people that survived had, they were pretty horrific.

Where did you see locals with burns?

Well they were really, you'd see them anywhere, they'd be round the railway or something in

32:30 Kure itself and you could bet if someone was badly disfigured and burnt it had been from the bomb itself. I think it saved a lot of our lives by dropping those two things, although it was pretty bad, but it might have saved a lot of lives. Because I think if we had have went into Japan and attacked, I'd have think they'd have fought to the finish. Would have been a lot of casualties and I think they were aware of this.

33:00 And there still always was the threat that it could come back again. See they didn't touch the heart of the city in Tokyo all concrete and so on, was never touched but the outskirts which was the normal homes, was burnt flat by incendiary bombs. And also they never, ever sent any of the planes over the palace itself.

33:30 And I think that was more or less a deterrent for the Japanese themselves and the hierarchy and we didn't have any trouble with them.

Were the local people there making an effort to rebuild the cities?

Oh yes. Yes the - they had a very little for a start but as I said, after I went back, a couple of years after the

34:00 occupation force, the Tokyo, which had been just burnt and flattened, that was all high rises and flats and shops and what I expected New York to look like. The train system, first class, in the city itself around Tokyo, away from the palace itself and the big

34:30 buildings there, they had every facility, with the electricity there's something I couldn't understand. This was back in the early days, I'd be out on a patrol and there'd be a little farm where they were growing rice or whatever and you'd got there and they'd have electricity on the place. And a wire run across on sticks and all the rest but in this place, first class- although the, I think the volume

35:00 is about half of ours, of the power but there, it's everywhere, so we're not certain where it come from.

How long were you there?

A couple of years. Give or take a bit. I came back from there and I took my discharge. We could have joined the regular army then,

35:30 So in that couple of years did you have leave and enjoy any nightlife?

Yes, at one stage I went, they had certain centres around the country and they'd send people to these and I think it was for seven days, I'm not quite certain about that but you had everything you wanted there as far as food, bedding and they were sort of not army

36:00 beds, they were good beds. There were swimming pools, some places you could go where it was in the snow in the south. Actually one of our officers he'd gone down there and he was a Norwegian, Norwegian Swede, and he taught skiing, bit unusual an Australian how to know how to ski. And his name was Ness, Fred Ness. He went to Korea too, Fred. But he

36:30 run a place that called, Dogiyama, I went to Kobe I think they call it Kobe now and this leave hostel was run by a German woman called Irene Gressel and you couldn't wish for a better place. The dining room, good food everything looked after you didn't have to polish your boots even, leave them outside your room

37:00 made the beds. You could go on tours, go for a swim. Have a drink, everything was sort of relaxed. And I enjoyed being there. The only other place that I went to was later after the occupation forces, when we came out of Korea after six months for five days and nine months for a couple of weeks.

37:30 Might have even been three weeks. Anyway, we had a good break but that was in Tokyo (UNCLEAR).

Was there a prostitution trade going on?

Of course. Rife. Rife. It was rife and naturally anywhere where the people were starving you'll get that but wherever the camps were, they tried to curtail it, there was no way. But people, some people had a

38:00 they looked ahead on this. This is a no, no in any case, one of the units and I won't blame it, had a regimental brothel. It was controlled by the MO [Medical Officer] our doctor, it was policed by our regimental, by the regimental police, and everyone was inspected that went in there and when they left they were inspected. The women that were there, went in there voluntarily

- 38:30 they had to go through the doctor system and none of them were allowed to mix with anyone else, they had to live there for a certain time and then they'd let them go out and then they'd have to come back and go through the system. Well, some do gooder from Australia came up there, found out about this was going on, kicked up hell, it was closed down and what I was, should have said in the first place was, this unit, fictitious
- 39:00 unit I'm talking about was free of VD [Venereal Disease]. And remembering a lot of people had got a liaison sort of had a Japanese wife through a sake ceremony, you had a drink of sake, you were married so and I think that you're going to have another drink of sake and you were divorced but I'm not sure about that. And any case, immediately that disappeared, the girls were back on the streets again and VD rates skyrocketed. Anyway
- 39:30 the - that person did the country a lot of, well it was ill will that did it in the first place, but that fictitious unit paid for it later I can tell you that. That's the only one I know about and I can't speak about the other units.

Sounds like it was your unit.

Oh, I wouldn't say that. Our unit wouldn't do anything like that, we came from the 7th Division.

- 40:00 And we were all 19, so there's no way in the world we'd have done that.

The do-gooder you mentioned...

Was from a magazine in Australia. She worked for a magazine. And she really blew it, reckoned no one should be allowed to come back to the country and - usual thing.

When you returned home

- 40:30 **what was the feeling amongst the division about coming back to Australia?**

No problem. We never had any - we were just treated the same as any other diggers. Actually I came back, as I said before, to Auckland, New Zealand with the unit of the 22nd Battalion. They were Kiwis and once they disembarked, we were given leave and they still had rationing over there too at the time

- 41:00 because they asked us not to go to the restaurants and ask for meat. Because of ration, (UNCLEAR) a few other things and petrol was rationed and they had cars lined up there and as we came down they said, "You boys come with us and we'll show you Auckland, then you can do what you like." And they'd take us up and round, showed us Auckland and then took us back in the city and dropped us off. And far as I was concerned I reckoned it was a wonderful place. Couple of our boys

- 41:30 reckoned it was real good, they stayed behind. Ship was pulling out and they waved till it was pulled, out they remembered, 'stop, stop,' you know, they had to report to the nearest army barracks you were under arrest sort of business. They stayed there for a couple of weeks. I never thought of that.

Tape 3

- 00:33 **Can you describe and average day for me in Japan, when you were on patrol or at work?**

Always reveille at six o'clock, couldn't miss that. In buck order you'd just come out and make sure you were there, sort of, call the roll. Go back, the usual, shave

- 01:00 shower and so on. You'd have breakfast, then afterwards, first thing you'd do is clean your rifle or whatever you had, Owen gun. I won't go into hours on this. But the routine is always the same. Then you'd have your first parade, you'd have, you're inspected either by your platoon sergeant or platoon commander who was a lieutenant. Not 'loo' tenant. And

- 01:30 certain times the company commander would come along and he'd pick a platoon to inspect. So he'd check you out and if there were certain things that you hadn't done, your name went in the book. And you were told you were on either CB, confined to barracks, or you were on defaulters parade. I know all about that. And defaulters parade is to be a pack on everything, pack on your back, haversack on the side, bayonet, water

- 02:00 bottle, full. Your rifle naturally. And you went on the parade ground and you were given an order every time the left would hit the ground, you'd get an order. 'Left turn, right turn, about turn.' (SOMEBODY AT DOOR, TAPE KEEPS ROLLING BUT NO INTERVIEW)

- 02:30 (BREAK)

- 03:00 (BREAK)

- 03:30 (BREAK)

04:00 (BREAK)

04:30 (BREAK)

05:00 **Parade, where every time you marched you'd have a new instruction on your left foot?**

Oh, right defaulters that's right. You know and that's when the order comes to you. Or anything to do with it, you get half an hour of that and they really belt you around. Nothing physical.

05:30 But anyone that steps out of line, they get that instead of being put on a charge which could cost you money and normally anyway, a good run unit, they keep that to a minimum, they let the CSM [Company Sergeant Major] and that handle that sort of stuff. Yeah, nearly all of us were pretty fit in that respect. Other things were, of a night time, if you were a real bad boy, especially

06:00 we were in buildings were two, or three storeys high, they had what the call, 'chasing the bugle.' What you'd chase the whistle. They'd blow a whistle and you'd have to head up these stairs, report to the orderly room when they take your name, they say well you report back here in X hours and you will wear battle order. So you had to race back to your room, get into battle order and wait till the whistle blew again. And next time, you even could be told there to turn up in your pyjamas. I know a lot

06:30 of blokes that turned up there in the altogether. And got into trouble. 'Well you said, pyjamas, well I don't wear pyjamas.' But that was just a bit of normal discipline around the place. They have their military corrective established, anyone that's done something that is pretty bad, they send them away to these places and I think the British idea is to break the spirit of the man. That goes in there. But I'm dead

07:00 set against that. Man's no good to anyone if they've broken his spirit. But I won't go into that and the details of it but it's pretty bad.

Did you have an experience with that?

No. Well, not in Japan. Back in Australia one stage I looked through the bars

07:30 from the wrong side but not for very long. They rectified things for me but anyway, I suppose, where am I? In New Zealand?

No, you're still in Japan, we were just going through an average day and we diversified into the punishment phenomenon. So I think we got up to parading as far as the day was concerned.

That's a normal punishment. That's it. You're normal

08:00 daily work is, after you've had your inspections, then you go off onto training. If you've got a special job, as you were talking about, patrol. But normally if you went out on patrol, it started early in the morning, they had an early Reveille, you had your rations for the day, you'd have a breakfast and all this other stuff wiped, then your section commander would check your dress, your weapons and so on. And then it went up to the platoon sergeant and then you went out and did your

08:30 patrols. Some of them were on ships. I'm talking about fair miles boats that they had and some landing barges and you'd go to a certain area and they would break you up into sections or sometimes three blokes'd go on their own and just move around the area. Because no one to my knowledge had ever been fired on by the Japanese, I'm not saying by the Koreans, the Koreans had certain villages and they had their

09:00 own laws there and you had to watch what you did around the Koreans. Normally, as I say, with us it was just move through the area, you'd come back, if you didn't find anything, they'd know about it, if you found something real good, you wouldn't tell them you'd go back and get it yourself later. Or some would.

How would you go about finding some of these hidey holes?

A lot of tunnels were round the place and they were open.

09:30 But when you got inside them, and had a look around, you know, there was a lot of stuff there. And a lot of it had me beat. One place they found the salmon and stuff, they had very little food on them on the island and the local populace they didn't touch it. And that surprised me, if that'd been our mob, it would have been gone you know, but that was the honesty thing as far as I'm concerned, they must have had them frightened of what was going to happen if they were caught anyway.

10:00 **We had a couple of reports particularly from one fellow who was on the Burma Thailand Railway and he seemed to think that the Koreans were worse than the Japanese.**

Wouldn't doubt it for a minute. I've seen the way they handle their own men.

And how's that?

With the butt of a .45 [pistol]. They've got the officer in the - the only thing I can talk about is the South

Korean army. Not so much with the type of division in Vietnam, but in Korea he had the

10:30 power of life and death. Someone had stepped out of line, done something in his eyes that were a disgrace, he wasn't beyond just walking around at the back of a hill and blowing his brains out. That sounds a bit sort of, that it's made up but it's not, it happens to be true. A lot of our people wouldn't even if they'd done something wrong, wouldn't say anything about it because they knew what'd happen to them. You know

11:00 they'd turn around somebody, if they pinched something they'd get a kick in the behind or a clip under the earlobe or something. But they wouldn't report them to their officers because he's just liable to shoot them.

Well that can't be good for morale.

Sheesh! I'll tell you what, it's real good for morale. You don't pinch anything, you're going to die.

Just wanted to find out, when you were in Japan, what was your accommodation

11:30 **like?**

Mostly for kick off was old warehouses that had had petitions put into them and we had stretchers, just the old canvass stretcher, and a soldier's box for our gear and so on. And then at a later date, they started building in these areas, these big brick accommodation, two storey, and they were very good. I

12:00 only got into these with the 65 Battalion, it was when we were brought back from Onomichi, with D Company, prior to going say to Tokyo, or something like that. But no, the accommodation, the second time, I think I mentioned we went to a school. A high school and we still had stretchers and things, but they were quite good and they were warm in the winter time. They were heated. In the summer we were lucky, we were right on

12:30 actually we were right on reclaimed land. An old Jap had told me during the earth quake, that when they had a big earthquake prior to us being there, it had come in and it had washed the whole place away because all the land was reclaimed from the ocean.

Is this Kobe?

No, no, this is at Onomichi. Where the high school was they had a wall around it and it'd been overlooking the water and then they'd built the dirt up inside of that.

13:00 And they had the school there and other, you know, villages with houses and that there. I couldn't complain about the accommodation, it suited us, for a start, anyway you could generally put our blokes anywhere and they'll make themselves comfortable one way or another.

What are your impressions of this rumour that was going around about survivors of the HMAS Sydney?

13:30 We went out at different times looking for the so called person around, one of them Caucasian, that may have been a survivor, from the Sydney. Nothing eventuated. It may have been more prevalent round Kure, down south where the other battalions were but not with us and not with (UNCLEAR) Company, we did go out at one stage and it was a funny thing, one of our chaps, I won't mention

14:00 his name, he was a prisoner of war. Now, it must have been at Nagasaki. He went back there with the occupation force and he had a girlfriend, and apparently they got together and he disappeared. And we didn't look too hard for him, I'll put it that way and he chose what he wanted to do and we've never heard a thing about him since. So hopefully

14:30 he had a long life. But he suffered enough when he was with the Japs but this person apparently had looked after him a certain way and he went back and they cleared off together.

As far as the survivors of the Sydney are concerned, do you think that was just a rumour, not a reality?

You never can tell with things like that. A lot of funny things happen. And but with that, myself, we all sort of talked about it,

15:00 we were out to find them if they were there, but it wasn't - I don't think the information we got really was that strong. Where the powers that be said, "Right you get out and clear that whole area, make sure that there isn't someone there." Could have been somebody else that had cleared all the - you know the Yanks were there a lot earlier than us. And a lot of those had a liaison and they could have, you know, it couldn't have been that, it could be anything. Personally I have my doubts.

But it is a rather unusual thing

15:30 **that there were absolutely no survivors.**

Well, it looks like that's it. But if they ever pull that ship up or find where it is, they might find out why there were no survivors. Might be a hole from a torpedo in them.

You just mentioned that quite a few fellows ended up with Japanese wives, how prevalent was this?

Well, I spoke about the sake ceremony,

16:00 that was nothing, you know. That was if you had a girlfriend or something like that you had an agreement, she stuck with you only and vice versa. People probably broke the rules, they do it anywhere. People I knew, that married Japanese girls, and brought them out to Western Australia, they never had the slightest bit of trouble with them. One chap, just

16:30 recently, all I'll say, he lived in Albany. And he had trouble with his legs and he was in Hollywood Hospital and something went wrong with the op and he was there for nearly six months. Now, this fella, had been sent back to Australia and was threatened with everything if he married this girl in Japan. And he came back to Australia, took a discharge and he made his own way back to Japan,

17:00 at his own expense and bought the girl out to Australia and they were married. Now that happened round 1940 - no it was during the Korean War, it was in the '50s. And she used to come and see him every opportunity she could, the family came up there, that's one. Another chap that I knew was in Korea, he was in the islands, he was decorated in the islands. He went to Korea and he married

17:30 this Japanese girl, they had I think Ken had two boys and a girl. The girl finished up in a diplomatic corps, the two boys had first class jobs in Canberra and Ken died, I think two years ago. And I went to his funeral, went to the wake afterwards and one of the boys gave the eulogy and

18:00 it was one of the best I've ever heard. And he sort of idolised this Australia bloke. But there's two or three I know in Perth, and they're still together after all those years. So whether they got the right one or not I don't know.

So what you're saying is, they were actually relationships based on love rather than sexual convenience.

Well, that's the way I see it and they stuck together. And hey, I didn't get one of those, I wasn't that lucky.

Did you give it a bit of a go, did you?

18:30 No I didn't. They said, "Jeez that bloody Japs." That's what I always said for years afterwards, and then I thought 'struth,' they mustn't have been too bad, these blokes are still together and I'm not with my missus, I'd married before I went to Korea, I'm not married now.

19:00 **So we'll go forward to where we were before, in Auckland, New Zealand. How long were you in Auckland?**

I think it was a couple of days. It wasn't very long. Long after we find out they had two and sixpenny pieces. But I went crook about I was short changed with a quid and then I was told a quid wasn't worth their quid anyway. Been a sterling. No, the people couldn't have done enough for us there. And I think I may have mentioned

19:30 they told us not to order meat, and of course we all went in and we were going to have sandwiches and the place we went to, it was a fairly big place too, and we asked for sandwiches and tea or coffee, whatever and next thing, either the manageress or the manager, whatever she was, came out and said, "Are you sure you boys wouldn't like a piece of steak?" And we all looked at one another and oh jeez, and we told them, "Oh, we're not supposed to ask you that." She said, "I asked you

20:00 wouldn't you prefer that?" And of course everyone said, yes, so we got a nice steak and we were charged for sandwiches I might add too. No they were very good to the people that came in there.

No wonder you liked New Zealand.

No, I liked the Kiwis myself, you know, having deals with them which was sort of pretty important to our existence, or our survival, I think they're if you want someone alongside you, you get a Kiwi and doing all right.

20:30 **How similar are Kiwis to Australians in regards to the understanding of mateship?**

Pretty good really. Getting ahead a bit on incidence, but we'd been taken out of the line after operations, I'll put it that way, and then next thing we got Kiwis up there pinching our hats, making themselves a damn nuisance, but then they'd

21:00 invite us back to their camps and look after us. And I also known a time I've been in a pretty bad situation and I've looked around and a fella with a black beret's said, "Where do you want us Oz?" And an order came out and it was promulgated that no New Zealander would desert and go to the front lines to fight with the Australians. That what it was like. Because we always had our artillery officer with us and his sig [signaller]. They were always there and you could

21:30 always rely on them. But this was getting way ahead but these fellas had sneaked off from their units, they come up when you were in trouble. No, I've got a lot of respect for them, same as I've got a lot of

respect for a lot of Americans. There's a lot I haven't got respect for too and including Australians.

What's the problem with Australians? What's the downside?

Oh, it's not really a downside, it's just people that - they're going to exist, no matter what. That's

22:00 basically it. Some people that are there are supposed to lead by example and not stupidity, didn't have what it took to do that. And they wonder why they - well their troops, sort of ignored them. It's happened and happened repeatedly. Thank god it never happened with me.

So after Auckland, is it back to Sydney?

Yes and then back

22:30 via ship to Fremantle. Two or three weeks, a month, wait or something like that.

How were you housed in Sydney?

We were at an LTD, a leave and transit depot. And they're pretty rough, Marrickville was the centre there.

Doesn't sound like the facilities were very comfortable.

No it was only tents, floorboards and you'd get a couple of blankets and a palliasse, you might be lucky to have some straw in it. But that was it in those days. The food was reasonable.

23:00 **What were you doing there?**

You just were heading for a transportation either by rail or they didn't fly in those days, anywhere or by ship. We were put on a British (UNCLEAR) troop transport ship. It was - I can't remember the name of it but anyway, we were given hammocks to sleep in and of course that was a nice old job for a while. Sleeping on the floor or the steel decks.

23:30 But they brought us back to Fremantle and going through the Bight, naturally we had a dirty great storm, but they had a submarine alert and everything was blacked out, apparently at that stage and that was well and truly after the war's finished,

You had a submarine alert after the war was finished?

Yes, yeah. And then back to Fremantle and then the normal thing. The

24:00 LTD. Leave and transit depot and discharge.

Just rewinding there, whose submarine?

Well no one knew. It was just a submarine alert, that was it. And of course, naturally, you take the initiative to say well it's got to be the enemy, irrespective.

I'm just surprised that there might have been any Japanese or German submarines floating round, down the bottom of Australia.

24:30 Well one of them came into Sydney. Well they went in with midget submarines into Sydney.

But I'm just thinking after the war, you'd think they'd go back to base.

Yeah, well look at the troops that were still in our islands. Years afterwards, they didn't - wouldn't accept the war was over. Probably the same way.

So you say you had a bit of a bad storm on the way back?

Yes, there were a lot of the boys sick. I was a bit lucky I didn't get air - sick on the ocean.

25:00 As a kid I used to get sick in the car, but I've never had any problem with a plane or on the water. So I'm probably lucky there.

How long had you been away from home up until this point?

Well in actual fact the people who had the farm down the south but it wasn't really my home, I just went there on leave and stuff like that. Because I had

25:30 a couple of brothers down there and a sister. They still live in Busselton area. Actually they were at - did you watch, Who wants to be a millionaire? [television game show] last night?

No.

Well one of the fellas there come from Cowaramup. Near Cow Town [slang for Cowaramup] and what's-his-name [Eddie McGuire host of Who Wants to be a Millionaire?] had a bit of trouble pronouncing Cow Town, Cowaramup. I thought he'd ask him what it meant. But anyway that's something else.

26:00 **So what was it like to come back to Western Australia after being away for a while?**

Well, at the time, I wasn't too sure what I was going to do and sort of we all got together at different times and it didn't make much difference to me really, I hung round Perth for a few weeks and

26:30 then saw my grandparents and so on. And from there I went and worked in the mines.

That's a pretty big difference really, from soldiering in Japan to going to mines.

Yeah, I was very lucky really, because at the time they were recruiting people from the Blue Asbestos. And a couple of chaps and myself tossed up. And I said, "Oh we'll go up and their might be some gold laying around. We'll go up where the gold is." And that's where I went to Big Bell, but it was only a three way

27:00 show and you never saw gold. A tonne of dirt and three penny weights of gold in it, you want good eyesight. Any case that's how I finished up in Big Bell.

And what was that work like?

Well, it's funny, I found it better than working in a timber mill. And mainly because it just about had the same temperature summer and winter up in the area and down below and it's not a deep mine

27:30 I think 700 feet, most of the time we were down. The summer is stinking hot, as most of that area is. And if you weren't working underground, when you came up, you had small huts. You'd grab your mattress and you'd go to a dormitory which is air conditioned. And have your sleep there during the day. In the winter time when it's freezing cold, up top, you're down below and it's warm and you still worked in a

28:00 sort of just a singlet and so on there. The work, to me it was pretty interesting because I was put with people who were experienced in the work they wanted me to do which was with these explosives and they taught me the correct way of handling stuff and respecting it, and I still respect it too, you only make one blue with that stuff and you're airborne. But anyway, the work I started off,

28:30 you start the usual thing, you're doing all the navy work around the place and then I drove an electric train. The mine actually, to explain it would be twelve foot wide, the drives and eight foot high, electric lights everywhere. Rower line down the centre of it. Big five tonne trucks that are pulled by electric train. And they pull the dirt down then it goes down to a pocket where everything goes down, where it goes up top to be

29:00 crushed up and the gold content removed. And I went on to explosives and I worked on what they call, 'rule firing.' And where the ore comes down from where they're working, sometimes a big piece comes down and jams the whole area up, you've got to get under that and drill it, and fight - well you've got a special drill you use and you can hook it up and stand back while it works. Then you fill that with explosives and blow it to free up

29:30 the what was the word for it? Anyway, let the remains of the ore come through to be processed, go through, down into the trucks and out to the processing plant. The town itself had a nice hotel, believe it's a wreck now, although they've opened the mine up again. We had - on the site, we had a good swimming pool,

30:00 and not a little one either. We had tennis courts, reading room, lawns all around the area, it was first class. It was controlled by CSR [Colonial Sugar Refining Company] I believe. Because at one stage I had some exp- efficiency experts working with me. And you got certain ways of sort of going around rules to help you, we were paid by the tonne, to help you

30:30 boost the tonnage you're turning out. And of course, while these people were with me I thought well, I've got to stick by the book. And when they'd finished, they had two of them, they came back to me again afterwards, and one day they came and had a talk to me and asked me did I want a job at Mount Isa. I said, "No, Mount Isa? Christ!" I said, "That's nearly up in New Guinea." So any case they

31:00 said, "Oh well." Another chap that I worked with too, he said, "You two fellas can come over there and the way you're operating here, we want you to teach people over there."

What was part of the operation that they respected so much?

Yeah, it was actually the cheap, see we had to pay for our explosives. And what they called your rods. That was about a four foot length of fuse with the detonator on the end of it, which was cramped onto the fuse,

31:30 was lit by a lighter and it was painted with tar so that it was sort of waterproof. And if it got caught you used to stick them round your neck and put your hat on top. And if the superintendent caught you getting along like that, he'd send you up the shaft. In other words you'd miss the shift. But you got a little bag to cart that stuff in and while they were there naturally I carried it in the bag and I did what I was supposed to. I hid all my good explosives, used the stuff I was supposed to. And

32:00 they must have been checking the tonnage that was coming out. But anyway, it didn't eventuate, I didn't take it. And Korea blew and I came down and went back in the army.

When you were in the mining business, did you actually ever consider going that way rather

than going back into the army?

No. No. Actually I got a bit involved with a lass up there. And anyway

32:30 things didn't go the right way and at that time I was just about ready to do something in regards to the mine itself and then when this blew, I decided well I'll go down and see what's going on in Korea. Before that I was saying, "I wonder where in the devil Korea is, that's where we used to send those blokes up from down south of Japan," you know. But I knew very little about it. Tried to find out a bit before I went there.

33:00 But then I had trouble with my enlistment papers down at Perth and I finished up in the regular army. I got it fixed later, but it held me back from going away for nearly close to 12 months, not quite 12 months.

How does a screw up like that happen?

I reckon that they, recruiting chap was taking in regular army people and when they wanted the Special Forces, the K Force to go in, I think preference was going to the regular army.

33:30 And if you'd gone down about that time when they were ready to start recruiting, it was better for the recruiting chap to send you to the regular army as to have you hang around and go into the other mob for only two years, see. It was six, yeah, it was six years for the regular army, and two years for the K Force [Korea Force]. Because at a later date they brought in Razz O, which you were enlisted for three years, and

34:00 I stayed with that for 15 years. (UNCLEAR) I did a little over 20 years, all told. In between times, after I came back from Korea I worked with Telecom for a while. And then went back to Malaya in '55.

I like how you have a bit of a holiday in between with a normal job and then go back.

Well, I wasn't real wrapped in regular army and I thought when these other jobs come,

34:30 it's better to be outside the country than inside in the services and that was one of the reasons that, and the other reason was to see what it was like there. Especially Korea, not so much what Malaya, I thought I'd had enough sense to know what was going on there.

With the recruitment process, how does that work? Does the recruitment officer start asking you a heap of details and then shoves you into what area...?

Normally what they do, if you've had previous service

35:00 they hang you round until they get a record of your previous service. You could be in all sorts of strife in the army see, so my record's reasonably good and I know I had to wait on that, there was a couple of us going back in. And some of the other blokes were straight into the regular army. I know that they got away before us, and we were held, but then, see the only difference was, is in the number. They had a

35:30 regular army number and a K Force number. And at the time, they said, "You're in the regular army." I said, "No I'm not, I'm in this K Force." And they said, "You've got the wrong number." And when I got over I fronted a brigadier, I was in trouble there, and the company commander and I told them the story and they sort of, didn't worry them and I said, "Well there's a letter gone to the minister of the army, you're recruiting people under false pretences." And ooh, that made me real popular.

36:00 Old brig told me what sort of a so and so I was. And to top things off we were on a battalion parade and they called out the draft and I wasn't on them. So I thought I'll have to stir these blokes up.

What is K Force?

K Force was an ex-servicemen that had served, if you'd served in Japan, you [qualified]. Army, navy and air force, we had chaps who were air force came in. Well they knew nothing about infantry or the army.

36:30 Ex navy chaps came in but most of them were the younger blokes from the Second World War, but you had to have sort of, operations, you were supposed to have had. So a lot of blokes who were a way to get into K Force, said they were, got away with it. But there was a bit of a shemozzle [mess] there for a while. Anyway, I brought it to a head by - when they called the draft out in Puckapunyal, I undone my belt and you got a scabbard which hooked

37:00 on your belt, your bayonet in it, and I fixed it on my bayonet and I stepped out of the ranks and I laid it down on the ground and the RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] nearly had a fit. 'Get back in the ranks!' And I wouldn't move so he raced over with a couple of blokes, he said, "What the hell's wrong with you? Get back in the ranks!" I said, "You just read out the draft, you told me I'd be on it, I'm not on it. Now you can do something about it." He said, "Good, in the boob," So he got two of my mates and he said, "March him - take your rifle and bayonet with you."

37:30 He didn't think I was too much of a risk. "And put him in the boob." And was we were going my friends are saying, "We don't want to do this mate," and I said, "You get me in there that's what I want, get me into the clink, I'll be right." So they took my rifle and bayonet back up the Q [Quartermaster's] store, locked me up in the calaboose, and about half an hour later, down comes the company commander, "What the hell are you doing?" Then he gave me a burst. He said, "You're up before the brig." I said,

"Good." So when I went up before the brig I

38:00 told him a few things and he said, "You're here in the army to take orders." I said, "No, when I came in, I came in for a specific purpose and now do something about it." "Right." He said, "You want to go that bad, you'll go, get back to your lines." Let me out of the clink and everything, back to our lines. Next day they're kitting me out. Within two days, I'm at Marrickville waiting to get a plane to Japan to go to Korea. And the chap

38:30 who was the acting RSM at the time, or he was CSM or he was a great fella. He's gone now, but anyway, as a sideline, I'll jump ahead on this, when at one stage I was in Korea, and he turned up, I'd been there about six months and he recognised me, he was having a few words with me and he said, "Well now you're over here, what do you think of the place?" And I said, 'I'll tell you what I think of it,' he used my Christian name and I used his, I said, "Look George, you sent

39:00 me here." He said, "That's debatable about sending anyone anywhere." He said, "Well what?" I said, "Will you send me home." He said, "Get out of my b [bloody] sight. I don't want to see you again." So that was a bit of humour from an old RSM. Any case then I finished up and I've told you about - not on this have I? About running round the oval. When we got off the plane, we went to an RHU, reinforcement holding unit, at Hiro.

39:30 And Kapyong, they were just getting over Kapyong, was in May, the first week of May. I think, I'm not certain on this and they run us around, dumped all our gear and run us around and round an oval and as the people fell out they'd put them on one side. And the last 20 or 30 they put us in a certain area and they sent us up to be equipped and next morning they handed some ammunition to us and put us on a plane and sent us to Korea.

40:00 **So it was literally about fitness?**

Yes, that's right and they rest of the people were sent up to a training area called Haramura up in the hills and they had to do I think it was about six weeks there. Before they finished up come back to the battalion they had to do a certain time. And all it was was the physical side of it and the best training they could give them move them into the front lines. So that was

40:30 how we got a quick trip from Japan, anyway, into Korea.

Was this the first time that you had been back to Japan since?

That's right, I never went back on trips or anything like that and since then I've never, ever gone back to Korea, I have no wish to go back there. The not about the memories of the war or anything like that it's just that I didn't like the damn place. And it was a lot different when I went back, when I come out on leave to when we first went through, the cities were deserted there was no one there, they just cleaned out.

How many years is this in time difference, I'm thinking maybe it's nine or so years?

No, it was only three years, seven to fifty, 51, four years.

So basically what you're saying is Japan just completely turned itself around in a way that...?

Oh so fast. Yes. It amazed me. Though, I think those people are well, we could do with a little bit of their patriotism in any case and I don't believe in a lot of things myself and that's one of them I don't go for but I reckon it's the way the Americans are, it's a bit too far but we could go halfway with it. I don't mean we have every kid in a uniform and saluting and all that sort of rubbish, but you only got one country.

Tape 4

00:33 **So you mentioned that you were married before you went up to Korea?**

Yes I was knocking around with a girl in Perth and she came over to Seymour in Victoria and a few months before I got away we were married in the chapel at Puckapunyal, I've got a photo here somewhere. But anyway, and the boys put on a guard of honour with the cross bayonets

01:00 and all that bull. And we lived in Seymour for, oh when I was off duty I was there, we just sort of had bed and breakfast sort of set up there. And then before I looked like going away she came back to the west, her mother was with her and all the rest of it and she lived in WA, or worked in WA while I was away. And I might add she

01:30 saved every penny of her army allotment while I was away and she's a very stable women, the only real problems we had was I drank too much. And little bit of controversy over religion, but that's in the past.

What were your religious differences?

From a C of E [Church of England] to

- 02:00 a RC [Roman Catholic] and you probably know the situation with a RC if they have any kids and all the rest of it they expect them to be brought up in the RC religion and so on. Going back in my family my grandmother was a real stickler with the RC's, she was a strong RC. Anyway, that was one of the problems, the other one as I said I drank too much.
- 02:30 It lasted 20 odd years but most of that I was away, anyway that's my married life. Also I suppose I had two boys and two girls, the eldest is Don he's still around. Ian was my second boy he did 3 years in the unit I
- 03:00 served with in Japan, the 65th it was changed to the 1st Battalion, he came home, he was married he had two kids and they found out he'd had a crook ticker, he'd been in the army for 3 years with a crook ticker. And he was having a, not a transplant, the work they do on the heart, which in those days was more or less experimental
- 03:30 and that's where he stayed on the slab. And I tried to get support from him and his family through the services and had every trouble in the world, they'd do nothing for him because he wasn't actually involved, he'd gone to Malaya on a trip but it wasn't involved in the anti terrorist operation it was after it was over when Malaya had it's independence, or Merdeka. And that
- 04:00 turned me right against things as far as repatriation was concerned, and I'm still crooked on them for it. I had two girls, Kay and Anne, they've got families they live their life and I live mine. That's it finish.

Okay well let's move back to Korea, perhaps you could step us through the service?

See a lot of stuff,

- 04:30 oh right we were allocated to Don Company, myself and another chap and they were on the top of a dirty great big mountain and it took us all day to get to the place. We were put in sections, the other chap actually was a fellow called Don Simons, the 10 Platoon the one we went to had previously been run by an officer
- 05:00 who they swore by called Mickey Minette, I never met the man till later on. At the time we had people, acting platoon commander, fellow from WA actually Jack Stafford. And they'd been pretty well knocked around because they'd been napalmed during the Kapyong blue [Battle of Kapyong] and a hell of a lot of them were burnt, blokes were killed. And they were involved in battle itself and we were
- 05:30 going to make up numbers to it. They accepted us okay I moved into 2 Section of 10 Platoon, they made Simons the 2-inch mortar man, which he didn't like too much. Anyway, from there the next morning we had to move further up onto a higher sort of position, once again took quite a while. And we stayed, and I'm not to sure I think this was out of a place called
- 06:00 Uijongbu, and we stayed on this hill for a couple of weeks. We were picking up odds and sods that got pushed out during Kapyong and were lost and quite a lot of American Negros.

Where were you picking them up?

They were in the hills and the valleys all around the place, they'd sort of got broken away from the units and they got lost.

Were you conduction patrols?

We were sort of clearing our own area, protecting ourselves. You know if you're in a position you always want to know what's outside so they

- 06:30 send patrols around to sort of clear the area. I know at one stage we found 4 of them and they'd been away for nearly two weeks and we asked them what rations they had and they said, "Oh we had a lot of crackers." That's all they'd had, very little water, cause they got some tucker from our boys. We moved out from that position.....

Just before we move out from that position how were those patrols usually organised Don?

- 07:00 Well within the platoon you always keep a firm base and if there going to send a patrol out it's probably part of one section and they'd leave say that section support, which is a Bren gun behind with a couple of people. And they'd take the rifleman and the bloke with say the Owen gun, he'd normally be the 2IC [Second in Command] or the section corporal. He'd take these people out and probably they go out and do a sweep around
- 07:30 then come back in again. It wasn't long distance or anything like that it was sort of your own protection to make sure that Charlie's [Viet Cong] not over the next hill sort of.

So how long were those patrols?

Oh they might only last 3 hours, 4 hours. But the position it was there that your better to stay and hold a permanent spot as to get involved in something where you lost more people which may weaken your area in regards to firepower.

08:00 **I'm surprise that you found these guys, these stragglers only a couple of hours from your position?**

That's right.

And they'd been there for a couple of weeks?

They'd, oh no they'd moved up there and they were still moving when we, I heard a bit of a noise and had a look around and here's this fellow laying down on the side of the, a bit of a sort of cleft in the rocks, they could have been there for a couple of days too. But being sort of Negros I knew probably

08:30 what had happened, they'd been with the transport, drivers or something like that, lost their vehicles for some reason gone bush and was sort of trying to head south. And we were south then of Kapyong area itself, where they'd have the trouble. Oh that often happened around the place, you'd find somebody and they'd come from some other unit or something had gone wrong, they were lost. And a lot of them

09:00 sort of, especially when we got some of the Chinese and they'd be waiting in the morning and want us to go over and get them, they'd be sitting right in the middle of a mine field. And they'd find out, first thing that happened they'd run a book on them, how many steps he could take before he was gone. So many cigarettes and somebody would be saying 4 steps, 5 steps, oh and all this sort of caper and then they'd try and kid him to walk forward, they wouldn't move, they

09:30 sat on their bum and stayed there. Mainly because we used to have to get the engineers, the British engineers to go in and clear a track into the minefield before you touch him.

Did you have any contact with the Koreans on those short patrols?

No not a thing, oh we were back, on the position and from where we'd sort of joined the platoon and moved up 2, I don't know North Viets [Vietnamese] or Chinese, they weren't Chinese I don't think. Anyway, they were

10:00 spotted and they were calling out to surrender and a couple of boys said, "We'll go down and get them," and this fellow was behind me and I said, "I don't think they're surrendering at all they've got all their gear." Anyway, when they took off and went down towards them they saw them coming and they made it, they cleared out. And what it was they were calling on us to surrender to them, it was the other way around they weren't giving themselves up. But we all knew the words it was

10:30 in Chinese or in Viet [Vietnamese], it's not Viet, Korean for surrender. But that was the only incident with the enemy that I struck on that hill itself before we moved down onto the plains. And we were there another couple of weeks reorganising and then we moved up to the Imjin River.

Did you get any Chinese artillery while you were in those hills?

None at all, no and actual fact

11:00 right throughout the whole front Chinese weren't using artillery at this stage. They used mortars, they had their, like us their automatic weapon, that was a 'burp gun' [7.62mm Soviet submachine gun] they used and some had a round cylinder sort of magazine, others had a straight magazine. They had a rifle with a bayonet attached,

11:30 light machine-gun and that was about it, and a great heap of grenade. They had a small grenade on a stick and it had a hog board up the centre of it and there was a wire ring on a string and the way to operate this, it was packed in with paper. The head piece, the explosive was only just about as big as a hockey nut and, we called them hockey nut grenades. Anyway, what you did

12:00 was you pulled the paper out, you pulled the pin and you threw it, you could throw with a stick you can throw them a long way, but they never had much damaging power. The next one was a potato mash, it was like a jam tin with a lever on the side and that was mostly concussion too, there was a bit of shrap [shrapnel] with it but mostly concussion. I've seen them land about 8 feet from people and not do any damage that was their main armourment. Some of them even had old Maxim guns,

12:30 that's on steel wheels and with a steel shield on them, and a couple of blokes would sneak them along, on the wheels. Anyhow, that is I'm talking around about June of '51.

What did you find most threatening out of their arsenal around that time?

Anywhere there were mines, they put, see there was no, you knew nothing about,

13:00 when I first joined the battalion I missed that, the first roar I heard from an explosion was a mine. A chap had stood on this thing and it wiped him out and it was one of the Chinese wooden mines. And they made them out of wood so that they wouldn't be picked up by a detector. At a later date the Brits had all the mongrel dogs around the countryside and trained them to sniff out these wooden mines, and they did a great job.

13:30 Right throughout even Malaya, Vietnam I think the Infantry man has a horror of mines anyway.

So how long were you in the hills there for?

I can't really say, until we, you're talking about the time we was there before we moved up to the Imjin River?

Yeah?

Oh was from, would only be a couple of weeks, might have been 3 weeks.

14:00 And once we moved up, I think they called it was called the Kansas Line, we moved onto, D Company moved onto an area south of the Imjin River and 10 Platoon was sent up onto the highest feature that was there in our area, which was called, we called later Lightning Ridge. At one stage we used to have to come down

14:30 to company headquarters and they'd give us a hot meal and by the time we got back up to the position we were hungry again. But that was just to give us a bit of exercise too as well as give us something in our belly. The food was normally a stew or something like that but it was pretty good. But coming down if it was raining or something it wasn't too good, you'd slip and slide everywhere.

15:00 **So when did the Chinese artillery start to fall Don?**

Would be at least a month later, probably two. One story is on that Lightning Ridge, we got struck by lightning and I'd made a bed up out of Vickers belts [ammunition belts], it's a webbing and of course I was insulated but it flattened everybody else in the platoon, badly burnt two of the boys and killed a chap from South Aussie [Australia]. I won't mention his name I know his name well, but he

15:30 never wore socks this chap and he had Yankee [American] combat boots on which has a buckle on top of them. And he was lying in a pop tent and his ankle was against the buckle of his boots and he had his head laying on a rock. All he had was a burn on his head and a burn on his ankle. When the lightening had hit the position must of arced straight through him, he was dead as a maggot. Other two blokes

16:00 were badly burnt but we carted them down and they survived and came back to the platoon.

Must have been a fairly horrific storm?

Beg your pardon?

Must have been a fairly horrific storm?

Yes it was, when it struck the place sort of, there was a smell, strange smell not like explosives but probably from hitting the rocks and so on, on the hill. And later it was pouring rain

16:30 and I remember we had to cart one of these boys down and, were carting them down on stretchers, and we've already tied their legs together and all the rest of it going down, and he kept saying, "Put my leg back onto the stretcher you so and so's." And he wouldn't believe that his leg was on the stretcher, he was in a bit of a mess actually. Yeah, don't suppose it will hurt anyone to tell his name one of the boys was Johnny Dobbs and he was a ex-prisoner of war

17:00 of the Japs and the other one was Stan Barwise, the bloke that said his leg was hanging over the side. And Barwise, he got a real good burn, he had a silver chain around his neck with his dog tags on it and it had burnt him round the neck like he'd been a potty calf branded, he was branded right around the neck. How do I word this, anyway the charge had gone down his belly

17:30 onto his dog tags and then it went down to his private parts and really fixed him up. And the boys pulled his legs said, "Gee we didn't know you were a Negro John," so you could work out how he got burnt, or where he got burnt. He survived, always remember him because he said he drove the Bondi trams over in Sydney, hope his still alive. Anyway, that's how

18:00 we named the place Lightning Ridge.

Literally Lightning Ridge?

If, now you want to continue....what we were doing there, our main aim was to patrol over the Imjin, at times it was blowing pretty bad too there, there's a fair sort of a river and go as far as we could into North Korea. That was the demarcation line there, the 38th parallel was just over the

18:30 the river. And we were going in certain areas the whole company would go over, less rear link, they'd be left to hold the area. And we'd get in as far as 6 miles sort of into North Korea through this area, never had much, few shots fired here and there, but no stiff opposition. Until, at one stage the company had formed up and

19:00 part of 10 Platoon, including our new platoon commander, a bloke called Geoff Leary, was sent to patrol out from the base. And it was a big valley and there were small hills in the valley and out about a mile from company headquarters, where they were based up, we were fired on from one of the hills which they called Flat Top. We moved onto this hill,

19:30 no one there, they fired a few shots and bugged out [departed]. Then the next hill which was another probably quarter of a mile away, when we got near that the same thing happened, few odd shots. So we

went through our battle procedure, went under the hill nobody there, they'd gone. Anyway, while we were there the platoon commander looked around and he found out none of us had entrenching tools, little

- 20:00 shovels. He had one and while he was sort of, at the time I must have been a corporal or something like that, I was in charge of the section. He called me over and he gave me the entrenching tool and he said, and he sighted the Bren gun, he said, "Get him to dig the Bren in there then hand around the entrenching tool and bring it back to me." Anyway, the Bren Gunner started to dig and all of a sudden we heard in the
- 20:30 distance a funny rumbling like a train. And anyway everyone looked at me and I said, "You're the old soldiers what the hell's that?" they said, "We don't know." And cause they'd been there at Kapyong and some of the fellows had been under the burning fire from the napalm. Anyway, a few seconds later we found out what it was, there were shells flying everywhere and we were trying to scratch holes with our fingers. And the valley was
- 21:00 open but on the west side there were razor backs, that's sort of ridges coming into the valley, very sharp. And I think about the second barrage Leary came forward and he said to me, "Grab all your men and move across the opening in the valley and get on the edge of the razorback." Straight away I knew what he was doing, they'd ranged
- 21:30 in to fire down the valley and of course they were lifting their fire going further down the valley. In the meantime there was a machine-gun firing from one of the flanks which we had to go across and you probably know with sound, we could hear sound bang, bang a few shots and by that time the projectile had gone past us, you know it's quicker than the sound. And he said, "I won't have to tell ya but you can work what's going on there and work out when to move across."
- 22:00 So we all got together in a sort of a line facing the razor back and as soon as we heard the shots fired we took off and got across and I didn't get any casualties. And from there, Leary came across with us, he made us go across these razor backs, up and down, back towards the river where we had to RV [rendezvous] with our company. And of course we'd gone a fair distance and we weren't feeling too good. but
- 22:30 that man as fellows dropped out he took their weapons, he was a big man, and he threw them on his shoulder and he carried them until we got to a creek which is a semi river and two of the fellows were just laying face down drowning and old Leary grabbed them by the scruff of the neck and pulled them across and throw them on the bank, and with their weapons. And he saved all our lives by taking us up and down over those razorbacks because they weren't ranged in, they ranged into the valley. And by the time Charlie
- 23:00 woke up we were out of it. I might add before we did this stunt he was a new officer and he came to us and we were wearing bandannas around our neck, had all sorts of different weapons, looked like a bunch of Mexican pirates or something and he got up there and starts kicking backside all over the joint. That made up set up our camp reasonably, there was no flat ground there it was top of a mountain. Anyway, the boys nicknamed him
- 23:30 Leo the Laos, his name was Geoff Leary, Leo the Laos. I tell you what after that episode with that artillery there was not one bloke ever called him Leo the Laos. I had respect for some officers but a great amount for him. And he finished up a CO [Commanding Officer] of the Vietnam unit that I went to but it was a different time, I missed him. Anyway, he's passed on now. But Leary
- 24:00 did exactly as an officer should and he also lead by example and not a lot did that. Anyway, that was the first time we got the artillery, from then on they decided we could have a bit every now and then. Mortars, they were very good with the mortars the Chinese. Their artillery must have been equivalent to our 25 pounder, cause it made about the same amount of damage.
- 24:30 That was about the biggest part I can remember, oh we captured a few prisoners too at one stage there. They had an order out that anyone that catches a prisoner we'll give them 72 hours leave down south somewhere and a bottle of whiskey. I remember a couple of blokes lining up and getting this. Anyway, then they were preparing for Operation Commando which was in October,
- 25:00 we moved from Lightning Ridge over to a place to the west of what they call Castle Hill and that was the area where the Gloucesters [Gloucestershire Regiment] got slaughtered and they were captured there and taken up as prisoners into North Korea. Actually we called it the Gloucester Crossing and what had happened, through history Genghis Kahn and all his mob when they'd come down from
- 25:30 China where they came from in that area, Mongolia, they used this approach, this valley and there was a sort of underwater bridge, down only about a couple of feet. And of course they knew about this and our people didn't and they, the Gloucesters were set up on the south side of the river and during the night the invading troops came down, quietly went across into them and sort of just
- 26:00 about wiped out the unit itself. No matter how you sort of fight you've only got a certain amount of ammunition and stuff and after that I think the Gloucesters were inoperable because most of them were in the prison camp, they captured them, they had to because they had nothing left to fight with. Anyway, we stayed in that area, I might add there was still a lot of the bodies lying around there too, every time

it would rain it would wash somebody out.

26:30 **How long were you in the area after that incident?**

Probably 4 weeks, close to it because we were going through this procedure which was leading up to a division attack. And we were doing the normal work that was done by a platoon and a section and so on and leading up to the company.

27:00 When we left the area we knew there was something on because they turned up with a trailer load of booze and we all got a couple of bottles of beer and we thought oh gee were getting two bottles of beer we might have to go all the way up to Pyongyang. Any case in the morning we broke out of camp and moved out and settled up again somewhere south of the Lightning Ridge.

27:30 Then we waited there for two or 3 days then we moved forward, by that time it's October. Oh our platoon moved up and attached ourselves to the King's Own Scottish Borders and we were sort of not involved in their operations. Then we were taken back from this position and formed up with a company for an attack on

28:00 355, 227, 199 and 317.

Were those objectives all part of the operation?

They were all hills that we had to take. It started off one of the West Australian officers a bloke called Jack Kirk he was on the flank, he'd gone to Charlie Company [C Company], he was on the flank of the battalion and he moved up overlooking this little Gibraltar or [Hill] 355

28:30 and he had two Vickers guns moved up there and they, the British couldn't take the hill. They piped them up they got slaughtered, they came back and they piped them in. Anyway, old Jack got the two Vickers guns set up and he fired straight along their front. And he took a Bren Gunner and a couple of other chaps and they attacked the edge of this sort of little Gibraltar giving the Brits a chance to put in their attack with support from,

29:00 right angle support. In other words they're firing across here and you're going up there and while that fires in front of you the enemy can't get it's head up. And anyway the next part of it was they'd occupied part of 355 we had to move through and take the other area and the bottom of 355. That was early in October.

What kind of set ups did the enemy have on those objectives?

It was

29:30 their winter line and they were really dug in and any case, and I always remember one of our blokes had a fixed bayonet, got to tell you his name. He came from Geraldton and actually he was a Mornington Milne boy and he attacked this, with the boys on the attack with the rifle and somewhere I've got a photo and a bullet went straight through the butt of the rifle and missed him and his name was Wilfred

30:00 Horseman. And we called him Slim, he was about 6-foot-2 and about that wide, just as well he never got hit then. Anyway, the actual attack was, we were moving into position and you could see nothing and somewhere a shot came out of the mist and a mate of mine he got hit fair through the head and dropped him. And we'd been playing cricket a few weeks before and I remember I drove the ball and this, he was pretty quiet

30:30 sort of bloke, put his hand up caught me out and I was crooked on him for catching me, playing cricket. Anyway, he caught that one straight through the head and fixed him up. Then there was no more shots fired and we moved forward and we were moving out into formation to put an attack in. The mist rose, you wouldn't believe it the Chinese are sitting on the edge of their trenches eating rice, I was amazed, I thought my God and they looked like fleas, they

31:00 were everywhere. Anyway, prior to that our artillery was going in to soften them up, things in front of us and so on, we moved in and you wouldn't believe it our blokes went straight over the top of them. They occupied their trenches, we took quite a few prisoners, and before we realised it we had taken this position on Baldy [Hill]. B Company moved through us and Charlie Company

31:30 and they took the hinge, they moved through that and then went straight onto [Hill] 317 and they took 317, it was amazing. And if they take those objectives like that, in any case that's taking it. A few days later they put in a counter attack and there was hell on earth.

Before we talk about the counter attack isn't it a bit surprising that you had the artillery sweep through there and then when you

32:00 **arrived and the fog lifted they were just sitting there eating rice?**

Yeah well see it was going over the top of them and see I don't think they realised it was a winter line there, they had trenches with great sort of bunkers in them and everything else. And if we hadn't of got them out in the open when we did and they'd have been in those bunkers we wouldn't have survived,

even though we had a drill we use grenades and stuff like that and blow them out of them. But later we got clothes

32:30 and things out of their winter line and we wore these clothes cause we'd lost our own stuff when we went through, you dump all your gear and then it's basically bought up to you after you've occupied a position, well that didn't eventuate. But anyway there's a bit of a story with that.

Well did you take any prisoners while you were occupying those trenches?

Yes, yes they were everywhere, I think they were amazed where we'd come from and they weren't too happy about us either, they thought we were cannibals and all the rest of it. But we had a lot of

33:00 prisoners and weapons and mortars and small arms, you name it

How did you take custody of them?

Well normally what you do it people come up and take them back and you never let anyone go back with them. In other words you don't let your strength go off your position. So these people were put in a central point, they had guards with them, and then people came up and took them back, mainly they'd bring a

33:30 jeep up and sit a couple on the bonnet and strip them and take them back that way. With the people that were sort of still fighting in the trenches the main way they got them out was by using grenades and cause with the grenades there's a bit for everybody. But I think the, initially they got such a shock when they sort of looked out and

34:00 to see us blokes coming straight at them that they were demoralised. But if they'd have got back in those pits, we still had a few to dig out but the majority that got away took off and went down the reverse slopes, see we couldn't hit them but the artillery could.

Did you out number them?

No way, no way, as I said they looked like fleas all over this hill but half of them the fleas took off too, they weren't going to stay there. But

34:30 I just forget the figures but they would have got at least 20 KIAs [Killed in Action] on the edge of the trenches. A friend of mine went into a trench, I was up on the right hand side at the time, I was the 2IC of the Section, and I had the light machine-gun and the boys were firing across to give support to our blokes that were going into the first lot of trenches. This fellow was called Sid Buckley, he was a corporal

35:00 and I saw him go backwards and half his head go with him and then I was called up to take over the section. And I thought he was dead, anyway he came from Ryde in New South Wales, you know he survived two burp gun bullets through his head? Of course afterwards he had a plate in it and every now and then he'd go all funny. But after I'd come back to Australia that bloke turned up in the Savoy Hotel in Perth,

35:30 to meet the West Aussie boys, there were a lot of West Aussies in the platoon. Old Sid he died later on, but he survived that. Anyway, what happened a chap came and gave me his Owen gun and he had what they call a pole vest, it's like a waist coat with a zip on and it's wool, or it's got padding in it and he said, the words he said to me was, "Buck said to give you this." I said, "What are you talking about? Buck's dead." He said, "No he's not."

36:00 He said, "The Yanks got him, strapped him on a tank and took the tank through the river and hand him over on a chopper," and I said, "Well that's marvellous." Anyway, a bit of a story with this, I said, "Fair enough," so I took the pole vest and later on I put it on under me gear and all the rest of it and about a month later I was wearing that going back in the same area, and we were putting the attack in at this stage

36:30 and I got shot with it. So when I was going out with another bloke that had been skittled before me to, it was the second one to be wounded, I said, "Here take the Owen and ask the boys who wants the pole vest," and I got a nice reply from them "You know what you can do with that, you're the third bloke that's had that that's got knocked and we don't want it," they wouldn't wear it, I said, "Well you can go cold."

What happened

37:00 **in the instance where you were wounded Don?**

That was later, after they'd settled down with Operation Commando, or they had two battle areas, 1 was Maryang San, that was 355, or Little Gibraltar. The one on 317 [Maryang San]. I can't remember the name, the Korean name. But anyway when they counter attacked our boys held

37:30 and they went through hell these fellows, and they even ended up half the mob had to cart ammo and grenades up to them so they could exist. And we were getting the overflow from the Chinese artillery onto where 10 Platoon was, and that was bad enough, and they were coping the initial barrages onto where they were. And we were sitting waiting and every now and then you'd hear the burp gun or the Owen gun and you'd hear the 36

38:00 grenade. When they exploded you'd hear ping, as the base plate used to fly, and that's how we knew our blokes were still holding, cause it was Australian grenades, or British grenades that they were throwing and it wasn't the Chinese stuff. They held the position and then later they sent British troops in to take over and they were part of our brigade, it was the King's Own Scottish Borderers, they held the position up until

38:30 4th of November, were going from October now through to November the normal stuff went on in between...

What was happening in your position while that was going on?

Well we were moved forward to cart out the wounded and also we still had to hold our own position because we were on a flank, but to get grenades and stuff up to the boys and the KSC as they called them, the Korean Service Corps, they were just carriers, they bugged out,

39:00 I would have to and they wouldn't go up to the front with the ammunition and stuff. And all over the battalion people volunteered and went up and gave them a hand. We stayed in position and still carried on holding part of 355 and the jocks moved onto 317, the Kings Own Scottish Borders, and the coastal eyes were over from them

39:30 and I don't know who was on, I think that at stage the Americans were fighting on Heartbreak Ridge, which was to our east. But the normal stuff was going on, we were digging holes and putting bunkers in and overhead cover, barb wire and all that sort of stuff. But we had an outpost under a hill called 227 and you had to get in there in the dark and out in the dark cause a Charlie could shoot down into the trench, crawl trench

40:00 that was there. Anyway, we had snipers bought up from BHQ [Battalion Headquarters] and one bloke was called Stumpy Loud, a great big bloke come from Pemberton. They said, "We want a sniper," I said, "Get Stumpy Loud he's a great shot," I didn't tell them he didn't smoke and I used to get his tobacco ration. I met him a few years ago at a reunion in Canberra. And old Stumpy would get there and say, "All they've got to do is

40:30 fire one shot and there gone," and he was so right. And old Charlie woke up they've got a bloke down there that can shoot, we won't fire any more shots at them. And he had a light machine gun and as I said he'd fire one shot and they'd put another gunner up there, after they'd lost a couple they decided they wouldn't fire any more shots. But I've got to mention Loudy because I struck him over in Canberra with another chap and this chap was out of our platoon

41:00 and he had a wooden leg, but he got that in civi [civilian] life on a motorbike. And this bloke kept bumping me and saying, "Hey give us a smoke?" and I said, "I told you before I don't smoke." "Oh come on give us a smoke," and I got a bit...couple of things too weren't very nice and he said, "Come on you always were a miserable B [bastard]." And I looked at him and it was a bloke I'd worked with in the mines, served with him in Korea and he'd gone got married had a

41:30 heap of kids and the poor bugger had a wooden leg. And it was a bloke called Ray Cullen, always remember Ray.

So he'd gone to Korea with a wooden leg?

No, no when he came out of Korea he fell off a motorbike and him and another boy from the west both smashed their legs up, Normie Taylor was the other fellow, I haven't seen him for years but he's still in the west, I hope he's

42:00 still alive, he went through Kapyong...

Tape 5

00:31 **You were just telling Julian [interviewer] how many companies were involved in Operation Commando?**

Well the whole battalion was involved. At times they put, if a company had been involved in a fire fight and an attack and they'd lost casualties and the physical side of it they just about had it, they would then leap frog another company through them and then they'd do the attack. And that's one of the reasons why I never mentioned

01:00 our commander was Hasset, he's got, I think he's Sir Frank Hasset now, I know he is and I think he would be close up in rank to old Tom Blamey. Anyway, he had worked out the tactics on this attack and he more or less used what he'd learnt in New Guinea too. He got us on the high ground, or to take the high ground

01:30 then he moved troops through because in one of the official documents on the attack our company had moved and taken a position, I haven't mentioned this but I've got to. Our platoon commander was Geoff

Leary, once again I've told you about how he was. And on the attack the first thing that happened was some how or rather they shot the Company Commander, Bazzel Hardiman,

- 02:00 and he wasn't up in the front anyway. Then 10 Platoon was moving in, Geoff Leary gets shot in a bad place through the thigh and of course he wasn't too good. After they'd taken the position Leary sat down and as a platoon commander normally does he sights the right machine-gun, he did that, he told everyone where to go,
- 02:30 he called me up, and I always tell the boys this, "You blokes were never promoted in the middle of a battle," and he said, "Cameron you're now the corporal of 10 Platoon, 2 Section 10 Platoon." And with that after he'd placed everyone in position he said to the stretcher-bearers, "Now you can take me out," but that's the type of man he was. I don't think, I think he got mentioned at despatches,
- 03:00 but anyway he went in with his forward troops onto that position. Now what am I talking about, oh Bazzle the Beast he got, that was the nickname for the company commander he wasn't very well liked. Anyway, he went out and Jim Young was about the only officer we had left there I think he took over the company. And the CO, this is hearsay of course, apparently contacted he and he said
- 03:30 "Can you advance any further?" and he, this is what I'm told through the Sig, he sent back over the radio "Give me 15 minutes and were ready to go." And he gave them a bit of a break and then moved forward again and we occupied the whole position. Then they held E Company back, we'd just about had it by then physically and we had casualties, but as I've just said
- 04:00 company commander, we had an acting company commander, our platoon commander took over from Geoff Leary was a bloke called Vince Brown of all things, ex Wharfie from Sydney, only little bloke. Everyone then was put in acting jobs including myself. We held Baldy, the position of Baldy, B Company went through us,
- 04:30 Charlie Company went through us, A Company were, at that stage were holding another position, I'm not sure I think it was 199, but anyway what we were suppose to do we were advanced further and we were suppose to. And apparently when they had the officers group with the brigadier and so on our CO disagreed with the plan and anyway
- 05:00 the Brits generally get their way with these things they decided well they had to go ahead with it, our people did. And a writer afterwards had written up on this battle and he said, "The Australians disagree with the plan, god knows where they'd have finished up if they had agreed with the plan," in other words they did more than they were suppose to have done, which they did, they did a great job. And it was everyone in it not say a section of machine-guns and
- 05:30 1 Company, it was the whole battalion. The whole battalion was not involved in Kapyong for instance, Charlie Company was a reserve Company and they weren't involved in the battle. Lot of people hate you saying that because they wear the citation, but it happen to be true. Two blokes I went to school with were in the battle, they said they heard some movement and they threw two grenades down the re-entrant
- 06:00 finish, next day they had to help D Company go out, anyway I'm getting away from the story.

So that was Kapyong that you were talking about?

Yes this is from people that fought at Kapyong.

How many casualties were there with Operation Commando?

Well I got there a month later than Kure and masses of casualties and so on and there'd have been,

- 06:30 in the ward I was in, and there was Australian Ward, Brit Ward, Canadian Ward, and our blokes were in the lot of them, if you were hurt in the head you went to Canadian or your eyes or something like that. Gun shot wounds up with the Aussies, Australian nurses and that. I'd say there'd be anything up to 30 to 50 people. No, I don't know how many were killed, their WA's wounded I'm talking about. And the chap that got shot in the head he was in the
- 07:00 ward and he had his facilities about him, he was a little bit hazy and cranky at times. And as soon as he saw me he said, "What are you doing here you so and so? I told you to look after that Section." Anyway, he used to go, they let him go out on leave in a blue uniform with a red tie and a white shirt and all this and oh he'd get done up, one beer and he'd be done up. And he come back and he had a lanyard
- 07:30 and he'd get up on his bed and he'd put the lanyard around his neck and he'd hold the top, he was going to hang himself, cause he'd stir all the blokes up in the ward and the old matron would go crook. Even though he was badly wounded like that he was still, he didn't have the silver plate in his head then either, he still had a bit of humour with him.

But after he got the silver plate he lost his sense of humour?

Oh I tell you what he finished up, I think he did finish up doing himself in,

- 08:00 he tired once when I was with him and we saved him, he told me he was having terrible headaches and

stuff like that.

So that's quite a tragic story?

Hmm.

We know when you were made a corporal on the spot in Gunpowder Plot?

No, that was Commando.

Oh that was Commando okay. Does that actually carry through like after you've been made a corporal there?

Not by the book your suppose

08:30 to do a school and become a substandard corporal, pass your corporal exams and all that or sergeants exams. You've always got to do exams for these different ranks, well there's no way you do them over there. But we're all temporary rank, now I think you interviewed Ray Parry a double diamond chap, you may not have. Ray took B Company, or 1 of the platoons of B Company in the attack

09:00 on Commando as a private acting corporal, acting sergeant, acting platoon commander, a private soldier. Anyway, he had a platoon at Kapyong and he took the brunt of the attack and he's the chap that in the morning after the attack they were out of ammunition and Clem Keeley was forwards, he's a chap that's not too good now he's over in the eastern states, old Clem was a great soldier, finished up

09:30 warrant officer. He had an outpost in front of Ray and he had to withdraw because they had no ammo and they had fixed their bayonets for the last attack, when they came up with ammunitions and stuff for them and a few reinforcements. And Ray's told me that himself and he's a fellow that doesn't stretch the truth. But yes he went in and they really had it there, they went in and it was full of Chinese, anyway they got them out.

10:00 I can't tell you how many we killed there really, how many were wounded but we had a lot of prisoners.

And you mentioned also before that these prisoners seemed to think you were cannibals, what's going on there?

Oh I think they're like us, we get brainwashed about certain people and all that business.

So you think its propaganda from the other side?

Well later on, of course same with us, same with the Japs, can't see, can't do this, their planes are no good, didn't do too bad with them.

10:30 Anyway, lost the train of thought there, there's something I'm going to mention about. Oh, after Commando, after Operation Gunpowder Plot [Chinese offensive] there was a big shield hole just back on the reverse slopes from the trenches and we heard, I think 5 prisoners, 5 or 6 prisoners and they were in that and we had fellows watching them,

11:00 and we had some of our wounded there too, and a friend of mine was a Stretcher Bearer Corporal, Maxi Stegar. Anyway, Max was giving our boys morphine, they could have it, not the head wounds and things the usual story with morphine. And he went up to some of the Chinese and I was sitting there watching this fellow, our fellows had taken over the position, we consolidated and I'd moved

11:30 back out and a fellow had taken over from me. And when he saw him come along with the needle he didn't see him given anyone else the needle he put his hands together praying not to give him the needle. And Max was a pretty cluey bloke, anyway a fellow called Smith, Tosh Smith was with us and he'd been decorated at Kapyong, he should have got another one there too and he didn't, but anyway that's my opinion. And he gave him a shot, he was hit around the legs in a lot of pain and after that

12:00 then the prisoner accepted it, and when I did anyone that they were giving it to that wanted it they gave them the morphine. But I always remember that fellow he reckons we were going to get rid of him giving him the shot.

I think we really skipped a bit too much over the Gunpowder Plot, if you can actually tell us why it was called the Gunpowder Plot?

Yeah it's a fair story really, take a bit of time. Anyway, on the 4th of November

12:30 the Chinese counter attacked 317, at that stage I was sent out to an outpost, it was more or less a listening post, with a Section of fellows and a radio. My orders were if you get any stiff resistance fall back to the Company Platoon area. Any case when the artillery start, oh the Kings Own Scottish Borders were on 317, they'd taken over from us

13:00 and Charlie was going to get them off there one way or another and he blew hell out of the place. And this is where Simpson got the VC [Victoria Cross] for throwing bottles at them or something, anyway that's the story. And were sitting in this position and one of the fellow lit a cigarette, I'll never forget it, useless B anyway, afterwards pushed down his neck, he said, "I didn't think I didn't think," and he was really

- 13:30 he hadn't been in a blow before anyway. So Charlie started to fire and were getting green tracers going all around us, and that was as far as I was concerned stiff resistance. In the meantime the Chinese had gone straight over the top of this, I could see in the flares they were all over this 317 the big point, it looked like an ice cream. And I told our fellows to go and I stayed to sort of
- 14:00 have the last look and all I could see was Chinese troops everywhere. And I always remember I ran and I jumped over this bit of a hill and there was an open pit full of tins and I dropped right into the middle of these tins and there's tins rattling and roaring and I'm trying to get out of the tin pit, managed and moved back to the area. In the morning I told them, the company commander said, "What did you come back for?" and I told him and he said, "Well were not too sure they're there." I said, "Wait till tomorrow, you'll
- 14:30 find out." Were standing too at dawn and this Baldy Hill was covered in them and I said to this officer we had, "Get all the Brens over here, quick." I said, "They're out in the open and what we can't get company will get with the Vickers on the other side." "Oh," he said, "better than that I'm calling in the artillery." I said, "Your what?" Anyway, I was disgusted I walked out of the way. If it had of been the Kiwis I'd guarantee
- 15:00 they'd have dropped them right on top of them, but it wasn't we were supported by another unit and they fired the first lot of shells and they went straight over the top of the hill and Charlie jumped back in the holes. And at 4 o'clock on the following day, all day they sniped us and we fired a few shots back, put in artillery and all the rest of it, because company was right on the edge of the position we couldn't put too much there or we'd have hit our company headquarters, they were in front of us. Anyway, the afternoon
- 15:30 we got the order we were attacking Baldy we've got to put a section over from company, I'm not sure what platoon they were from, and we used two of our sections and left 1 back to hold a position. And this officer he, was his first fight he was going to play hell. Any case we lined up and started to move and I, they put me forward because I'd been through the mine field where all the
- 16:00 wire was and it was all blown up and there was no track through it but I knew, the night before I'd come through this. So anyway I'm moving on with the boys and I told them I said, "You know what we were told about the Vickers for god sake keep moving and don't anyone fall out." Any case Charlie starts throwing these stick grenades and there going over our heads, one of them hits this officer square in the top of the head and blew up and he blew up with it, that's the last we saw of him.
- 16:30 And they said it knocked him rotten, well he was very lucky it knocked him rotten. So I looked around and there's myself and Tosh, this other bloke, and I said, "Well all we can do is keep going if we start mucking around now they'll have us on the defensive we'll be gone." But anyway we got up close and used our grenades and one bunker finished, we took the position except for one bunker and they were still fighting from this. And prior to that, which is by
- 17:00 my citation no one knew about, except one man that I've got as a witness, a fellow had shot at me from the bunker and he shot me through this arm and I had equipment around my belt and it hit the equipment and ricochet into my back, I wasn't feeling very happy at the time. I threw a grenade into this bunker and it was thrown out, and only without laying across this bloomin
- 17:30 overhead cover and they're firing into the bottom of it trying to get me from the top. Anyway, a bloke called Billy Walsh crawled up close to me and I had no grenade and I said, "Blue for god sake throw me a grenade," and he came right up and he tossed the grenade to me, he's sticking his neck out. Anyway, I got the grenade and I let the striker go, 1, 2 and I threw it in and it upset a few of them in there and I got a couple of prisoners out of there.
- 18:00 And after I pulled back and sat on the side of the hill Blue was alongside me and I looked down and here was a grenade and it shot to bits, off my belt, and the lever was twisted over and I said, "Blue have a good look at that no one will ever believe that happened," he said, "Get rid of it, get rid of it." And I threw it over the top of him into the trench and it blew up. And that should of exploded and blown me to bits and
- 18:30 I still carry little bits of it in my back now. And they didn't tell me that I had that in there for 40 years and a English Doctor told me he said, "What's all these little bits in your back?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "Did you ever get?" He said, "Oh you've got a bit of scar there." I said, "That's right," and he said, "What was it?" I said, "Oh that would be bits of cast," and it was the stuff that came off the grenade, you wouldn't read about it. But old Blue he's somewhere over in Vic, I hope he's still alive he can authenticate what I've just said.
- 19:00 He said, "How the hell did that happen?" it twisted the striker see and it couldn't go down to ignite the grenade, talk about lucky I should have had a ticket in lotto then. Anyway, we occupied it, the company commander came up to me and said, "What the hells wrong with you, get back on the hill." I said, "Yeah, right oh I will if you give me a couple of blokes to help me." He said, "What's that dribbling out of your boot?" I said, "Blood. What do you think it is?" "Get down on that stretcher and get out of here."
- 19:30 Anyway, he came to see us in the hospital later, when he was going home. But this Smith and myself were put on a stretcher jeep with two prisoners on the front, they weren't stripped they'd just taken their, they were both wounded. And while we were going down towards where they had the

ambulances...

How far away were the ambulances?

From where we were probably could have been 2 or 3 miles, you had to come off the hill itself,

20:00 edge of little Gibraltar then go down to the flats then out, there was another row of hills and they were on the reverse side of that. And it was just a field hospital.

Is Baldy still raging now?

No, no it was all quite our boys were still sitting there and holding it and that was the last attack after [Operation] Commando that happened before they withdrew the whole front. And that we'd taken and held and all the rest of it and they

20:30 made us withdraw to straighten the line up, oh, tactics and all the lives that were lost. Anyway, old Tosh said to the, sergeants got a rifle see, not according to the Geneva Convention your not suppose to have a red arm band, red cross band and have a weapon. And Tosh said, "Give us a look at that rifle you've got there," and the bloke went to get it and he said, "You

21:00 murdering B." He said, "Your not getting my," Tosh was going to shoot the two prisoners. He said, "I wouldn't have shot them." I said, "Wouldn't you hell," he was one of those type of blokes he would of shot them. Anyway, we finished up, oh on a hospital train with a bunch off Heartbreak Ridge, I don't know where the hell we got onto a train, but the ambulance took us there. Then...

Are you getting like medical attention as soon...?

Oh yes we'd all, actually I'll tell you how good it was,

21:30 I had a field dressing on that arm and a field dressing around my belly for my back and I had that until I got to the evacuation, the American Evacuation Hospital and then they didn't touch me arm, they said, "Oh it's just a scratch," which it probably was but I was screaming blue murder help and all that, not really. Anyway, we went to the Norwegian MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital].

Norwegian?

Norwegian yeah,

22:00 and they were brilliant, did everything they could for us and they were waiting to move us to the American Evacuation Hospital where they had all the operating paraphernalia and so on, I think that was at Soul. Everyone was on stretchers and they were giving what they could and what they, and looking after you but there was a bunch of young blokes, I won't tell you what nationality and all night they

22:30 were crying for bloomin morphine, I could have strangled them, thank god they weren't Australians. But anyway this Tosh with me he was a Pom [English], he sorted a few of them out. Well we went from there to the...

How did he sort a few of them out?

Beg your pardon?

How did he sort them out?

Oh with the voice, he told them what they were and all the rest of it. Anyway...

What sort of attention did you get by the nurses there?

Very good you, the only thing they couldn't do was sort of, we were on

23:00 the nose a bit was give us any new gear and stuff like that, but if you could eat stuff, naturally it was combat rations and stuff that they had but we got fed, got a drink of coffee or whatever was going. No they were very good and it was still primitive, it was similar to what you see on MASH [American television series set in a surgical hospital during the Korean War] here the set up was under canvas.

How long were you there in the Norwegian MASH?

I think we were there two days, we weren't there very long and, what they were doing the trains

23:30 were going through and taking the people off Heartbreak Ridge, they were all Americans to the Evac [Evacuation] Hospital, they were working out the ones with the real bad wounds, life threatening. And then we moved back onto ambulance and they took us through to the Evac Hospital which had been used for years and was there when they were fighting earlier on and all the windows were gone and everything else. But they were treating Chinese wounded

24:00 in the operating theatre exactly the same as they were treating our people. Cause I always remember one fellow was on like a stretcher and he had a bath under him, and as quick as they were pumping blood into him it was going out into the bath and they were trying to stitch him up at the same time. But they fought like hell to save him and he was just an ordinary Chinese soldier. They treat us okay...

What do you think about the fact that they were treating the Chinese just as they were treating everyone else?

I think that's how it should be.

24:30 As far as they're concerned I've got a lot of respect for them, different little things that happened. Like at one stage during Commando they came in with a white flag and they went and picked up their own wounded and dead and some of our people were there and put sheets over them, left them there. Our stretcher bearers went out into their territory picked them up and they never fired a shot until they were over the reverse flanks of our position, where they were safe, things like that.

25:00 Even blokes who were taken prisoner they had nothing but they treated them reasonably well but the North Koreans they had a hell of a name. Oh, I've got to tell you this one Tosh and I got the Purple Heart. We had beds there at the Evac hospital and an American Padre, what the hell do they call them, they

25:30 don't call them Padres. Anyway, this fellow came along and he had a dirty great big tray thing and as he's going along, and he's got the stuff for the last rights around his neck too I might add, and he's putting a Purple Heart on each pillow as he goes past. So he puts one on my pillow and he puts one of Tosh's pillow and anyway I said, "Oh we can't wear those." He said, "Who are you people?" I said,

26:00 "We're Australians." He said, "Oh I don't see why you wouldn't have one," he left it there anyhow, were not allowed to wear them.

Is that just an American?

That's correct and I'll quote the book and it says, and this is from the Presidents Secretary 'A person who is not an American citizen cannot win the Congressional Medal of Honour or wear the Purple Heart'. Every other decoration Silver Star, Bronze Star you can wear them. And as

26:30 I say a lot of people later on got them and they reckon they're entitled to wear them, well that's not on. Anyway, they treated us pretty well they had a look at my back and probed around a bit and then they put a great heap of sticking plaster right around me. Went back to the bed, I was out to it while this is going on with pentathol. And then when I went back and come to on the bed I got both hands taped to my thighs like this. Something went through my mind and I

27:00 said, "Oh liquid don't tell me what I've done." And I ripped this thing away and it's all blood on me hand, cause I though I'd wet the bed. And I yelled out and one big Negro came along and he looked and he looked where I was laying on this rubber stuff and the blood there. And anyway to finish a terrible story there was a fold in the stuff, the sticking plaster they put around me and of course it was bleeding through this,

27:30 this fold, it hadn't sealed up the cut on me back. And these fellow came along with a stretcher and his mate and they're galloping along there and I think they hit me and caught me in mid air and they took off and they're heading to the operating theatre and this blokes saying, frighten hell out of me, he's saying, "Don't you die boy, don't you die." And I thought I'm not about to die as far as I'm concerned I'm getting out of here. And they put me out to it again and then they still put sticker plaster back on me,

28:00 cause they were pretty busy, the place was full of them.

So what you're saying they didn't seal the wound effectively?

That's right yeah I wasn't stitched up, I was stitched up back in Kure, wasn't a hell of a lot of stitches.

Hell of a lot of stitches?

There wasn't no, no, no, it's only a cut like that.

It still sounds like you were loosing quite a bit of blood?

Well it's only natural they'd been probing around trying to get these bits and pieces out. Tosh and I then

28:30 were put onto a RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] Dakota and taken back to Iwakuni, 77 Squadron in Japan. From there we were put on a train and sent to Kure and from Kure we were taken to Kure Hospital and...

They always escorted, sorry, by nurses?

Beg your pardon?

Are you escorted by nurses when you.....?

Yeah some cranky old dears too, they don't ease up, they don't hand out too much bloomin sympathy I'll put it

29:00 that way, oh there's some old bags amongst them, they do a great job though. Even, we got time to tell stories about this?

Yeah sure?

Anyway, after I got straightened up all right and old Tosh he was dry to the nuts, I was out on the veranda with a Kiwi sergeant.

This is in Japan?

This is Kure Hospital, military hospital and for fire there they had a full 40 gallon drums with the tops chopped out full of water.

29:30 Anyway, one night this Kiwi he says to me, "Do you want a beer?" I said, "Where the hell we get a beer up here?" He said, "Do you want a beer?" I said, "I'd love one." So he goes over rolls up his dressing gown put his hand down into the fire bucket pulls out two bottles of beer. And I said, "Gees how'd you manage that?" He said, he wasn't telling me his tricks. But in the morning the house girls would come along and sweep up and she'd dive her hand in take the empties out and put the full ones back in

30:00 and he'd give her the money, she was getting the money for the empty bottles as well as pay for the beer. There's always a way.

So what was this hospital like in Japan can you describe it for me?

Oh military hospital, two storey place great, everything there, we had the best of everything. While I was there I was telling you about that Miyajima, I was sent over to the con [convalescent] camp for a couple of weeks, I didn't last, I got into trouble, they sent me home,

30:30 or back to hospital. Anyway, the matron comes around one day and she said, "You can walk around all right I'm giving you a blue uniform," and I thought, "There's something here. I don't know what it is." And she said, "And the condition is you will take," Smithy was, Tosh was a corporal, "you'll take Corporal Smith on leave and you're responsible for him." I said, "Not on your life. I'm not responsible for him." She said, "That's the only way he gets out you'll look after him." And there was another chap with us and I can't think of his name.

31:00 We get him in the wheelchair down we go and I wheel him into Kure, he said, "We're not stopping here down to the beer hall." So we get in this beer hall, have quite a few beers, I knew something was coming, turned around and he said to me, "When you going back?" I said, "You know when she said we've got to be back." He said, "Never mind about 'we'." He said, "I'm not going back." I said, "Well that's great, that is. I go back and that old bat, she's going to get stuck into me," which she did. He said,

31:30 "Well I'm not going back." So he called a house girl over, one of the bar girls and he said, "Get a taxi for me?" she said, "Taxi's only little." He said he didn't care, get a taxi. So he gets all the people from the beer garden to take this wheelchair out strap it on the roof of this little taxi he gets inside and takes off. I said, "Where you going?" "Oh," he said, "I'll be right." He wasn't going to tell me where he was going. I might add he'd been there and had connections around that area before.

32:00 So back I go, "Where's Smith?" Didn't I cop it. "Get out of that uniform into your pyjamas." That was it. She got rid of that uniform this blue uniform, put me pyjamas on and me dressing gown and that's how I stayed, they wouldn't give me the blue uniform back until they sent me to the con care. Anyway, that's the humorous part.

So how long were you actually in that?

Couple of weeks I suppose I'd be there,

32:30 a couple of weeks sent to the con camp came back after a week.

What sort of nationalities were being taken of?

Only Aussies there.

Oh only Aussies?

A mate of mine to, side story, in an attack he lost his eye, George Wilson, great bloke too, UK [United Kingdom] enlistee job, who's a Scotsman. Anyway, I got a message from the Canadian ward, they said, "Cameron," they asked Cameron to go down to the ward at a certain time, and I thought what the hell there's nothing, I'm

33:00 not hit in the head or anything. Anyway, I went down and they said, "Oh your Cameron?" I said, "Yeah." They said, "Go to that bed over there." And it was Wilson. So when I get over there I said, "What do you want me for?" "Oh," he said, "I want you to help me with a little job in a minute." And I said, "What the hells that?" His eyes all covered up and everything. And I still can't work out how he didn't get hit in the nose or in the side of the face, just ripped his eye out. So

33:30 with that, oh weren't they making a fuss of him these Canadian Nurses, I said, "We don't get that treatment," they were awake up to us anyway. She comes in and she's got this thing covered and when she gets alongside me she said, "Now pick one out," and she pulls the cover back and it's all eyes looking at me. And what he wanted me to do was get the same colour eye as... I said, "Don't you trust the nurse?" He said, "Oh you never can tell what they do to ya." And anyway here I am helping him get these eyes to put in.

34:00 Oh Christ, anyway we did that job...

That's an interesting thing to be able to do?

Well later we were somewhere on leave and he was there and he used to terrify all the girls by pulling his bloody glass eye out and plonking it in his beer.

Nice. With the convalescent camp how did you actually manage to get there from?

From Kure we went on a fairmile boat,

34:30 there's quite a few of us, about a dozen, anyway...

How long is the distance on this just to give me a bit of an idea?

Oh I look I couldn't tell ya would be a good hours trip. But in the inland sea itself and to get across to the island they sort of had a ferry but on the island itself there were only the temples there plus this hotel, or con camp where we had it, our blokes

35:00 had taken over and the only rule in that place was you had to be at your bed by bed check, which was about 10 o'clock I think. I made the mistake of going into the library with a couple of beers in and going to sleep and I was late getting back for the bed check, and it was no good giving an excuse the next day I was straight back on the fairmile, this was a week later I might add, sent back to Kure.

35:30 **So basically if you don't follow the rules?**

That's right your gone, back you go. And you can drink as much beer as you like there, terrific food and...

Is this also and Australian?

Run by the Australians yeah, all Australians.

What sort of facilities did they have, you mentioned they had a library which was...?

Yeah library, ping pong, bloomin' billiards, it was a first class place. I mean similar to the lead places they had during the occupation, they had everything in those lead places.

What

36:00 **would you do to pass the time mostly there?**

Well I was getting around reasonably well but I still wanted a bit of support with a walking stick and there's deer and things like that running wild on this island and they're tame you can walk amongst them. I think I told you about the white horse, turning around, belonged to the Emperor. The big temple of so many mats, that was up on the hill, I didn't go up there. The people working

36:30 around the place making these sort of curio's and boxes and things like that. Oh you'd find plenty to do and of course they had beer on certain times, it wasn't open slather.

So you actually got to interact with some the locals?

Yes and funny thing they were growing, and I didn't want to ask what they grew them in, giant mushroom, they were gigantic things and I remember as a kid going out in the bush

37:00 and we used to call them horse mushies, we'd find these big mushies but you had to cut a piece of the back to cook them. And I know often we'd thrown them onto the stove as kids and you'd see all little wriggles coming out of them, we didn't look too hard I might add. Any case I went down the market and bought a couple of these and went to one of their sort of little eat houses things and they cooked them for me, oh they were delicious. But that's something that stuck in my mind from there,

37:30 as well as getting those boxes made.

Can you get like bits and pieces of food in markets or is it?

Oh yes see for a start it's a no, no you don't touch any of their food, especially vegetables, anything with skin on oranges, lemons anything like that you can peel that was okay, and that was only for a little while, after a while they were eating anything they could get their hands on. You now I'm talking about the troops when they

38:00 could get into a place where they could cook stuff. Eggs, tomagos, I always remember then.

What's a tomago?

Egg, if you go into a beer hall they'd have a heap of hard boiled eggs and liquid salt, you dip them in the salt and eat these eggs, tomagos. I always remember this bloke wanted some tomatoes and he asked them about tomatoes and they came back with the eggs, he's said, "These are the funniest B so and so tomatoes

38:30 I've ever seen." And they didn't know what he was talking about, but tomago was egg. Anyway, from Miyajima I went back to Kure and from there I had a talk to the doctor and so on...

Well did nobody actually believe your story about falling asleep accidentally?

Well it was a waste of time trying to tell it, I mean they probably heard that story a hundred times, I didn't care very much I was getting a bit toey at the time.

How's your injuries by this point?

They

39:00 weren't worrying me at all, went back they pulled a few stitches out. Oh I was going to tell you even when I was in Kure hospital I still had a field dressing on my arm, and that would be about a week later, but it was clean so that was the main thing. Anyway, the doctor cleared me and an ambulance took me back to the Reinforcement Holding Depot at Hiro and I stayed there for a couple of weeks. I wasn't allowed to wear a web belt

39:30 that used to go on the outside of your coat and all the Provos [Provosts - Military Police] used to pick me up.

All the sorry?

The provos used to pick me up, regimentally undressed and I had the pass on that says waived, wounded waived web belt. So I thought I'd get out of the guard and the old Jack Gerg again, the old devil he was the camp commandant, one day he said, "Your not doing anything around here." He said, "I'm going to put you on guard." I said

40:00 "Right sir but with respect I can't wear a web belt." "Well," he said, "I've changed the rules. You don't have to wear a web belt." Old B, he put me on guard. Anyway, when I got over to where the boys were and I had to call out their names and mark them off the list I hear, "Ho, ho, ho, she'd on tonight," and I look up and it's one of the blokes out of my Section and another fellow out of the battalion, all in a boob. Anyway, that night

40:30 everything was quite so I snuck, there's a beer hall just over from the camp, right opposite the main entrance I might add, I think it was the Boomerang or the Kookaburra, one of those. So I get across there, everything's nice and quite and they're all looking funny at me and I thought gee what's wrong I must have BO [body odour] or something then I heard this singing and I go round the back and all the blokes out the boob are all in there on the booze, oh gee I said, "I've got to get out of here," and this

41:00 chap Dave Bennett, old Dave I said to Dave "Make sure there's no grog over." "Oh," he said, "you won't find any grog there tomorrow." He wasn't saying there wouldn't be any grog over there. So anyway after, the next day they were all there, whoever the orderly sergeant was he came up, checked them out and afterwards I went inside cause they inspect their sleeping area and all the rest of it and I said to Dave, "Where the hell did you put all the bottles you blokes had?"

41:30 he said, "Anyone around?" I said, "I'll come and see you later." So I went back, and I had the keys to get into the boob and everything and he said, "Come over here and I'll show you," and they had floor boards in the tents, they were probably about 6 x 6 and they were up about that far off the ground on clouts, and you lift them up and there's bottles all lined with their neck down in the sand and there was rows of them. And I said, "Are the rest?" he said, "Oh we've still got one empty, one for the next time." Oh he was a wag, he's

42:00 ex prisoner of war too Dave Bennett.

Tape 6

00:31 **What did you do when you came home and you were discharged after Korea?**

Korea, oh I had some land in the Busselton Shire, this is virgin country and I started to fence the area and sort of the idea

01:00 was to have a farm there.

When had you bought that Don?

I'm a bit hazy about this, I should know. Anyway, I got it under a scheme with the government for ex serviceman and I forget exactly what it cost but it wasn't very much and I got it at half price, I think it would have worked out to less than a hundred pounds in those days.

01:30 That was 200, over 200 acres, cause we worked in acres in those days and later the government got in touch with me and asked me did I wanted a block which ran onto my boundary and onto the edge of the Witcha Ranges, which of course now they've found gas on. In my day they found coke in coal there

02:00 and the first lease I had was to 200 feet of the earth surface and the later ones was two metres and the mineral companies at the time were negotiating with me, they wanted to put an open pit in the area. Anyway, it didn't sort of work out and I was told in those days that even under Busselton, the Bay in

Busselton

02:30 geographic there was coal under the ocean there, good coal not the stuff from, brown coal from coaly. What else did I do, worked at the brewery, didn't drink either, that was a mistake.

How do you manage that, how do you work in a brewery and not drink?

Well you do but it's pretty hard. What happened during the war I was on leave, just before the finish of the war

03:00 and an uncle of mine, ex 2/16th Battalion, he had worked there before he enlisted, they kept all their jobs open for them, this is the Swan Brewery, and I take it it was the same with the Emu. And we were going there to see somebody's friends and he said, "Now when we go down there go into the office and put your name down for a job." I said, "I'm not working in any brewery." But anyway jobs are hard to come by and I called in there one day and they went through the records and said, "There's your name, you can start tomorrow."

03:30 And I worked there for quite a while, from there I went to Telecom [telecommunications company, now Telstra] and I was with Telecom, I don't know for how long, wasn't years when I decided to, I heard on the grapevine 2 Battalion was going to Malaya and I had a talk to some people I knew, they waived my basic training and took me back into the army.

04:00 And when I say waived my basic training I was enlisted I went to Enoggera in Queensland and from there I went up to the jungle centre, and if that wasn't basic training I don't know what was. And we put in a month up at the jungle school up at Canungra.

What kind of training were you doing there?

All jungle training, patrolling, ambushing, MT ambushing, motor transport ambush,

04:30 the stuff that they taught if it had of sunk in they wouldn't have been caught at the pipeline. The main thing about it was the fact that I knew a lot of the chaps that were on the demonstration platoon there in Canungra and some of the fellows that I served with were in 2 Battalion at Enoggera.

So how did you find that time?

05:00 Well I was back in the swing of things again, I was back in the army and I knew what to expect. After we finished Canungra...

What was the average age of the blokes at Canungra?

I'd say without the older hands which were not a great amount of the average age would have been round about 19.

And how old were you older hands?

05:30 55 I've got to do some mathematics here, I suppose I was 23 in Korea, I'd probably be around about 26 and I was one of the old blokes at that stage.

Did you blokes feel your age against the 19 year olds?

Yes sir right, nothing like youth. I'll put it this way

06:00 I used to drink at that stage but an older fellow if he plays up of a night time in the mess or the canteen, wherever depending on his rank, he'll find it harder to throw off than a young fellow that plays up. Next morning and an hour of sweating and he's back into the swing, and older bloke it takes a little bit longer and a little bit harder. The way I see it with,

06:30 once you've trained these people initially I think the younger fellow is the best one to have in uniform. Anyway, the old bloke knows all the lurks see so you don't want that passed on. I found Enoggera okay when we finished the course they sent us back home on leave then we were warned that we were being sent by ship to Malaya.

07:00 We went on the Georgic I think was the name of the ship from Brisbane to George Town. We went to Minden Barracks on Panang Island, it was British barracks they had married quarters there for their dependents and most of the unit at the time was on operations on the mainland.

07:30 We put in over a month on the island, they gave us time to acclimatise, we did some patrol work on the uninhabited part of the island, where there was a little bit of light jungle.

What kind of patrol were you operating?

Well we were just carrying on with the normal training and the patrols were to get us back on the ball sort of as far as not getting ambushed

08:00 and generally after the trip up, which was I don't know about 8 days sort of the fellows getting back fit again to go on operations. Once all this was completed we were then decked out in the British greens sort of in camp shorts, sock tops, blasted putties and a

- 08:30 coat type jacket. Then we had British gear when we moved to the mainland, they were like jungle green trousers and jungle boots which are canvas with a rubber sole. And I don't know who invented them but on the outside you had long laces and they had clips on the front of the boots and you went backwards and
- 09:00 forwards with these clips. And of course once you got in the jungle they were real good for getting things tangled up in. I think the life of the boots was about a week, they'd rot, the canvas and that would rot with them. When we did operation we got an air supply every now and then and so many sets of greens and boots and so on. I don't think we ever had much trouble about our, having plenty of clothing. First place
- 09:30 we went to was Kuala Kedah, I should of said the state of Kuala Kedah, some jungle and some rubber, a lot of rubber there. We found if the rubber plantations were owned by Chinese they were never sort of the jungle was never cut back. They had tracks in and out amongst the growth and if it
- 10:00 was controlled by normally anyone else they'd cut all the growth from around the trees, and it was easier to operate and work and everything else but it was a bit hard for us patrolling in the area. Once again we'd get British rations, which I'm not in love with, especially liver and bacon in a tin which you could sole your boots with. The midday meal was boiled lollies,
- 10:30 I always told the joke there about a brigadier asking a bunch of Australians what they were cooking for dinner and the usual answer that anyone would give was, "Have you ever tried to fry a Mars Bar [chocolate bar]?" That was part of the ration. Well you've seen Mars Bars you know what they're like just a gooey mess in a hot climate. We operated in one place from an outpost called
- 11:00 Ling Tang, originally there'd been an ambush, there was a bend in a road going onto a plantation and a bunch of Ghurkhas were ambushed in a truck with covered tarpaulin sides and the back up. And the story we got was a Bren gunner who was notorious in that area, I'll think of his name in a moment, stood on the back with a Bren
- 11:30 gun and he hosed down the Ghurkhas as they jumped out of the trucks. Paramal was this fellows name, he was one of the only Indians that I've been told about that were with the Communist terrorists. The boss in our area, on the Communist side was R Swee and every now and then you'd hear a plane go over with a loud speaker calling on R Swee to give himself up,
- 12:00 which he wasn't about to do. We had only a few contacts at [Kuala] Kedah, the one big, now I could be wrong in this, some of the years I get mixed up with. At one stage we'd been operating in an area, and I'm pretty sure this was at Kedah, after we'd had some leave and came back onto the mainland
- 12:30 and were just finished about 10 days patrolling in a certain area. And one day while were out on this patrol, by the way I was back to private, I lost my rank when I went back in the army. And anyway he said, "I've seen someone in green, charging off in the scrub," and I thought he was pulling me leg. Anyway, when we'd finished our time in this area
- 13:00 and we were waiting where the road and the Jeep head was for a truck to come and move us back to the company area, I belonged to a platoon at the time and I don't know it may have been 11 Platoon, D Company again. And our platoon commander was a bloke called Allen Lapin, good type of man, Duntroon officer too. Any case we heard this gun fire and I said to the boys "That's pretty slow that weapon that's firing I think it's a Tommy
- 13:30 gun," and of course they all said, "You old soldiers you so and so give us the so and sos." And with that Lapin said, "Drop all your gear apart from your ammunition and you weapon and come with me, a section," and this is in the middle of the day and it was stinking hot. And we took off and he anticipated that the people that we'd heard the firing come from was A Company who'd we just changed over with. Actually we'd told them where we'd been operating.
- 14:00 And we must of gone I'd say about 1 k [kilometre] onto a ridge that ran right up on this area and by that time half the section had collapsed on the side of the track.

What was the name of that area that the ridge ran up onto?

I think this was in the state of Pera but I'm not certain about Pera or Kuala Kedah, I'm a bit hazy on this but I'm not hazy on what happed. Anyway, the next thing I

- 14:30 know there's a platoon commander, a little Scot's fellow in the Aussie [Australian] army, a bloke called Cartwright from Queensland and myself, the rest of the fellows had collapsed on the side of the track, and the platoon commander. And were in amongst patrol of these Communists terrorist, they run right past us. In any case we engage them
- 15:00 we got one bloke down immediately and some took off and a chap and myself followed them. Prior to me going the platoon commander gave me his Owen gun, and I had a short Lienfield at the time, jungle .303. Any case we followed where we thought these people were and saw the movement down through the bush and as we moved down we picked up what we thought were bodies so we opened fire, when we got down there it was their packs.

- 15:30 They were carrying enormous packs. So anyway Cartwright and myself carried these back. At the time the rest of the section had caught up with us and there's nothing we could do then and we took the body and put him on a pole and carted him back to the G pit, plus the two packs full, we had a lot of information in the packs as well as, it's too late for them to pinch
- 16:00 me now. Somehow or rather there's a role of notes got in there and anyway I'm not too sure what happened with those role of notes but we had a party after we got back to Penang, it was a pretty good one too. But anyway I'm told that the information they got from the packs was very helpful. Also we'd killed the paymaster, there was
- 16:30 a lot of inquiries after that but apart from little contacts that was, I fired about 10 shots off, oh and a burst from the Owen gun into a pack. And that's the only angry shots I fired in Malaya.

How many men were in the terrorist patrol?

The ones that went past us, all I saw was a fellow with a shot gun, looked like a 25 pounder he was waiving around and

- 17:00 I think there'd be no more than 5. They split, it goes back to a story of what happened. Charlie Anderson was a sergeant in charge of this patrol from A Company who we heard the firing from and apparently the forward scout called him up and wasn't too sure where to go on the patrol. So this is hearsay, I'm told that Charlie said, "Well fall back and cover me and I'll go forward
- 17:30 and see if I can pick a route through this area," and he moved forward and walked straight onto a century and it was a camp behind him and we'd been going past that camp for the whole time we was out there and didn't know it was there. Any case it was a Tommy that I heard and later I went out the following day with, I stayed out there with a chap and the following day we went through the follow up as they call it and I went through this camp and had a good look around and I picked up
- 18:00 the spent cases from the Thompson and everyone was split, it was old war time ammunition but it killed Charlie Anderson. Charlie was a part Aboriginal fellow that was serving in Korea during the Second World War and in my opinion he was respected by all the fellows in the platoon he was with and they spoke very highly of him and I think he did a pretty good job. Normally people
- 18:30 wouldn't do that, they'd pick something out, a route to go on and send somebody out in front, well he went himself, in other words he lead by example, which cost him his life.

What do you think the outcome may have been if he hadn't gone in by himself and?

Well he, later if he hadn't went in the direction he sort of moved in on they probably wouldn't have found the camp. And the camp really opened our eyes afterwards, there was 3 or 4 escape routes on the camp,

- 19:00 if you hit them from one side they'd get out about 2 or 3 other ways they could. Inside all the bushes and trees had been pulled over and they had a sort of lead wire and it made a big copula and there was planes always flying around looking for smoke and so on and that sort of covered them from the sky and all the approaches had centuries posted on them and in the centre of the camp they had
- 19:30 a table, bamboo table and wire coming from each of these century areas going over the top of the table. And where that table was there was a string attached to these wires and on the bottom was a piece of bamboo and that bamboo was inside an empty tobacco tin, cigarette tin. And of course anywhere that hit that wire this thing would rattle inside the tin, the century just sat there
- 20:00 listen for the rattle, they knew exactly where they were coming from and they moved off the other way. And they must of stumbled, Charlie must of stumbled onto the century and instead of him taking off, course he must of been too close he shot Charlie. But inside the camp every, they had a weapon pit and alongside very weapon pit that faced a certain area to cover, they had their sleeping quarters and where they were doing their cooking, and I take it for rice and the usual thing
- 20:30 they had platforms over the top of where they had the fire with green bushes on it to cover the smoke. It was, if we'd ever had a camp ourselves that was as well protected and as comfortable as that, they seemed to have a good water supply, it rains there mostly every afternoon.

How was the water supply contained?

I'm not sure what they had it contained in now, I know they had quite a lot of, which we finished

- 21:00 up copying, they were carrying plastic sheeting, we had our own poncho's and so on but the green plastic sheeting you could put a cord on each end of it, and most of us had para cord from the air drops which we souvenired. And we'd just take out these pieces of sheet and set them up with 4 pieces of cord on them and you had your sleeping quarters while you were out there. I can't recall what they had the water
- 21:30 contained in.

How many men do you think the camp could of accommodated?

Oh we worked it out, we reckon at least 10 maybe more, and that's going according to each fighting pit that was dug there, at least could have two men in it. And of course in the centre would be whoever the commander of that unit was. That was one of our biggest finds really.

What did you do with that camp once you'd...?

22:00 Oh they destroyed the camp.

How was it destroyed?

Oh physically, everything was cut down, we had machetes and stuff like that. And of course then it was open up to the sky and we knew where it was and everything else and if they had of been any re-occupation it would have been no problem to put some artillery in on top of it or even drop something from the air. That really is the only

22:30 big deal we had as far as the platoon I was with 2 Battalion.

You mentioned the rest of the men behind you when you had that contact were just lying on the side of the track?

Oh it's the middle of the day, we had been there for what 8 days, could have been longer and it was just that at that stage, and I think most of us had just had a feed, we were waiting for the trucks to come along. And it was just a matter of they just couldn't keep up with the,

23:00 with Allen Lapin, he was a pretty fit sort of lad too. And I don't know what kept me going cause there wasn't much on me in those days but oh no I was seeing black spots all over the area.

What do you mean by that?

Oh it's just the heat and the exertion and I know at the time I was firing at the enemy I sort of had to concentrate on sort of if I had a bayonet on the weapon pointing it and pulling the trigger,

23:30 cause I had a hard job sort of sighting it, it was blowing like a whale.

What do you think might of happened if the rest of the men with you had not dropped back?

I don't think it would have made any difference because the front fellows that made the contact, we were the only ones that could do anything because you've got people behind you and were sort of running in one direction which we normally didn't do, we space right out normally for our own protection, from ambush. But

24:00 at that stage I think we all had the same idea we were going to catch these people on the way out, well we did.

How thick was the terrain?

In actual fact from where we were running it was fairly thick but there were tracks around the place and I think we wouldn't have gone that way except we want to intercept these people in the quickest way we could. And that's why they took the risk

24:30 of sort of going along bits of side tracks and the edge of ridges to get to that spot. I know the chap who was carrying the Bren at the time he had the heaviest job and he's passed on now, he's name was Potts, Ken Potts, he was a Queenslander. Cartwright the fellow that was with me when we went looking for the people that had gone down through the scrub,

25:00 he's passed away. Who was the others, Allen Lapin I thinks in America. Oh that was all the talk for quite a while afterwards as far as what Allen Lapin had sort of carried out was the right thing to do at the spur of the moment. If we'd have hung around they would have all got away.

How far away were you

25:30 **from your base?**

Probably we were about 5 or 6 k's at the time. They used to send out the trucks and a scout car as escort when we moved backwards and forwards and normally they'd work out a RV where to be and they'd drop us off. Not in one lump, all the way along the track, the road to get off the road and move to a certain area to start operating from. Then

26:00 we had our own drill how to base up and everything else, in other words you didn't sit down in the open and light up a fire and kick up around.

How long were your patrols usually in the area for?

Well when you based up if we were moving into a certain area the whole Platoon would go and you'd work out, basically what the officer, or any senior NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] works out, when you get to an area and engage the enemy the man have got to be fit enough

26:30 and fresh enough to be able to fight, it's no good getting onto a hill and collapsing. In actual fact with some of the boys that's what happened on that contact. They would have been useless to us in any case

there's a couple over weight.

Over weight?

They were over weight yeah, oh you get them over weight now and then.

In those conditions?

Don't last too long, beg your pardon?

How do you gain weight in those conditions?

Oh well they go there that way and a lot of people

27:00 have got the weight it's hard to throw it off, I found that on in later years.

Did your discovery of that terrorist camp increase your patrols for other camps in the area?

Well see what we'd been doing beforehand, we had things happen in Kuala Kedah too but you were always looking, how can I explain. Right when a patrol moves into an area you kick off with two scouts

27:30 the forwards scout and he's job is to look ahead and look left and right of the area that you're moving through. The second scout is to cover the first scout, what he doesn't see and look in the trees, cause you'll get a bloke stuck up in a tree too that will let you go past and give you a burst. Then everyone in that patrol has an ark of responsibility, that's basically the

28:00 third man, normally is a section commander in any case, but the third man he covers an ark to the right, the fellow behind him an ark to the left and all the way down along the patrol. And the bloke at the finish, backside Charlie he's just about got to walk backwards, he's job is to cover the rear in case you move through an area and they hit you from the rear. That's by the book how they were trained in Canungra, and that's how

28:30 we operated. But when your moving through an area and your doing this all the time and your going at very slow pace, your not walking fast or anything like that and your watching where you put your feet down to, that's very strenuous and on the nerves, you think there's a fellow behind each book, and you've got to think that. If there is one there you're very unlucky. But with all that going on not making contacts when

29:00 you do make a contact that sort of builds up the sort of, within the unit itself and little bit more interest in what's going on around the place, in other words don't go from point A to point B as quick as you can and forget about it cause you know if you do your going to finish up on the wrong side of an ambush.

Did you increase your patrols though to find more camps like the one you?

29:30 **found that you were surprised to have discovered?**

Well at one stage see the Australians in the area tried to build up the usual prestige. They were given a certain amount of information that was coming through the police and informants and everything else, I'm not so sure that it was first class info, it would probably be third or fourth class and you may have stuck someone. To beat this at one stage

30:00 we stopped our normal patrols of a section, which is roughly 10 men, and we broke it down into 3 patrols from each section and we operated on a fan system. Now from our base we moved out like a fan to cover more area in that area we'd make contact with them. We did at one stage, of all things we run into, we'd take it he could have been one of the Sakis, Sakis

30:30 are little pygmy chap in Malaya and they live out in the jungle and they're very shy and normally won't have anything to do with anybody. Anyway, we ran into this chap and he was carrying a deer with it's legs tied together over his back, and he dropped the deer and took off. Later we found where this deer had been caught in a snare, at that stage

31:00 I don't think they were very interested in what it was to go back to the deer and chop the deer up and cook it. But in any case things like that happened quite repeatedly, they'd hit somebody and they'd take off before, they might of got a chance to fire a shot at them, half the time you didn't.

Was there anyway of determining who it was with the deer whether it was the pigmy?

Not really because your in, see if your in deep jungle it's

31:30 open, but a canopy over the top it's like a big roof and the main ones you've got to worry about there is the old monkey up top throwing a great limb down on top of you, through the areas. But you've got an open sight but where you get in possibly through creeks and that where's it's fairly thick and they were, if it was a Saki that's where he'd be looking to catch something going down for a drink in the creek. I worked the Sakis

32:00 a few times at, they were sort of well they shouldn't be involved in anything anyway but at one stage we were looking for caves that reports that the Japanese had been there during the war and the Communist terrorists had taken over from them. We saw signs of habitation but found nothing there except all the

caves are full of bats, which the Saki reckon is pretty good 'oncom', food. They used to

32:30 get in with a stick and swing it backwards and forwards, or a brush with 4 or 5 limbs on it and kill the bats then squash them with their finger and put them in a container of water, a dixie and boil them up. Well I think if you ever look at that I don't think you'll feel like eating it, it's like a rat being cooked up. I didn't take a taste anyway. But in one they are helpful they found onions for us, wild onion in the jungle,

33:00 something like a bracken fern, and I found this out in Vietnam afterwards with the yards, the Montagnards, they'd get the ends of this and eat it. And yet here in WA that bracken fern it will poison ya, but it's just different countries and things are a little different.

Did you encounter any other wildlife in the jungles there?

33:30 Well we often, I don't know whether this was to stir people up or not someone always saw a tiger, I never saw a tiger, I didn't want to see a tiger, wild pigs quite often. Certain areas I recall patrolling in Pera and we moved into this plantation and just as we set up to start moving out we thought it was an artillery round went off

34:00 and anyway everyone scattered, we did a recce [reconnaissance] patrol to check it out and it was a gun set up to frighten the elephants. And it was timed to go off independently if anything was coming in amongst the rubber to destroy stuff, and that was a Jippong [Japanese], no one had told us about these guns. So apparently there's plenty of elephants around the place to.

34:30 **You didn't see any?**

No, no I didn't not in that country, I've seen them in other places.

What kind of operations were the terrorists carrying out in the area?

Well mainly I think they were just re-supplying themselves and waiting for an opportunity target, in other words if you were patrolling in a certain area and going backwards and forwards to the same spot. Take it this way

35:00 if there's a water hole somewhere and you kept going to that place at the same time to get water or get anything else, the people that are working in the rubber trees and that, that was their information, and often we'd hit the edge of a plantation and the holes that they get the latex in with the knife that they open up the cuts down the side of the rubber trees to get the latex and they renew these everyday,

35:30 and you'd hear this tap tap on the side of this like a porcelain dish. And then you'd hear a tap a bit further then a bit further, well anyone would wake up to the fact that they were signalling that we were in the area. And I think they would pass on information, they were forced to they were sort of, if they didn't co-operate with the Communist terrorist they'd cut their throat and if we caught them with stuff to give to the terrorist we put them in jail. So they never had much of a

36:00 choice. We found that out if we were on food denial in the campongs, they'd put a bunch of us in the campong, they'd have a Malay on guard at the gate and of course a curfew was on there and they weren't allowed out at night, when they went out of a day if a pig, they'd have a rope on the pig, this is one of the Chinese, and they'd take them out into the jungle to feed. Now if it was a Malayan and he was on guard

36:30 he saw a pig coming he'd turn his back and put his hand over his mouth, they're Muslims of course and the pig is unclean. Well even things after our mob started to sort of supervise this they would take out night soil in a container and of course they turned the other way and some, one of our blokes got a great stick and he give a bit of a wriggle around in this container,

37:00 heard something metallic, turned it over and it was full of tin food, there wouldn't be any labels on, I wouldn't like to eat afterwards, but anyway that's what they put it in to get it out. That's things like tablets in pushbike frames, inside the pushbike, oh they had some pretty good ideas. But once again if they didn't take that out they were in trouble with the Communist terrorist and

37:30 if we caught them well they were in trouble to, it was a no win situation there.

So there's a general distrust I suppose?

Well I was in sympathy with the campong, the Malayan himself he's pretty sort of inoffensive, the army fellows they're inoffensive too they don't drink booze or anything like that and I think they prefer to sit under a bloomin bush or something and play a ukulele or a banjo or something like that instead

38:00 of going out looking for the Communist terrorist.

So in a broader sense what had happened in your time in Malaya for you to be coming home?

Beg your pardon?

In a broader sense what had happened in Malaya during your time there before you came home, or for you to be ready to come home?

All it was was the normal thing out in an area patrolling the area trying to clear it of the Communist terrorist, looking after the people in the campongs, basically that was it.

38:30 Then after a certain time they'd take you back to Padang Island for a break and you could let your hair down there and of course we weren't allowed to wear uniform out amongst the population and when we got there we got an allowance to buy civi clothes. I think everyone bought a tie and a tie, this is a bit of a joke. One of those 4 in hands, you know the, a boot lace that you tie a bow

39:00 in it and our blokes would line up and there's be one of the Brits officer would be the, or the officer for the day and he'd come along and give the order "Produce ties" and of course we were awake to this and everyone would get out the boot lace. And he come along and I remember the first bloke we pulled this on and he asked one of the, he said, "What sort of tie's that?" he said, "Look sir," he said, "back home we all wear these ties,

39:30 there like, you've seen the cowboys wear they tie a big bow with this black ribbon." He said, "Oh I've seen those there quite striking." And when we got away with it once, it never happened again, no tie back you go get a tie.

How did you let your hair down when you went out?

Oh most of us went to the ice cream shop and had a couple of ice creams and a drink of cool drink. No usual

40:00 bloke what the diggers do, go and have a belly full of booze, tell a lot of lies. I did see in George Town there were two brothers in our battalion, came from WA to, in any case at the time they were showing a Town Called Alice, a Town Like Alice in Malaya. These two blokes get shot go into the pictures and when the Malaya's

40:30 terrified of anyone that's sort of drunk or looks like they're running amuck. And they got outside and started abusing all the patrons calling them dirty 'clabarates' and so and so's, of course they got arrested. But that was something different, these two brothers. Incidentally they both came back to WA, they had both finished up TPIs [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Pensioners]

41:00 and one was found in Subi [Subiaco] after there was something smelt funny around his flat, he'd been dead for a week and the other chap was down near Fremantle. He was supposedly over seeing some flats there and collecting the rent and a few other things, and my boy was involved in this, his in-laws owned the units. And they'd been going past this window

41:30 and this fellow had been sitting at the table, the same table and they said, "Oh he sits there everyday at the same time," went and had a look and he was dead too, and that was the other brother. I won't mention their surname.

How long had passed since they'd arrived home before they were both had passed away?

I think it was in a matter of months, the chap in Subi and the chap down near Fremantle, not in at Fremantle itself. Another fellow...

42:00 **Just before we go on the tape's about to end...**

Tape 7

00:31 **We were just saying that the amount of contact that happened in Malaya was actually quite rare.**

That's correct. That's with all troops. I think at the time, some of the fittest people there were the Fiji troops. And they have great footballers and very fit and I didn't operate with them or work at any stage with them, but I'm told that

01:00 if they ever bumped the enemy, they'd run him down afterwards. And I don't know what the record was. There's something I've missed out too. At one stage they gave us Sarawa rangers, and these Ibans [Sarawa rangers] from Borneo and the chaps we had were the, he was supposed to have, they were sort of on the coast. They had a word for it, but it slips my mind

01:30 but they had tattoos down their neck and they could sit on their hair. But they were pretty superstitious and the only time we ever had any trouble were these fellas, when one fell down a well. And they carry their own family parang with them. It's given to them and you don't touch that.

What actually is a parang?

A parang's a knife. It's like a machete, that's the closest explanation I can give to it. Anyway, at

02:00 this stage this fella, naturally we called him Davy Crocker, he falls down this blasted old well. And we all carried what they called, toggle ropes, was a length of rope with a cleat on the end of it, one end was a loop and the other end was a wooden toggle. You could hook them all together. Anyway, we hooked

these up, dropped them down to Davy and he come up like a monkey, up this rope. And when he got to the top I always remember he says, I won't repeat the exact words,

02:30 but it was, 'b- so and so, so and so, so and so, Jippong.' He reckoned the Japs had dug that hole there and he fell down it because they hated the Japanese, because when they moved into Borneo, the Japs didn't treat them too well. Including the women. But he was convinced they'd dug that hole just to get him. Anyway, we found them as far as scouts, our blokes were just as good, picking up a track and things like that, and they were very superstitious.

03:00 If you're operating with them, in my opinion, if they thought there was a heap of Communist terrorists around, they - well it wasn't unknown for them to go in a different direction. I found a snared large pig, in one of the places we were at and I took the - they're over there too - I took the tusks from this pig

03:30 and - anyway, I hung them outside the little huts we had. And that iban'd come in he'd sit and look at those tusks. He wanted them, right I wouldn't give them to him. Anyway, they're over there in a case. I bought them back home and naturally being over there. But I always thought afterward what a miserable thing not to

04:00 give them to him because he was a big fella if he had those. Yeah.

You were mentioning before that you had to change into civvies [civilian clothing] to go to Penang?

Yeah, on Penang island itself.

Why was there such secrecy involved in..?

It wasn't a matter of secrecy, they didn't like to see foreign soldiers in the area. They didn't mind you going down the town and spend all your money, but they didn't want you to do it in uniform. The Brits weren't allowed to wear uniform either.

04:30 I can't recall going anywhere apart from operations on the mainland where you wore a uniform. Any work around the camp, naturally it was under army discipline, you were in uniform then. But this was, must have been an agreement with the Malay, sort of, government itself. I've always thought that

05:00 we've never been popular with the Malays. And this last fellow who just retired well he really liked us. But they didn't think of the blokes that died over there trying to get rid of the Communists for them. I think we'd have been better if we'd have been helping the Communists. And that goes back to the original, what happened there is the story that we got from our side, then what we got from the Malay side. That they offered to fight

05:30 the Japs, when they took over Malaya and it was on the condition that when the war was over, they either were allowed representatives - a representative in parliament. And apparently all they told these people was, 'bring your weapons in and we'll give you so much money for your weapons.' And that was it. And Chin Peng - Chin Peng, he

06:00 didn't agree with the British and he went off into the jungle and took his men back into the scrub and said, 'we'll fight you now.' Incidentally, this fella marched on the victory parade after the war in London, he was decorated by the King in those days and as far as I know he's still alive. I think what they wanted would have been good, because the way Malaya turned up, well they're anti, well they're anti

06:30 British because they kicked them out when they had Merdeka. And they were anti Australian for sure, which you can't blame them for. They're, they live a different life to us and they've got different rules and they see our blokes carrying on, if they don't drink and all the rest, well they're not going to pat you on the back.

Do you think that Australian forces should have been sent to Malaya?

Well, if you've got a regular army and you've got something going like that, that's the best place for them.

07:00 But political wise, no. Same as I - political wise, I don't think we should have been involved in Vietnam. But you're a soldier and that's your job. And (UNCLEAR) to go and get your head blown off and things like that but if anyone's to go and I might add I'm anti conscription, I agree with the old diggers in the First World War, when Billy Hughes tried to send, put everyone in a uniform, it's a wonder he didn't put the kangaroos into khaki. In any case

07:30 that probably is one of the reasons why we were willing to wear civvy clothes.

So how did you leave Malaya?

At that stage they brought the penance in and you had to stay once the penance - it was a bit - it was running behind time. And I never intended to ever take any of my family

08:00 into any army establishments. I was in it and that was it. And just before my time was up, anyone that didn't have his family there went back to Australia. Just inside the two years. And I came back here and had different postings around the place and mainly down the south-west.

What would those postings involve?

Well the jungle course we had going down below the weir in outer Collie,

08:30 Wellington Dam. I used to go down there quite a bit, I was stationed in Bunbury later on. The officer who was down there was an artillery officer and sort of I had a bit of knowledge of the training in the jungle and so on and I get - did quite a bit of work with CMF down there. And kids that came down from Perth for the cadets and so on.

What sort of things would you teach..?

Oh mainly show them how to

09:00 live in the bush more or less. And it was a jungle as far as they was concerned. The main things that we'd been (UNCLEAR). How to live there reasonable and comfortable and make sure that you clean the place up and don't leave it like a pig sty. And the tactics too, that we used. No one had been taught that stuff here. It was just taught in Canungra and that's where it stayed.

09:30 **Why do you say that?**

Well, the point was, they didn't have instructors here, the facilities to train them the same as Canungra, you had the bush, that's about it.

And what you're saying is, the conditions in Western Australia are so unlike the jungle that it's useless to..?

Oh that's right. It's better than nothing but it's not the jungle. Everything should be in North Queensland. And that's where Canungra should be. Canungra's not a good jungle area. It's been there for years, since the Second World War. And

10:00 apart from being lousy with lantana roots, you've got to cut your way through. Up around where's the wettest place in Australia? Tully, that's the place they want to go, up round Tully and get a wet backside and you'll know what the jungle's like. An old friend of mine who was in the section I was in as a private soldier, he finished up doing an OCS [Officer Cadet School] and he run that place and he turned out

10:30 a brigadier. George Mansford, he was a great fella. He's still running round the bush up there somewhere, out at Gordonvale.

Do you think that the training that you got in Australia was relevant to some of the experiences that you had in Malaya?

I think most of it was pretty helpful. You got the basics of looking after yourself, sort of working without the world knowing where you

11:00 were. The main thing, I think that we lacked, was not enough weapon training. See, when we got to Malaya, we were given a - the old (UNCLEAR) was taken off us. And we were given a jungle, a short jungle .303 [rifle] and the barrel had a - like a funnel on the end of it, like a

11:30 Bren gun, flash lemonader. Anyhow, a lot of the people weren't used to this, they were used to the old .303 and of course they messed around with them, and when the first couple of people who were killed there, someone had shot them with this rifle. The next thing, which was pretty bad, and we'd been taught not to do it the same as the pipeline, an ambush was set up, and once you get set up in an ambush and that sun goes down you never move.

12:00 Well, the sergeant decided to check to see if the officer was set up okay. He was, the officer shot him stone dead with an Owen gun. He moved after dark. His name, will remain a secret but anyway, we were waiting in trucks do drop - they used to drop us off trucks and sort of move onto the side of certain areas and set up an ambush of opportunity in case something came through. And we heard the shots. That killed this fella.

12:30 Anyway, it was the sergeant was killed by the platoon commander. That was in Kuala Kedah.

Was that kept a secret?

Not really. Well it couldn't I - the whole battalion knew about it, but the point was, I agreed with what the officer did. That was it, he didn't know who the devil was coming over at him at that hour of the night. After stand down anyway. Actually he'd been doing the wrong thing if he hadn't shot him.

13:00 **So, apart from survival skills and living in the jungle that you were doing in Collie, was there anything else that you would be training some of the younger fellas?**

Not really. At that stage I was trying to get into the SAS [Special Air Service]. And any case they wouldn't take me, I'll put it that way.

Why's that?

Well, I'd like to know that myself, I thought I was a pretty good bloke. Anyway, and I had a few people pushing for me.

13:30 Anyway, it always stuck in my craw that I couldn't do a para course. I couldn't get into the SAS, and yet on my second tour in Vietnam, the Americans call a foot-slogger [infantry], a 'leg.' And they said, 'we don't have legs in this outfit, you could do a para course.' And I did my para course. At 42 and I felt every bump on my behind when I hit the ground. Anyway, that's getting a bit

14:00 ahead.

So, you were trying to get into the SAS and didn't succeed, about what year is this happening?

About '57, '57, '58. The boys that came back from 2 Battalion a lot of them were taken into the SAS to do the carter.

14:30 When they finished their tour in Malaya, and some of them stayed with it right through their army career. Quite a few didn't make the grade. I used to see them down at Collie if I was doing something down there in the middle of the night they'd be doing a recondo [reconnaissance], and these lads would be going along on the sleep with their hands on one another's shoulders, one behind the other. And knowing a lot of them,

15:00 if I struck them in the daylight and they were doing something real rugged, they used to threaten all sorts of things if I said anything to them. And of course I gave them a bit of a hurry up too. That time I thought to myself, jeez I could be doing that. But it's a good outfit and I've got a lot of respect for them. I worked with a lot of them with the Training Team.

With the training team in Collie?

15:30 No that's later. Vietnam. In any case the - we have a - I'm infantry, corps of infantry and our director - each state's got a director of infantry and the chap who was the director at the time, he was one of our officers in Korea and he'd come down to me and he'd say, 'are you still here?' And because I had the land down at Busselton and I was getting a little bit

16:00 done on that when I could sort of pinch a bit of time. And he finished up, he said, "Right, I'll give you six more months down here." Wanted to move me and I said, "Well give us a bit more time." He said, 'I'll give you six months,' and then he said, "You can do your courses to go for sergeant's rank." So any case when it come around he's transferred me to 5 Cadet Brigade. That's a holding unit in the west. We wander round to all the colleges.

16:30 And any case, then I had to do my subs ex for sergeant and I knew what was going on as far as Vietnam was concerned, on the grapevine.

What was the grapevine saying?

Well, it was telling us that eventually we would be in there. With the Americans and they were going to send a special force there. So anyway, this eventuated and in 1962

17:00 towards the end of '62, Australia sent instructors to instruct the South Viet Army. In the meantime, I was transport corporal, then transport sergeant of 5 Cadet.

And what does that entail as far as duties?

Well I had to look after the unit vehicles and so on and see if they're maintained and go through workshops and allocate unit vehicles to people going round the colleges. They'd get a

17:30 ute or something and cart out equipment whatever they're doing and teaching at the colleges themselves. I had the honour of working with Jimmy Gordon, our VC winner for quite a while. Great man, Jim. Never say too much, and him and I looked after Trinity College, Aquinas, St Pat's up in Geraldton, the high school in Geraldton. We were never home. Down round Bunbury we were all over the place.

18:00 And this is when I was back in Perth. But like a lot of people, I forgot how old Jim was and we were going somewhere and I said, "Oh we'll chuck a couple of blankets in and camp on the side of the track." Well that was all right. Next morning Jim could hardly move and he was a tough old fella. So I didn't suggest that any more.

How old are you by this stage?

Oh must have been in my 40s or close to it.

18:30 And the chaps, anyway they sent around the word that they wanted volunteers to go in this Training Team as they called it, I think the first lot was about 30 at the most, went up. And they were to do 12 months. And only in training. This went on right up until '64, '65. By that time I'd been - oh in those too,

19:00 when you're selected, you went to the school, not the school of infantry, the artillery barracks at North Head and they put you through all the intelligence course there.

What did you learn as part of the intelligence course there?

Well I'll tell you what I was taught. Mai, tai bah, bun. One, two, three, four in Vietnamese. When I landed over in the Training Team and I went to Special Forces, they gave me a Chinese platoon of

mercenaries.

19:30 And they didn't want to know about mai, tai, bah, but, they said to me, "You either learn Cantonese or you can pack your bags." So that's our intelligence, one little thing for a start.

What did you actually learn as part of the intelligence course?

Well, right, for a thing, they got a blown up mud map of Dien Bien Phu. That was the big battle over in North Vietnam. And everyone goes through his opinion on how to win the war, that war or what

20:00 you would have done and it works up to the final battle and the only thing that stuck in my mind was the fact that the French commander named all the outposts after his girlfriends. Oh, he'd had a bundle of girlfriends, I think about five. Once again, a bit of the language, also what they knew about the people in Vietnam and their different customs and

20:30 little things like, not patting the kids on the head. Stuff like that, that's taboo. Be careful taking their photographs, similar to a lot of other people. What was the other thing? Don't sit down and point your boots at them. Different things like that but mainly it was crash course on the weapons that would be available there and mostly chi com [Chinese rifle - AK47] stuff and

21:00 some of the American gear. That was the first course we did. Then to follow up on that we went to Canungra to do the advisers course, they called us advisers. And that was supposedly six weeks, unless you were an infantry and you did three. So any case, another chap and myself,

21:30 you can't see his photo, it's up on the wall up there. Frank Lucas, him and I were infantry and had been from Korea together. The only thing he missed was Malaya. And we finished the course and we fronted up and said, "When are we moving out back home?" They said, "Oh something's come up." And I looked at Frank and I knew it what was going on. He said, "We're short of instructors, we've chosen you two men to stay behind for another three weeks instructing." I didn't collapse on the floor kicking and

22:00 screaming but anyway, I didn't like it. And we were kept behind and helped the instructors there with the rest of the force, going through the place. I wasn't that worried about it, but when we'd finished the six weeks, then we were given leave back home and had to wait to be called up to go in a draft over to Vietnam and once again we come under this civvy

22:30 clothes deal. Before we left WA they gave us an allowance to go and buy civvy clothes. Basically, you know, the navy jacket that they'd wear with the buttons on and all that bull dust, the shirt and tie and slacks and any case, when we left they gave us an extra, we had a normal passport and another passport, the green passport, official job. And I might

23:00 add as soon as we hit the country they took the green one off us. And it was locked away for security. But we had to go...

Before you hit the ground in Vietnam, can you remember what the political climate in Australia was in regards to...?

Not too good. They were - I agree with a lot of it too. Anyway, they reckoned we shouldn't have been involved, number one and I agree too, they were giving us this domino theory business, which we got in Malaya too. Righto

23:30 they take these places one by one, Malaya, then it'll be Vietnam, and then it'll be everyone else and Philippine, all that business. Anyway, turned out a bit of a fizzer [non event] in the finish. But no one sort of interfered with us but we were told, at North Head that everyone of us had a dossier in Sydney with the Communist Party. And - well right or wrong, I don't know, I don't think you all worried too much about the

24:00 what we were going to do, we were individuals. But some people had letters sent to their homes, calling them a murdering this that and the other. And they hadn't even been involved in anything, they were supposed to be training. Yeah, we knew exactly what the feeling was around the place. But that wasn't the reason we wore civvy clothes, that was to cover us going through the Philippines and where else did we go?

24:30 Oh anyway, through there, that'll do. And the funny part about it, when we got to Saigon, we all had to go down to the toilets at the back and put our uniforms on. And if they didn't know we're all sitting there with short haircuts and blokes about the same age and pretty well tanned and really fit and if the people in the plane didn't know who we were there's something wrong with them. And we got our uniforms back and then reported to the Americans.

And where did you have to report to?

This was in Saigon and...

25:00 **What sort of facilities did you have to report to in Saigon?**

Well we lived in a hotel there at the time. Went through Australian headquarters then we were taken to the American headquarters and first of all we did a drivers test by signing our name on a drivers

licence.

That was the drivers test?

We were American officers, not Australians, American officers. I've still got mine here somewhere and then we were taken and kitted out in - with American gear

25:30 and there were weapons handed out to us, we could request what type of weapon.

What did you request?

What did I have at the time? I think I had a Carbine. 30 calibre Carbine. But I'm not sure and a .45 pistol. Some of their bush gear, specially their boots, their boots were very good. Oh something before that, in

26:00 Australia they then changed from the old AB [ordinary army boot] boots to this new type boot and they were being made in Tassie [Tasmania]. And I was held up for about a week because my boots hadn't turned up. And when we got these boots, they weren't full, they were a high boot but not as high as the later ones were and they were made out of kangaroo hide. And they were beautiful. I hated wearing them. But any case, and you wouldn't leave them laying round, the Yanks'd pinch them, if they could get their feet into them

26:30 they've got feet like that. But anyway, we got the special boots and then we went to the American set up they had jungle boots. And some of them had a steel insert into the boot itself. Some had it built in. And the top was canvass and they had holes on the side to let the water out, when your boot got full of water. The reason for the steel plate in it, they had a trick of putting these punji [bamboo]

27:00 stakes in holes all around the place, and it was to protect you if you went in on them. I did at a later date and I didn't have these boots on, I had American paratroop boots on but I was lucky, I went in sideways onto the bamboo spikes and only tore my pants sort of. From there we were told to use - see the Americans don't have a sergeants' mess and sergeants' quarters. So their warrant officer

27:30 normally has a job flying choppers and stuff like that. And they do a great job. And as warrant officers we were classified as officers and had to use the BOQs. Bachelor Officer Quarters. And eat all our meals there. And a funny thing struck me, first meal I had in this BOQ in Saigon; everyone sort of speaks when you sit down and calls you 'sir.' They didn't

28:00 know who the hell we were. And we hadn't sat down for five minutes and one chap started off and asked the fella alongside of me, he said, 'school of?' Wanted to know what year this bloke had gone through West Point. And the senior fella, who it was there, they waited on him and why I noticed that he said to me, when they found out I was Australian, and that, we were pretty popular with them. Well someone had to be anyway. No one

28:30 else wanted them. And if they went to say, get drink or something they'd ask you, 'would you like it?' and all that, I found them, they were sort of a lot different to our people, you looked after yourself. But with them it was just part of their sort of, well the way they were I think from West Point. Anyway, from there we were allocated to certain areas and certain states in Vietnam.

How many Australians are there at this time?

29:00 Under 100. Now I'm talking Training Team. I'm not talking, what battalion was there? First battalion that was there, wait a minute, the fellas were caught at in the big ambush. Or it wasn't an ambush it was a battle that they fought there. Maybe they were 6 Battalion. Anyway, one of the battalions there at the time, had just been involved in this great

29:30 battle down south. And all the Americans every time we run into them they'd say, "Australian?" "Yeah, Australian." We've got Australia all over our shoulders and all the rest of it. And they'd tell us what a great job we had done. And we had to tell them, it wasn't us, we weren't down there mate, we were up here sitting on our backsides. Anyway, we were allocated to certain states and to certain jobs. Now myself and three other

30:00 WOs [Warrant Officers] and one officer, Victorian but he was stationed WA, for a long time. He was killed over there later. We were with what they call, 'Ruffpufs' [slang term]. Regional and Popular Forces. Like a home guard. And anyway, a bloke called Vic Harrison and myself were sent out to Tra Bong which is a Special Forces camp, controlled by Australians and we stayed in that area but we looked after a Montagnard village called

30:30 Tra Bak. And we went down to inspect the armaments.

When you say, 'looked after,' what does that mean?

Well we were in charge of the place with the - they're sort of home guard. Well they had two old BARs [Browning Automatic Rifles .303] I think they used them at bloomin', where was it, Iwo Jima and some old Tommy guns [machine gun] and it took us about a week before it was going to fire one of them. We'd operate there every day and we made sure we didn't go there at the right time and the same

31:00 time and then we'd go back to the Special Forces camp at Tra Bong.

What was that camp like?

Well it was run by an Australian called Felix Fazikas. Funny Australian, he was a Hungarian. Hungarian in the Aussie army. Part of our team there was American and the other part was Australian. The platoon commanders were in those days,

- 31:30 it was, 'advisers.' But you were the commander, that was it. Or Australian warrant officers. One was Dasher Wheatley, got killed later and got the VC [Victoria Cross]. Butch Swanton, who were the other two? Oh anyway, that doesn't matter really, the one there was an engineer, Les Dousett, fair sort of a bloke too and the commander
- 32:00 was Felix Fazikas. In any case when they had this battle where we lost Butch and Dasher and Butch was put in for the VC, he called us up one evening and said, "I've some good news for you." I thought, "What's this going to be?" And we were doing all right on our own, we didn't want anyone interfering with us. He said, "You now belong to A107," I think it was, Special Forces A- they call them an A-Team.
- 32:30 Might say, heard it on TV [television] the A-Teams and all that bull. Anyway, I wasn't too happy about this. "Oh," he says, "It's in orders and it's legit [legitimate]. You have such and such a platoon. Vic Harris, you have another platoon." And then we woke up, we'd taken the place of Butch and Dasher, the blokes who were killed. We stayed with them right over Christmas. Or did we?

What was your CO like?

Our CO was an American.

- 33:00 Facey. He was back in the C-Team at Danang. We were up probably closer to Cambodia and the borders, than any other Special Forces at camp. They had them all scattered all over the place, if there was a valley, and there was a hill in that valley, the Americans in their wisdom, would put a Special Forces team there,
- 33:30 then they would recruit the people in that area and bring them in as mercenaries. They called them CIDGs. Civil Irregular Defence Group. Behind the scenes, the Viet Army controlled them, they had what their own green berets. And they call them their LLDB [Luc Luong Dac Biet - South Vietnamese Special Forces]. And they looked after the political side of things, in other words they controlled everything. With the indigenous troops there.
- 34:00 Once again it was patrols and so on and we made a few small contacts.

Were you actually a moveable camp in canvass or...?

No, no we were dug in in the ground. But our com [communications] shack was down below; everything was underground and mainly protection from mortars. And anything else they'd like to throw at us if they had it. But there was a bit of a disagreement. Between the Viets and our people

- 34:30 and they decided they'd move the Australians out of the area. So they moved us down to, of all places, on TV [television] they had this China Beach, we were moved to China - we didn't call it China Beach and there was nothing like on the TV there I can tell you. Just sand hills and - one good thing, back off the edge of the water, down at about six feet, beautiful fresh water. So we just used 40 gallon drums and put a bit of a hole down
- 35:00 and that was our water supply. And we were under canvass there. The people that had taken from Tra Pang, we were changed over with a team from what they called, TDY team. Temporary Duty team and the first thing they did, they pulled a fence down which we had between us and the Viets. And different times we were there a shot'd be fired from our side of the - where the indigenous
- 35:30 troops were and we always knew who they were meant for. They didn't like the Australian commander. But he was lucky, they didn't get him.

They didn't like the Australian commander?

No, no, he was a, you know, I think he reckoned he was Hitler for a while, but apart from that. Oh a funny thing, one day he said to me, "There's something in my bunker I must show you." And I thought, oh what's he pulling now? So righto, down I go and he said, "Have a look at that."

- 36:00 And here's a big boxhead with a steel helmet on with a big spike on top. And I thought, jeez might be old Kaiser Bill, I don't know. So he said, "That man is my father." I thought that rings a good bell with me. He said, "You know that man had his first command and he was," now this was out of the air, '36. I have my command and I'm only 32. And I looked around and thought, if that's a command I don't want one. Any case
- 36:30 apart from that we were taken back to China Beach, set up what they call a mobile strike force.

During this time are you wearing an American uniform or an Australian?

No way, I was in the indigenous uniform. Whatever they wore, if they had a little round straw hat, I had one. And I'm not very tall but I made sure my head wasn't poking up above theirs. No, you wore their uniform, wore a 'tiger suit'.

Can you describe that?

Yeah, black and green stripes all over it. Terrible

37:00 looking thing. But anyway, that's what was our dress.

And what was your actual objective according to headquarters?

We were advisers. We were advising these people in everything we sort of, they recruit them from the - the people had Montagnards, they recruited them from the Montagnard villages in the highlands and we had the Nungs, which are

37:30 supposedly Chinese, part of Saigon, is Cholon, and over centuries they have remained Chinese. And they sort of still marry between themselves and so on, they can speak Viet, there's no worry about that but they use Cantonese. Now, they'd go and recruit these people and we'd have to train them. And then after we trained them then they'd take them out on operations. And the Americans forever

38:00 trying to cut down the training time. You can't do that. Well you can, if you want casualties but their body count, didn't pertain to the indigenous troops.

Isn't this quite difficult to do, combining minority groups together?

Well, they left us alone. The people as I said, who we had, come from Cholon, and they had even fought with the French. One chap I was with he jumped into Dien Bien Phu

38:30 and was captured there and then later on they let them all go, the Viets, but,

But just the factionalism between different minorities of the Vietnamese.

But in Saigon as I said, Cholon, and that was where the money was, because the Chinese are the Jews of the East, it was noted for that and the other part of Saigon itself, was the old Viet Regime where they had these

39:00 commanders and everything else that when they count the money it was three for me and one maybe for you. Sort of it was rife with all sorts of graft and stuff like that. And some of the allies weren't far behind pushing a bit of this graft too. Towards people they wanted in charge. One stage there, one of the premiers was - he was - they had a coup, he was killed anyway his body

39:30 was found in an armoured personnel carrier...

Are you saying there was a great deal of corruption?

True. CIA [Central intelligence Agency] controlled a lot of the place. They were all over the place; they were up in the highlands with their mountain tribesmen. Wherever you went you knew there was CIA around. They were always in civvy clothes.

Could you spot one of these blokes a mile off?

If you were in an area that was all uniformed, yeah, you could. But I had a bit to do with them up at a place called

40:00 Dalat, at a later date. And two of us went up and joined this Australian outfit and it was run by an ex Australian brigadier, wartime chap, and he was a notorious old fella and he said, "One of you two are going to intelligence." And quick as a flash I said, "This is not for me." I said, "I don't think I'd be able to do the job, Sir." He said, "I'll work out who'll do the job."

40:30 And I said, "Well the fella with me," I said, "He's regular army for life and he's going to go for an OCS." I really built it up. "Oh well," he said, "it looks like he'll be the fella to do the job." And after he said to me, "Oh you dobbed me in." But you know he got the bug from the CIA and we lived in a villa.

Sorry the bug?

Yeah, well. He was indoctrinated into the CIA and the phone would ring and it was for him and he'd go

41:00 and hide in the corner and answer the phone. He didn't want us to hear what was going on. And we didn't give a damn. But anyway, he carried on, he was commissioned and I think the last time I saw him, he's a civvy now, he was a brigadier, he was a good type of bloke too. But that business of running round with that CIA bloomin' all their secret handshakes and all this business, that wasn't for me. Anyway, where are we? Back in the mobile strike force. And all of our - now this is in '65, '66. We didn't have to be airborne qualified, in that tour, one of our biggest jobs was the people that took over from us at Tra Pang, wanted to be loved by everyone as they normally do, the Americans and they used to use the same old trick. They'd hit an outpost and one outpost that actually I'd worked with.

00:31 **When you're with the Popular Forces why did the UN [United Nations] decide to move you guys out?**

You mean when we were looking after the Monyar [Montagnard] village, this is at Tra Bak?

Yeah?

Well two of our fellows were killed in action and he was short of two platoon commanders or

01:00 platoon advisors, whichever you'd like to call them, and he'd been on the blower to the senior advisor back in Danang and of course he'd requested myself and Vic Harris and that's how we went into this 107, this A-Team. And then we stayed with the Special Forces for the next, for the finish of that tour and the next tour I did I went to Special Forces. But that is the reason why we went there in the first place.

01:30 In actual fact we weren't doing very much in regards to helping anyone because all it was as far as the camp was concerned they'd only have to send in a section and they could have taken the whole village out, they had nothing to defend themselves with. We tried to sort of make things a little bit better for them.

Did the UN later take the Aussies out because of any discipline problems?

Any?

Discipline problems?

True, not on our

02:00 side, right old Felix was 'gung ho' he wanted to charge down the valley and do this that and the other and...

What was his ethnicity?

Beg your pardon?

What was Felix's ethnicity, where was he from?

Hungary, he was Hungarian, he was the one you might not of heard I was telling about his father was in the Hungarian army and ...

Who was his counterpart?

Beg your pardon?

Who was Felix's counterpart?

02:30 Oh it was a Viet captain who he was called dai wi [captain] in the Vietnam lingo. But he was our actual senior fellow at Tra Bong and when we moved and they formed the Mobile Strike Force he was still our company commander. And any case we then had to sort of train people and set up this Mobile Strike Force, we were heliborne. Anything

03:00 we did was with the Chinooks or something like that. One of our fellows from Bulga here in WA, Roy Weir was given a bag full of money and sent up into the highlands with a mountain trisalage[?] to recruit a company of Montagnards, mountain people. And, which he did he didn't know any thing about how to get there or anything else but he was an ex SAS man to and I think it was about his second tour

03:30 at that stage in the country. He was one of the originals I think Roy, or the second tour. But anyway he went up and came back with a heap of Montagnards and what I can always remember about these fellows they'd never seen the ocean and of course they went down and paddled around and one bloke had a bit of a drink of it. The next thing they're into it, cause they can't get salt up into the hills, in the mountains and they're drinking pure salt water. Well they only drank a little bit and that was it, but it affected them. But

04:00 it just goes to show little things that you don't think of at that time. I knew afterwards that I always made sure I had salt if I ever went out anywhere where they were.

Why, what would you do with the salt?

Well they had no salt see and then we got it for them in rations and things like that but if I had salt I knew that if I wanted something done around the place that little bit of salt was a sweetener.

What kind of things would you barter for with the salt?

Well probably,

04:30 they grew a lot of corn, now I don't mind corn I'll chuck it in the fire and have a corn on the cob and stuff like that. Anything like that, I didn't want any of their wine or that stuff, it would take the top of your head off if you drank. I used to always go through miming, you call over there's a big party on and you're at the head of the village, they're all done up in their village gear, which they make themselves incidentally, all the cloth and so on.

05:00 And they'd bring out, they'd dig up these jars of this wine that they'd make out of rice and it would be like sulphuric acid, bubbling and they put bamboo sort of funnels into it and you get the first one, you'd have the first drink. And I used to make sure I blew very hard and then I'd get back and pat my stomach and tell them what a good brew it was, but I made sure I never ever drank it. And then they stay there until they all get rolling drunk, probably get

05:30 a shower of rain and they'd demonstrate how they could jump out of aeroplanes. Their long houses had a sort of a log going up with steps cut into it, and it would be up about 7 foot high, and they'd be jumping off this into the mud and they reckon they were having a glorious time. But that's just one of the things they did.

What other kinds of services did the mountain people perform for you?

They were our soldiers; see certain tribes in the highlands

06:00 even had sort of their own language but overall they had a language different to the Viets, I tried to, I picked a few words up enough that I needed. But when they came to us they were to be trained, and most of them wanted to be airborne, be trained as paratroopers which on my second tour we did, we trained them as paratroopers, I was training myself at that time. But anyway

06:30 we put them through recruit training our side and, our style Australian style and even later when I was with a, I had the training company I was a senior fellow there we taught them their saluting, the Americans would always run amuck and see them saluting like this. And they'd grin all over their face when they saw an American officer and they'd be up like this see and the Yanks would be standing there

07:00 no showing them how to salute American style and they'd be nodding with their head yep that's right and as soon as they got it they'd give the old, our salute, that didn't go over too well I might add.

What later happened to the Americans on that post when you were moved out?

Right okay they wanted, they had this thing going over there the PSYOPS [Psychological Operations] and all the rest of it and they wanted to get the hearts and minds of the people, their

07:30 way. You can't change an oriental that's been doing these things for centuries in a couple of weeks. In any case they pulled down the dividing fence we had between us and the indigenous troops, the following morning someone had come in and pinched every one of the water proof covers they had, while they were out on patrols, and a lot of other things. At a later date they found out somebody had been in and broken all the firing pins on the heavy

08:00 equipment, heavy weapons. And then they set up an ambush along a valley that went to a place called Don Phu, oh doesn't matter a village and they sent a messenger back to the camp and to the district chief, who lived out on his own down at an airstrip in the village that this place had been over run and they'd killed everyone, the soldiers in the village,

08:30 which they had. So the 7th Cavalry decided they'd charge down the valley and liberate the people. Well Charlie [the enemy] had a half mile ambush set up and let them go through then they closed off the ambush and they wiped them out. Some of the stories that came back, a young officer, and a fellow was my offsider a sergeant in the Viet Army, was working with this fellow

09:00 and he was shot in the leg and in those days the M16 was sort of, you couldn't get them we were using carbines and everything else from the Second World War and Korea. Anyway, apparently this fellow pushed the officer over took his Armalite [rifle] and held it above his head and handed him over to, was Viet Cong that did this. Anyway, there's a story attached to that at a later date after all the people had been wiped out,

09:30 the ones that didn't escape he was taken to a place called..., anyway what had happened there'd been an air strike put in on this village and it's wiped off the face of the earth. And they took this chap down to the village they tied him up, they shot him and cut his head off. Then they sold the head back to the Special Forces through their intelligence system,

10:00 which was going all over the place. They were employing people to get certain information from them, they'd just give them half a note, in other words say for instance it was a Viet 100 piastre or dong they'd tear it half and give them half and when they bought the information back they'd give them the other half. A friend of mine was Intel [intelligence] sergeant and he said, "It's the only way I can remember who they are, they come back." He said, "Anyone could have come back," as long as he got the information.

10:30 Any case I know people that went back to the States with a sealed coffin and you wouldn't know his body wasn't there, a dummy went in with his head on it. That was one thing that happened there. The other thing was one chap in particular he'd been wounded and the Montagnards had tried to carry him out on a bamboo pole and they'd sort of wrapped vines around him and were carrying him out

11:00 and they apparently couldn't go any further and they left him and I found him afterwards and they put a, which I would have done I would have shot him if he was the enemy and they put a bullet through his head. Before they'd done that he'd taken his wrist watch off, which was pretty expensive and smashed it to pieces before they got him. And when I found his body he still had bits of the watch in his hand.

Why had he done that?

Well you work it out for yourself, you're going to die, you're going to give someone your watch, no way you smash it too. And that was

- 11:30 oh I'd have thrown it to or something. Some villages called me over, I had about half a dozen people with me at the time, by the way there was another Australian with me on this Jock Roy he was a senior bloke in charge of the, they called it a police action, policing out the bodies and Wally Davis was another chap. Anyway, we went with the people, making sure we knew where we were going and there was a big flat rock sort of
- 12:00 alongside the village. And when I went round the side the first thing I saw was my interpreter that I had before, shot through the head, a young American, I didn't know well but he was a medic and he was laying back with a cigarette in his mouth that he'd never lit and a bullet in his head. The young commander of the camp the LLDB chap he was executed and they'd taken his boots, but I always remember
- 12:30 old Felix getting a small pair of boots cause they've only got small feet, and they were the only things they'd taken from these people, apart from their arms, they were all gone and their ammunition. But that's one of the worst jobs I had really. Afterwards, prior to us going out on this policing action we had a whole battalion lined up and we couldn't get anyone to go out and they bribed them with double pay, they're mercenaries and they're only there for money,
- 13:00 but any case Jimmy McFagden one of the ex SAS bloke and one of our members he talked them into give certain amount, double pay if they went out there, and we got 30 odd decided they'd risk getting the double pay. And that's all we could get to go with us. And they flew us into the camp and we knew there was something pretty bad had happened and to get to the camp the pilot had to fly up this river because
- 13:30 it was socked in, the only way we could get in. He did a pretty good job there but anyway we did what we had to we policed up all the bodies, there was no arms and stuff left and moved back to the camp. And after a couple of days they bought more people in there and we moved back in our job back to China Beach...

Can we just pause there...?

Beg your pardon?

Can we just pause there for a minute Don. How did

14:00 you complete that policing action?

All we could do was later they bought down a 30 hundred weight truck we got the bodies onto the truck and they were taken back in relays to the camp itself. Then they had the choppers came in and moved them out from the camp itself at a headquarters which was out down at Danang on the edge of the Danang airport, airstrip. We returned to

- 14:30 our own place, once again in choppers and we just carried on with our normal duties which was to go out to any other, see we were Reaction Force and any Special Forces camp that got hit and wanted help, well we had to go out there and give them a hand.

And what risk were you taking of the VC [Viet Cong] returning while you were completing that policing action?

Well normally we make sure were covered, in other words we bring in a gun ship or something

- 15:00 like that and they fly around us while were doing these things. And of course all we've got to do, we've got ground to air coms and were on their frequency and just got to call them in and tell them to come in and really shoot the place up, which they can do to, they've got rockets and everything on, and the mini guns, on these gun ships. See there's different type of chopper you've got your dust off, take out wounded, you've got the normal one that goes out on observations and then you've got your gun ship
- 15:30 that's armed to the teeth, and there the ones you call in if you want support.

So what kind of air support did you have when you were completing this policing action?

Well plenty of choppers around the place, it's hard to used fixed wing aircraft because if they're going to use for instance napalm [petrol explosive used in Vietnam] you've got to be so careful you could buy it, in other words if you happen to be close contact with any enemy you can't call them in because you'll get burnt to.

- 16:00 That's normally you pull out of the way and they go through and burn the whole place out.

How many choppers though did escort you on this particular operation?

Well I'll put it this way if you've got two flying around he can only stay there for a certain time before he hasn't got enough juice to keep, to get back to the base someone else comes in and takes his place, you'll always sort of have two gun ships there, maybe only 1, you might only need 1 gun ship. But any

- support
- 16:30 that they can give you they never hesitate. If you're in a position where you can contact naval gunfire they will bring naval gun fire to bear on the target you give them. And the Americans would never, with us they'd say fix bayonet charge sort of business probably not that bad but they wouldn't use support like the Americans use it, it would have to be pretty good for us to get artillery support, mortar support. But with them whatever was available
- 17:00 they'd throw.
- I'm just curious on this particular occasion you were trying to bribe men in there with double pay etc?**
- Yeah well all our people were mercenaries, see when they recruited them if they were the Chinese Nungs from Saigon they were given more pay than the private soldier in the Viet army and otherwise you wouldn't have got them. And the same with the Montagnard, he was a bit naive sort of, he wanted to be tangled up with you and in the army
- 17:30 but he didn't want to be with the Viets. They didn't like the Viet's, they wanted their own, basically they wanted their own land and they wanted to have their own state and the Viets weren't going to give them this. Well now the Communists have taken over they'll never get it, but I believe the Communists are leaving them alone, they're not interfering with them. For a start they wiped them out where they could and now they're getting a better deal I believe.
- On this particular occasion though why were**
- 18:00 **you having to bribe men with double the pay?**
- They weren't going out, they just sat down and said, "That's it."
- What was their reason for not responding?**
- Well too dangerous, they knew what had happened they knew the people had been killed, they knew what was out there, they get it on their grapevine and that was the only way we could get them to go out. Oh there was a lot of that went on and there was a lot of the times that they'd turn around and they thought it was too dangerous, that's it, they're mercenaries, they're there for
- 18:30 pay. And incidentally if you were disciplining any of those people and you fine them money you're an idiot cause if you took money off them first chance they'd get they'd drop you they wouldn't carry out their orders. I made the point that never ever to take money off them.
- Just in summary with regards to this incident that we've been talking about who actually formed the police**
- 19:00 **action team or mercenary squad?**
- Well at the time Fazika was away on leave or he was getting married, he was doing something, he was out of country and a chap called, I mentioned his name Jimmy McFagden went to organise the Reaction Force to go in and police up the bodies and so on out of Tra Bong and that's how this business came up. The people didn't want to go
- 19:30 and to entice them he gave them double pay and I told you all we had was a Caribou full of people that's all we could get. I had no doubt in my mind if they'd have struck resistance when we were around on the follow up they would of cleared out and left us to it.
- On the follow up?**
- When we were going through picking up the bodies and so on down this valley. There's a lot
- 20:00 into why it happened and why the ambush was on and everything else but they never tried it with us because when we moved anywhere we had flankers out and we used tactics, we didn't go madly down a road, I mean that's asking for trouble. But they thought they were doing the right thing and it was an inexperienced officer in charge and he paid with his life. Often you got things like that people will handle
- 20:30 armies, divisions, battalions, when you get down to the company level they're not interested in that, and the platoon level not at all, all they're interested in is masses of troops masses of equipment and they proved that over here in Iraq, now they're paying for it. You've got to prompt me.
- 21:00 **That's all right I was just pausing. So given the extreme nature of this particular ambush it made the situation much less secure than any of these other police actions that you had launched?**
- Possibly it was the worst of the lot the Americans called it the lost patrol, didn't mention too much about Australians being involved in it. But after that I never ever
- 21:30 went back to Tra Bong again in that tour, at a later date I was transferred to what they called the Police

Field Force, it was run by an Australian brigadier. We were actually training the police, the Viet Police Force up in the highlands and this fellow instigated with his 2IC [Second in Charge] who was an ex-army major both from the jungle school at Canungra to organise the

22:00 training of the Police Field Force and he built a miniature Canungra with shooting galleries and pop up targets, that we had there he built over in this area. I was with him for about 6 weeks, I was sent there out of punishment for having words with an American officer. And any case from there I was sent down to Saigon and

22:30 had a couple of weeks there and then I went back to Australia.

What motivated those events, you leaving?

Well I'd finished my time, you do 12 months, thereabouts and I sort of finished my tour. Came back home, they sent me back on a, they normally gave you a easy job if you decide you going to go back as

23:00 something like that and I came back and once again worked with the cadets. That was 66, two years later I went back in 68 and did a second tour.

Can we just spend a little bit of time perhaps exploring the colleges and cadets that you worked with?

Yes they dedicate certain schools to certain people. At one stage the commander in his wisdom

23:30 of the cadets, I'm talking about regular army now, he had a fellow that was a great instructor but he couldn't leave the bottle alone so he said the best thing to do was put him with me because I didn't drink, well it still didn't stop him drinking. I worked with him for a while and I got a change I'll put it that way he had bottles of plonk [alcohol] I don't care where you went he had some stuff planted, he was an alcoholic and terrific instructor

24:00 if you could keep him sober. Once again we were going down round the country, one stage we took quite a few, I'll leave the school out of this, cadets down to Collie and the cadets always wanted to know if we could arrange for them to be under fire. Well in the training that's not on so chap with me we decided maybe

24:30 one day it might do them some good to know what it's like. So we set a machine gun up on a dry creek bed, we sand bagged it in and made sure it was safe and then we got the kids to crawl up this creek bed. Everything went off real beaut, oh they reckon it was terrific, someone got home next thing I'm up at command standing in front of the commander RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major]. He was telling me what a backside I was risking these kids

25:00 lives. Anyway, I told him exactly what was gone, he said, "I knew damn well you wouldn't take a risk with these kids," and he said, "But you know it's against the training code and all that." And after it was over and I was given a reprimand I had phone calls from the parents of these kids telling me what a wonderful job I'd done, I thought I wonder why they don't ring up the GOC [General Officer Commanding] and tell him and then I won't be in trouble then. But

25:30 often it amused me for a start years later I'd be in Perth somewhere and all of a sudden a hand would go on me shoulder and I'd look around and it would be a copper [policeman] and I'd think what the, and a kid would say, "How you going sir don't you remember me?" and you never remember the kids because your out in front of them, they remember you your one, but when you've got 50 kids out in front of you. And often that would happen different place, one bloke in particular he used to say to me, "I'm going to be a solicitor one day

26:00 always keep my name in mind in case you get into trouble." I said, "What sort of a bloke do you think I am?" But in any case one day a bloke came to me and he said, "Do you know this fellows name?" I said, "It rings a bell but I don't." He said, "He's a solicitor he said to tell you his your mate." I said, "I know who he is." Oh, he's a rat bag. I'll tell you a little story about him he was with the undergraduates and they had a bit of a club you can call it,

26:30 I think it was downstairs somewhere in the terrace. Anyway, one night they got raided and this fellow was the Vice President of the show, any case he was a real smart arse. Anyway, he opened the door, they knocked on it, "Police here, Vice Squad." "Oh," he said, "good to see you. I'm the Vice President," put his hand out and they put the manacles on him and that's the type of bloke he was and he wanted to help you if he was in trouble, he wouldn't help me. If he ever sees this he'll know who I'm talking about.

27:00 **What codes of training were you breaking?**

How do you mean?

Well you mentioned that you were reprimanded for breaking the codes of training?

Oh using live ammunition near kids, oh no no, anything like that you got, even with regular troops you've got to have things set in a certain way so that you don't have one casualty, not even anyone wounded. If anything like that happens, please explain.

What kind of exercises were you using the live ammo [ammunition] in?

Well see they were down at the jungle

27:30 school and we had all that stuff for just firing for battle simulation into a hole somewhere. Anyway, we probably weren't too far, but any time I had the kids down there at any stage they always when they went home, and if we were up to a march our parade and the parents always would make it a point of going over and saying, "I don't know what you did but Johnny polishes his own shoes," and my answer normally was, "Well lady

28:00 if you polish his shoes that's your fault." Cause when the kids come to you that's what was happening they'd been looked after and beds made and all that, they were horrified when I said, "Make your bed, clean your boots, do this and do that."

Right and when you confessed that you probably went too far what kind of things do you admit to being, perhaps crossed the line?

That was only that that, we bent the rules, we really bent the rules. And the point

28:30 was possibly one of the kids could of panicked and jumped up and taken a burst. But we'd worked where it was firing he'd have to be pretty big to be hit by anything from the, we were using a Bren gun and you can set them in on what they call a tripod and they'll only fire, they can't move only a certain travis on them and a elevation, it's locked into the elevation. Don't worry we knew the penalty if anyone was injured, we'd have to run through

29:00 it ourselves and poke our heads up over the top.

Why do you think you made those judgements about using live ammunition and bending the rules during training with these kids?

Well put it this way you always get them come to you and say what's it like to be fired at? I've heard CMF chap say to me, "What's it like to be shot at?" I always told them "Not to blasted good." And they'd come and ask you these things and then, in actual fact until you are shot at you don't know what it's like

29:30 and that's probably one of the reasons I might have been a bit gung ho and reckon well if we don't do it to them one day they might be on the receiving end and won't know what it sounds like. You know once you've been shot at what it sounds like, not very good.

Do you think that perhaps some of the circumstances that you'd survive, that you thought that the risk was much lower than perhaps the hierarchy during these training exercises?

Well policy, they've got to

30:00 look after the public interest, they cannot afford to have sort of a black mark against any regular army unit, any CMF unit or the school cadets or something like that. And that's one of the reasons why they can't give them certain training because of the risk factor. See even when we had them on ropes and things like that you always had someone sitting underneath to catch them if they fell off or, because

30:30 not only the trouble you'd get into over that not looking after things was the fact you'd be there for a month filling paper work in.

So what prompted you to do a second tour of Vietnam?

I don't know I think I must have been bomb happy then. Well a chap I went with first time he was

31:00 going back, two other fellows we'd served with in the same outfit were going back and I thought well it's good enough for them it's good enough for me. To go a bit further I did the 2nd tour but one of the fellows with us was wounded on each tour and when I tried to go back the third time they automatically down-graded me and

31:30 they said, "I'm never to go in the tropical area again," and a few other things and I thought sooner or later I'll toss them but I couldn't, that's why I pulled out of the army. Anyway, when this chap went back for the third tour he sent me a letter and I got it a week after he was killed, on his first operation he was killed. And the strange part about it I was at a reunion in Queensland, no

32:00 New South Wales and a women came up to me and she said, "Are you Don Cameron?" "Yep right," I acknowledged it. She said, "You're a friend of my son." And I asked who it was and she said this fellows name and I said, "Yes," and she said, "Can I talk to you?" I said, "Oh go for your life." She said, "By the way," she said, "my maiden name was Cameron," and she was a Scot. And when I was talking to her she said, "I accepted Johnny's with

32:30 the SAS he was this that and the other, he was a bit of a tear about," but she said, "What hurt me was his younger brother was commissioned," National Service kid, "He was commissioned and after John was killed he came home on leave he went out the backyard and blew his brains out with a service automatic they had." Oh I didn't know which way, when she told me that and it was a shock to me I didn't know the younger brother but the fellow that was

33:00 killed, I heard advisor killed on TV and I knew straight away who it was, somehow or rather I knew, then I got the letter. So you can't keep going back. Any case I better keep going.

In any case can you talk us through your second tour of Vietnam from beginning to end?

Yep there was a battle in this one. Okay we went back and

- 33:30 I was sent to special, I was going to another battalion and they pulled me off the plane and they said they wanted an advisor with the Special Forces, actually Frank Lucas the fellow I went with he came and got me. So I went back to the headquarters of Special Forces and the first thing they said to me was, "Are you air borne qualified?" I said, "No," they said, "Well were running a school here and to come into our outfit now you must be air borne qualified," I said, "Right
- 34:00 you get permission and I'll do the course." So myself and a fellow called Obe O'Brien, a Western Australian, we lined up with these American instructors and they had a whale of a time, they're all corporals and were warrant officers and didn't they get stuck into us. Anyway, the training was worse than jumping out of the planes. Obe O'Brien was 43 and I was 42
- 34:30 and that's unheard of an Australian doing a para [paratrooper] course at that. Anyway, we did the course, we qualified go the American wings, the Viet wings and up there on the wall is a certificate which makes me a life member of the Green Berets [United States Army Special Forces] and that's the only thing we got out of it. Oh and we got para pay and I was real pleased about that. Anyway, I said to his friend of mine "Do a couple of jumps with us?" and I said, "Then you can qualify for para pay." He said, "I see what they're doing
- 35:00 to you blokes there's no way I'm going." We were jumping out of Chinooks for a while, for part of the course. Anyway, we did that then we went back to our role, oh I made a blew there. There were two marines with us, half way through the course they tried to chuck them off because the marines and the Special Forces sort of don't get on too well.

Why is that?

Oh it's just a clash within sort of the marines, you a marine and that's it your not a

- 35:30 Green Beret or anything else. Anyway, they qualified and go their wings. Basically then we had a young officer came up and took over our company. J E D White, I didn't know what he'd be like for a start anyway we found out he was a real sensible sort of an officer and he did everything that he should of done when we were in trouble. They moved us from Danang with a
- 36:00 company of these noongs, Chinese up to a old French fort, the fort consisted of 4 bulldozed walls of dirt a lot of old mines they'd left laying around and barb wire and stuff and we were close, we didn't know actually if we were in Laos or by law we weren't in Laos we didn't have any trouble with them. But the borders are not marked there and we
- 36:30 occupied that area, maybe for two months. We were patrolling everywhere and every time we bumped someone and have a bit of contact and then about 12 mile from us is a Special Forces camp. And they must have been giving trouble to the infiltration then of the NVA, the North [Vietnamese] Army and any case, and we were a bit of a thorn in their side.
- 37:00 So they decided in when, October I can't remember the date they'd take us out. Everywhere we'd been we'd run into troops that were well trained and our job was at the time recce [reconnaissance], to find out what was going on there and to get the blazes out of it. Anyway, one day Frank and I had the same pit and I had a platoon to the right and he had a platoon to the left, dug in. And I looked
- 37:30 over through the, we'd knocked a lot of the trees down in the jungle to clear a firing area and there was two people standing up pointing towards our area and I said to Frank, we didn't have binocs [binoculars], I said, "That looks like Charlie over there working out what he's going to do to us," and that was pretty right. The next night they put a probing patrol in, our people were ordered not to fire automatic weapons, so they pin
- 38:00 point them see and fire the rockets in there. Then the following night they attacked, what I am telling you is we had two 105s [artillery] brought into our area controlled by marines and there would be 30 odd marines dug in alongside us. Anyway, the story is in the light a century was approached
- 38:30 by one of the indigenous and he called out, "Don't shoot, friendly." And of course new troops they fell for it and he let this fellow come up and he got close enough and he threw a satchel charge in and blew them to blazers. Then they attacked and they wiped out the marines. Then one of our platoons broke and a fellow called Willy Swisegood he was, this is an American he was their leader
- 39:00 he got a charge in with him and he was minced up but not killed. We were standing to, where we were Frank and I and we controlled the other area. Anyway, they overrun part of the position the company commander was in his bunker, actually he had a sort of a company area which was all sand bagged in and a roof and everything on it and himself and a little fellow he had to do some cooking for him
- 39:30 and an American medic they were hold up in there and they were trying to throw satchel charges in. But the way the wall was built it was on a slant and they kept falling off and exploding and doing no harm. One of the platoons got down amongst where my platoon was, we sort of stopped a couple of sort of skirmishes, they weren't real attacks and then something we could never work out a smoky mist

- 40:00 came up from the area where they were in and I said to Frank, we didn't have respirators or anything I said, "It looks like gas." And whatever it was it turned around and went back over the top of the NVA and I still reckon to this day it was gas because later we found them with respirators in their gear the blokes that were killed. Anyway, they kept the fight on and White got in touch with headquarters and bought Spookie, which is an
- 40:30 old Douglas Dakota with all these mini guns on it, we used to call it puff the magic dragon and, there was another name but I've forgotten. But anyway they flew round us all night and outside our area which they could identify and they mowed the jungle out with these mini-guns. And everything they'd sort of fire a burst there's about 6,000 rounds would lob in the jungle,
- 41:00 any case that saved our lives. Frank and I had a mine set out in front of us, they were the, names gone out of me head to, anyway they saved us. When they moved into our area we detonated these mines, they fired out in amongst them with all ball bearings.
- Claymores?**
- That's the one, it was the Claymore, how do you know this? Anyway
- 41:30 funny part about it we had a bit of a cover over us for the rain and that in our pit and on one side of it it sloped down and we had a food container, a real silver food container, I never liked that thing. Anyway, when we saw these people looking at the area I said, "I haven't got a good field of fire here we'll move it," and we moved it about 8 feet. And you know when they attacked they put a rocket straight into that water container, how lucky were we,
- 42:00 both of us would of coped it but that's the luck of the game...

Tape 9

- 00:31 **We'll rewind a little bit and then I'll pick up where Julian left off. We didn't actually discuss the weather conditions in Korea which made it really difficult. Now I know that the weather conditions in Korea are pretty nasty could you tell me a little bit about how you prepare, with the kind of gear you were issued with and then what the conditions were like?**
- Well we were very lucky we were in the second winter, you right to go? And is this right?
- 01:00 The first winter was apparently was a pretty bad winter and our fellow then still had the normal winter gear for Australia and it was useless. When the winter started with us the government bought British gear which include these string vests to circulate the air under your clothing, the long johns
- 01:30 sort of wind trousers, wind jacket, jumpers, big string jumpers, heavy jumpers and best of all the parka. And the American parka was a beauty, the best of the lot was Canadian stuff they were first class. Any case we had this thing and on the hood it had piano wire and it could be moved out in front of you, and if you were caught like that you were in big trouble. You're like a horse with blinkers on
- 02:00 you can't see left or right, so it was a no, no you had to keep it back. Mainly with a bit of luck you could have it behind your ears. So really we were pretty well covered with the gear, the winter gear. Oh and the Brits had big heavy boots called CWW, cold wet weather, and they had a nylon insert into those to circulate the air into your socks, they were first class, but big
- 02:30 and clumsy but they did the job. All I can say was the gear, well we didn't have any so we had to have theirs, some of it was white for the snow, for camouflage. At one stage I had a white suit, we had to do a job in the snow, it was just a recce thing but one thing it sort of kept us from view of the enemy. That's about all I can tell you with the, oh
- 03:00 I will tell you a story on the cold weather. When they were, right were in trenches, fighting pits and so on, bunkers and on the reverse slopes that's where everything goes on, where your fairly sort of safe, that's where a lot of trees were put in and if you were a little bit shy they'd put a big of a skirting around to canvas, I don't see any of our blokes, we didn't have any of this heshin or whatever.
- 03:30 But it was made out of half of a 44 gallon drum with a hole cut in the top. So everyone used to enlighten in a new fellow coming into the area and we'd stand to, then we'd stand down and we'd sit and wait for the first blokes to run down and get to the toilets, immediately they got there and sat down they were anchored, they're backside froze on this tin and they had to stay there till it thawed out. And of course where they'd been sitting
- 04:00 it just about burnt a great big ring around their behind, that was our humour. Any case that's how cold, I can tell other stories about it gets that cold that you've got to be very careful what you do. In other words I mean urinate, the story was you had to carry a big stick with you, in any case that's all I'll tell you about that.

Cause it froze?

It froze.

Sounds pretty extreme weather?

Yes summer

04:30 just the opposite, stinking hot, humid. Well between the two there's not much difference to Japan, Japan was about the same, but of course you had the facilities there which we didn't have in Korea.

Well what sort of facilities did you have for things like washing?

Pretty rough every now and then they had a mobile shower unit would come around and

05:00 you'd take it in turns going down getting scrubbed up and if they had any extra socks and stuff, someone had stolen or begged or had them they'd dish them out to the boys. Also every now and then, especially after we occupied Chinese trenches the DDT [d(ichloro)d(iphenyl)t(richloroethane) - insecticide] machine would come around, a blower and they'd stick this thing down your neck and fill you full of DDT. And mainly it was for the lice that were in the

05:30 rice straw that was in the bottom of the trenches. The reason for that is it's cold and also up where they fire their weapons from they'd have matting there to made from rice straw and the reason for it was if you happen to put a magazine of a weapon there and there was nothing there you couldn't move it, it would freeze there and you couldn't move it, not with a crow bar. And the same with the grenades if they weren't stuck on the matting that's

06:00 where they stayed. We soon learnt to do something the same with, we'd get half of the ration cartons and lay them along our fighting pits and things like that, but we still had lice everywhere.

How was that to deal with?

With the DDT yes and with we'd call for aerosol bombs and that's like a pressure pack and that would kill anything.

06:30 After Commando everyone was lousy because we'd been in the Chinese trenches and their bunkers and wearing their clothes, but I'll tell you what we didn't wear the bug bunny hat they wore. We made sure we kept a slouch hat on, I think I slept in mine just to be safe. It was an order anyway and yet some of our blokes wore them. But they were full of lice and the only reason we wore them we'd lost our own gear when we'd put the attack in. Normal

07:00 procedure was you'd have a trailer to each platoon and your pack your gear in that that you're not going to use and they come up to you afterwards, if you're lucky enough to be intact. Well they didn't turn up for us and that's why we used the Chinese gear and they don't have blankets they have padded trousers and jackets and a padded overcoat and they're magnificent to keep you warm. There like cotton, paper, some sort of a kapok

07:30 and there the best thing I've ever had for keeping the cold out, there really good and there sort of made out of nothing.

Was there any other problems like lice or you know with bugs or creatures?

Oh the place was full of rats in the middle of the night you'd hear a gun shot and you'd hear somebody, "Got ya you B," and you know he was shooting a rat, and they were enormous. You just about get them to carry your pack.

08:00 When they were in a static position that's when they invade, if you left anything, rations or anything around that would sort of bring them into where you were, it was a no no to leave you know food laying around the place.

Sounds pretty unpleasant rats and lice, hmm. Were there any problems with Malaya as far as bugs and pest and insects were concerned?

Well we

08:30 were given the anti-malaria tablets and so on and people started to, and I might add malaria was a SIW [Self Inflicted Wound]. In any case some of the boys went down with it and I went down with it myself, I'd had malaria before and thought, well I was cured of it, this was another lot I caught over there and when I was in, the Brits had a bit of an advance to

09:00 like a hospital but only staffed with about 1 Doctor. To cover us so we weren't charged they put fever of unknown origin on our medical report, otherwise they would of charged us. The Australian troops had the same problem in Vietnam and then they used the American, America had two pills they used to take and we, I

09:30 always took them and it worked great with us and we were with them all the time in affected areas. But at one stage one of our battalions was inoperative because of malaria, they don't talk too much about

that. Actually, not the battalion a company in the battalion was inoperative because of malaria.

With medical facilities what was it like in Malaya?

Pretty good, we could, if there was any real trouble we knew we could get the Brit

10:00 helicopters in, they were big and clumsy and a bit different to the Americans at a later date but they were available.

How far away were you from medical help?

Well we were a long way away from the hospital, back in BHQ [Battalion Headquarters] there's always a medical facility there where they can handle most things, maybe if it was gun shot wounds or something like that or an amputation they'd move you through to a British hospital. And that was down at Taiping, that was a fair way away from us

10:30 to, we were lucky we didn't have that problem. Minor things, the battalion could handle that the stretcher bearers we had with us or the medics they could handle things like that. Anyway, most of us knew what to do ourselves for minor stuff.

I know we touched on this one earlier and we didn't get a chance to talk about it but the security clearance for going to Vietnam, you said...?

That was through the system,

11:00 before you ever went to the school of insanity, intelligence they were in North Head you knew you were security cleared before that otherwise you never ever got to go to there.

What sort of things would they investigate about you?

I think they even check your family background. I'm not conversant with the actual testing of this all I know is that you be told you are security cleared to do this that and the other.

11:30 We had to be really security cleared otherwise we'd have never got that green passport, I mean that's semi diplomatic passport, I'd like to get my hands on it now.

How did you feel when you were presented with that special passport?

Don't worry they didn't give to us they said, "This is your green passport, where's your blue one," you had that on you, I think my says military advisor, not valid for North

12:00 Vietnam, I like that, and the green one I'm not to sure, once again it was military advisor and we were all photographed in civi clothes.

When you were on leave in Saigon what did you think about Saigon?

I don't think I was ever in leave in Saigon.

Oh really?

No we got leave back to Australia or wherever we wanted to go after I think 6 months.

12:30 Local leave no there's no where to go and when your stuck out in the middle of the bloomin, maybe rice growing area or in the jungle camp, something like that there's no where to go. Back in your base, the Special Forces they always had a team house, all ranks in the team house, but of course the high rank had the best tables and they were put in a place on their own.

13:00 You could get anything you wanted there and they had would you believe TV and they had a plane which was a TV station flying around and you wouldn't believe what we used to watch, this is the second time. Everyone would line up what's the time, well lets go and watch it, combat, it used to be on the TV and all these blow yelling to go and see, it's like me watching MASH now,

13:30 that used to amuse me.

Maybe it was all part of the humour?

Oh you had to have something, well if you didn't have any humour you were in big trouble.

Well what sort of humour would go on when you were in Vietnam?

Actually when you're in the base and the team house and stuff like that yeah pull peoples legs and all the rest of it. I remember a fellow coming up to me and he said, "Hey are you from out west?" I said, "I'm from Western Australia."

14:00 He said, "You people are in big trouble over there." He said, "One of your cities are wiped out." I said, "What?" He said, "They've just had a great big earthquake and they washed out the city of Meckering." I said, "Oh have they?" He said, "Aren't you worried?" I said, "Not really." Yeah that was when the Meckering earthquake was on, that must have been '68. I might have been somewhere I don't know but I remember we got the news from the Americans about Meckering.

Not quite a city?

14:30 No not really.

Were you actually ever in Nui Dat?

No never once. See we had our own CO, Colonel and in our areas mainly Danang we had a senior advisor, that consist of a major and we had a place called OK Australia House and we had a, WO1 [Warrant Officer Class 1] there

15:00 and he had an offsider a WO2 [Warrant Officer Class 2]. That was a real good posting that one except one night some fellow went past on a pushbike and chucked a grenade in the front door, he cleared the place pretty quickly. The road went straight past the front of this place, and I said, "One day they'll have trouble." But anyway apart from that you had your senior man with you in your area and that's how it worked out along the line. If you had a job to do they'd leave you alone and you

15:30 did it your way. That's if you had a good company commander, you had the odd bloke that was too fond of the bottle, other ones were too fond of the greenback, the dollars, I was pretty lucky I struck reasonably good sort of fellows.

When you say to fond of the dollar?

Well that actually cause me a bit of trouble.

16:00 Every now and then we were paid an operation fund and we always had an American XO, Executive Officer, second in command and every time, '66, yeah '66 we got our operation money one of those thieving mercenaries stole it. Within a week the XO was on leave in,

16:30 anywhere you like to mention and this happened twice. So no one say a word but some idiot always opened his mouth but anyway that started the ball rolling and I wasn't very friendly with the XO. On top of that he put some of my blokes in a jail and I told him they were my people and if he wanted to put them in jail he came to me and I put them in the jail, and I wouldn't put anyone in. The jail was barb wire 6

17:00 or 8 inches from the ground on steel pickets, interwoven and they'd strip them down to their underpants and shove them in on their back and lock the door. That was a jail and they'd leave them there in the stinking sun. So some advisor came in and found the fellows in one of these things and he got a .45 and he blew the lock off it and let them all out. Then there was a little bit of trouble around the camp.

Isn't that against the Geneva

17:30 **Convention?**

You're so right so is shotguns, and we had shotguns. As a matter of fact with, up in the highland at Dalat the troops there were all armed with shotguns and they'd come from the First World War and they had bayonet stand on them to put a bayonet onto the end of the shotgun. I bought one back and quite openly and I wasn't queried,

18:00 and I got it registered and I gave it to my brother down in Busselton, it was a Winchester and he had it for years until they bought this business taking all the weapons off you. And he rang me and he said, "What do I do with it?" I said, "Oh give it to them," I didn't want it. A lot of things, see America there not covered by this Geneva Conventions, if there've got someone as a prisoner somewhere they'd start squealing then.

Cause that just sounds something like out of a Japanese prison camp?

18:30 You want to go into their jails. See every now and then, once a month they get paid, anyone that was married we'd make them go into town so their wives got some money. The rest would sit around and gamble until 2, 1 or two of them got all the money and then they'd disappear and for the rest of the month these blokes would have nothing. Some of them would go into town and get drunk and get thrown into the Bastille [jail] and I tell you it was a Bastille. And I've

19:00 been in it to bail them out and American control this, American military police. And actually this fellow I had trouble with him and I went to get some out at some stage and I've told them only once if you go back in again you stay there. Well there just about begging you to get out of this place, oh it looks like those old things in history where they used to put them in the dungeons and they were wet and slimy, they were rotten.

19:30 And this day and age, or in those days I couldn't understand any civilised country putting anyone in there, well they reckon the French were worse, they're the ones that built them anyway, had them built.

What sort of a drug problem did you witness in Vietnam?

Very little, it was there and it was rife but I was pretty naive and I couldn't think of, well it never entered my head that people who were paratroopers and every now and then were using

- 20:00 a parachute would be stupid enough to smoke cigarettes near them, but they were. And also I was at a place called Play Cu, this is this tour were talking about now and I was pretty crook. In any case I could smell this strange sort of smell coming into the place and I spoke to one of the Negro male nurses and he's words to me were, "Well where have you been for the
- 20:30 last part of your life?" I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "That's pot." They've got some other names for it. I said, "Well that's the first time I've had anything to do with it." He said, "You're lucky." He said, "The place is full of it." And we even had it in our base at Play Cu sort of we had a team house and we had places built, rooms where there was a couple of blokes in each room and things like that. And this happens to be authentic
- 21:00 there was a chap in there and they had drug session and beer session and they had two beds opposite one another and there were 4 of them sitting on these. They must have been smoking this dope or anything else, I was in the team house with another chap and we heard a hell of a explosion and we thought they'd hit the camp, had nothing at the time either. Any case, normally you always had a .45, and we raced in to this area smoke everywhere and they had a strobe
- 21:30 light and they must have had this going in front of them, you've seen the strobe light that vivid light they throw out? We used to use that for ID [identification] if you out in the bush and want to get picked up. And this fellow had taken the grenade pulled the pin out and said, "Right oh I'll sort the men out from the boys." And he put it down amongst them and let the pin go, he won, he was splattered all over the wall. And one chap he made me laugh he was a big long lanky Negro
- 22:00 and he's hobbling down this bit of an alleyway and he said to me, "I got hit in the heel, I got hit in the heel," and he had a piece of shrapnel in his heel and I thought how the hell did you get hit in the heel. And apparently he was going for his life running and his heel must have been up in the air and a bit of shrap went into his heel. I don't know what he was going to do when he run either. But that was the only thing really, apart from the hospital that I had anything to do with the drugs.
- 22:30 I never saw them, didn't see them openly using them but I went into a division area where we were operating in front of and the first thing I struck was a barb wire fence around this place and a gate and the guard sitting up with a machine-gun with his feet up on the sand bags smoking dope, with a peace thing around his neck. I asked him a couple of questions and he didn't know what the hell I was talking about, I wanted to know where the commander was.
- 23:00 In actual fact they'd been thrown a few shells around our way and we went and had a talk to him and I said, "Well will you show us your area of responsibility and maximum area you can throw a shell to from where you are." And he showed it to me I said, "Well put a big ring around that," and he said, "What for?" I said, "Because were not coming within a k of that area and then you won't." "Well we're not dropping anything on you sir it was
- 23:30 NVA and camouflage suits." I said, "Those NVA are our troops." And of course a couple of these things happened but they were locked up inside another wall themselves and they were frighten of the troops. And what it was this fragging business they talked about, have you heard of fragging? Right if an officer didn't do what he wanted them to or played up when he went to bed in the middle of the night a grenade come into his bed and blew him to bits, that's fragging a fragmentation
- 24:00 grenade. I said anyone that does that to anyone at all I mean it's just cold blooded murder, well it happened.

Sounds like the Americans were loose cannons?

Well a lot of them were, this 9th Division predominantly were Negro and they were treated pretty rough to. Even I've notice with the Special Forces

- 24:30 Negroes, one bloke in particular which in knew very well he's, of all things his name was Winchester and they treated him pretty rough. One Christmas they had the usual cranberry sauce and turkey and all the rest of it, some of them had had a few beers or heavy stuff that they could get it. And when this chap was going through the line for his meal, they used those big square trays, he put some dark meat
- 25:00 on this fellows tray and he threw it at him and said, "I don't eat coon [indigenous] food," and there's a Negro behind him in the line up. Well I mean if they've got to listen to that they're not going to be very happy about it. Yeah there's a lot of them that still come from areas where the Negro he's nothing and carries on into the armed forces, which is bad.

Did you see quite a bit of that racism going on in Vietnam?

With those people yes.

- 25:30 As far as the 9th Division area was concerned they controlled it, the Negroes controlled the whole area, they wanted to. As I said there was an inner perimeter and all the officers were in there, and they had their own guards and everything else there with them. But on the outside I suppose they said if they get hit these blokes are going to fight or die, that's the Negroes there. Fellows I worked with there's nothing wrong with them, especially blokes like this

26:00 Winchester.

You mentioned quite some time ago that you actually set booby traps, were you setting booby traps at all when you were in Vietnam?

You know booby traps are illegal under the Geneva Convention?

Well you did mention that a bit of booby trapping was going on?

That was in Malaya, in Korea it was always on. There's a trick with grenades, how do I word this

26:30 what you can do you can make them fire instantaneously. Now the way we normally use booby traps around our area was to let us know someone was coming through, often a deer or something would hit the wire that they were attached to and they'd sort of go up. We'd get two tins and poke holes, two holes in the bottom and the top of the tins, if it was a track we'd put this light

27:00 coloured wire across and on one side we'd hook it to a tree or a bush and put a grenade in it. Then we'd take the wire across the other side where we'd have another tin looking in, we'd put another grenade in there and we'd wire them all onto this one piece of wire. And if somebody came along and hit these it pulled them out of the tin, I might add the striker was inside the tin,

27:30 but if you knew what you were doing with this igniters set immediately they'd blow, if not there'd be 3 seconds before they'd go up and that give anyone sort of time to hit the deck, maybe save themselves. We used them everywhere in Korea and we had our people to that would trip them at different times. Later in Nghok Travak, which is the name of this old French Fort, the first thing the marine did

28:00 when they came in was to put around these booby traps and a lad jammed a grenade in fork of a tree and tripped it and blew himself up, that was the first casualty. And then they came around to us to find out how we set them up and so on, but before that they knew everything they were gun ho and they didn't want to know anything. There a deterrent and also an early warning device but a lot of them, you have different ideas,

28:30 see we'd have a wire sometimes onto the grenade and loosen up and hanging on a branch, so when it was pulled out it swung in the air so then everyone got a little bit of it. Everyone had their own idea how to set these. But in Korea we used a lot of booby traps and that was the most common one, with a grenade. At times we'd get a grenade which had a

29:00 thread on the base plate, plug and you could unthread it and thread another one on top of it and then the one igniters would set the two off. Well that was a little bit more sort of potent.

Did you learn this sort of stuff when you were in the field or did you learn it at training?

You were taught a little bit like that at the jungle school, not the actual sort of, you sort of went on a little bit

29:30 further I'll put it that way after what you were taught. See mostly you're taught to put these trip wires around for flares so that you know when the enemy's coming and that and to put a board behind it so it sends the light forward, not in your eyes and all that sort of stuff. Well when they get in that close they trip those flares your in a lot of trouble, your close enough in to throw a grenade.

So there's no point in actually having a flare trap set, it has to be?

30:00 Not close to you because by that time, by the time you jump around and even get your weapon up to protect yourself you haven't got much time.

When you came back from the first tour of Vietnam what sort of attitude did you find on the streets of Australia in regards to the war there?

No one wanted to know us that was it basically and a lot of the things I read on I've never agreed

30:30 on the government manipulating words and calling what they did with the young people, National Service, that wasn't National Service at all, it was exactly what they voted for in the first war against. And this country, that's why I can't understand why he won't do Iraq, I mean we've been against wars and all the rest of it

31:00 and no matter what they say to sort of cover what they've done we declared war on a country. That's against all of our training and as far as I'm concerned the Australian peoples sort of attitude to other countries. I had a couple of incidents where people told me what they thought of me. I never received any of the letters, a lot of people received letters for quite a while, their wives got them to.

31:30 **Who would these letters be from?**

Well people that were against the war and everything else. They never stoped to think the wives had nothing to do with what the soldiers were doing, it was nothing, I mean they couldn't blame then, they should of gone straight to the soldier. At different times, even in Korea we picked, what did we get there, I think it was either some ammunition and a little note in it telling us what they hoped happened with that ammunition,

32:00 to us not to the enemy. There was quite a bit of that went on.

So people in Australia when they were sending the ammunition would give you little political messages within the ammunition?

That's what I mean yeah, things like that.

Was it hard to get back into the swing of things after the first tour?

No I was doing something at the time and in my spare time I was having work done

32:30 on my land, bulldozing and stuff like that, gradually sort of developing the place. When the second time I got crook and when I come back I didn't want to do anything actually, I did nothing for 6 months. Have I got a visitor again?

Yep pausing?

You just about run out of tape there?

No we'll do one more tape after this one?

Oh struth what can I talk about.

Well we didn't really sort of cover the end of

33:00 **the Vietnam second tour, we haven't got there yet. I've just lost me train of thought. You were mentioning earlier there was quite a few fellows that you were in contact with that managed to commit suicide particular after Vietnam. What goes on there do you think, what pushes them over the edge?**

Well

33:30 one fellow in particular, I used to go out and operate on my own at this place called Tra Bong and I was just virtually getting information for them as recon and if we run into something right oh and it was an opportunity target we'd do something about it. And I always liked to get another Australian with me,

34:00 I was working on my own with these Chinese troops, these noongs and at Tra Bong they had the Australian Advisors there, there was Infantry and we also had Service Corps, they're the boys that drive the truck and do all that sort of work. And there was a young bloke there he said to me "Can I come out with you?" I said, "I don't know what you want to go out with me for," because I used to use him as backup.

34:30 He used to operate a big mortar, they had a big mortar in the camp and before I went out I'd tell him where I was going and where I wanted support fire from to land onto I should say. And always, always when you went down this valley after a while you'd get fired on and if it was 2 or 3 people shooting at you you'd try and put the mortars onto them. And he used to do a good job, but in any case,

35:00 except once and I abused him over the phone and he said, "The mortar fellow over." I said, "It couldn't it's too big to fall over," and the monsoons had started and all the water had undermined this weapon and of course it had, it had actually fallen over, but he dropped the bomb right on the edge of where we were, the mortar bomb. Anyway, I took him out with me and I thought oh well he's a young bloke and all the rest of it. But we struck some people in a river, up to their waist in water, enemy,

35:30 well if they weren't they had AK47s, I'll put it like that. So he was with me, he said, "What are we going to do?" I said, "You've got to kill them." "Oh," he said, "I couldn't." I said, "All right I'm going back to where the rest are you stay here and when they come up you can shake hands with them." He said, "You mean I've got to shoot at them?" I said, "What the hell do you think you're here for?" So anyway he went up and I heard burst of fire followed very quickly by someone going, "Billlllll,"

36:00 and it was this fellow and he came back to me and I always remember. I'm getting onto your story he said, "Cameron you old so and so you've just made me a murder." I said, "No I haven't," I said, "That's what you've got to expect and it's no good waiting until they get to you before, when you've got them at a disadvantage in the river that's when you fix them up." Anyway, they collected the weapons off them and everything else and he was a bit of a hero when he got back. He often went out with me and another chap called

36:30 Billy Green, also Service Corps but Billy Green was bad news every time he went with us he got shot up. Bill died just recently, this other chap I'm with I won't tell you his name because he was looking after dependants, over in the east, I went on a reunion and met his wife and his family and everything else, seemed terrific. He went into a police station, parked his car and blew his brains out. Now something

37:00 cause I always think oh Jesus did you make him do that by making him kill those blokes, but it was his job anyway. But there's a young fellow with a good family and everything else, and he would have been commissioned if he stayed in the army no problem, very bright and he does himself in. We had other chaps that did the same, no one that stood out like he did, there was another fellow with us he went home and left a note saying I'm going to commit suicide and get in touch with the training

- 37:30 team they'll bury me, that was his attitude, we had to bury him. He was in Queensland actually this fellow. I don't know where they got the idea they want to commit suicide, they're not doing anyone any good, the people left behind are the ones that are going to suffer.
- Did you see any blokes loose the plot out in the field?**
- Probably myself. Different times different things happen and...
- 38:00 **Such as?**
- You can't control yourself it, if you see someone that you know or that your close to, someone sort of wipe then out it will send you off your head there's no doubt about it. You'll recover from it but what you do at that particular time your not responsible for. I remember a chap that, I'll tell you more about this Nghok Travak in Laos.
- 38:30 We were over run and we held two platoon positions, the platoon commander held his bunker or headquarters and he kept sending a message through to us which I couldn't hear, it was very distorted. And I got a message back to him saying if you stay there till dawn we'll get you out but don't move stay where you are and keep 'Spookie' flying around to stop enemy putting in
- 39:00 another attack. Anyway, first thing in the morning we were lined up, what's left and we put a counter attack in and drove the enemy out of the position, found some of the Americans sitting around, they were sort of dazed and everything else, we had a few words with them. But one bloke in particular went up to a enemy machine gun, it was swinging loose and he jumped into the hole and he had one of these
- 39:30 cut down automatic riffles, they use them today over in the desert. And any case he jumped on top of one of the enemy and he was hollering for help and he shot the enemy, chucked him out of the hole and when he got out of the hole he found that underneath him was 4 rockets and the round that he'd killed the enemy with had gone through the edge of one of the rockets. And then they found out the machine gun wouldn't fire, so he wasn't doing any good. But he jumped into
- 40:00 the pit, didn't know anyone was in it and there's a fellow in the bottom of the pit with him, made his hair stand up. But any case later on we got the platoon commander out a couple of the medics came and gave us a hand, they were good support. But something I must tell you prior to this when they were out in front of Frank Lucas and my position we could hear the noise and the build up that they were possibly coming through our area
- 40:30 and they were sort of, our fire couldn't be bought to bear on them in the slope on the hill. So a young radio operator, I got through to him and I said, "Do you think you can get to the 81 mike mike, millimetre mortar and throw half a dozen rounds around in front of our position?" And he said to me, and the last words I heard from him were, "Will do." Anyway, wait and wait and wait
- 41:00 bit of fire going on no mortars. And after the counter attack where we'd taken the position back, they were NVA soldiers by the way, all in new uniforms, young lads, fresh hair cuts and new weapons, and we found this fellow's body alongside the mortar, he got to the mortar and the enemy had it and they shot him dead at the edge of the mortar. And he was a lad that was telling me he was going to Bangkok on leave, every morning he'd say, Yanks never use your Christian name
- 41:30 always your surname but he always used to say mister and I used to say, "Don't call me mister some buggler will shoot me." And he used to say, "Going to Bangkok in 10 days," and he's going to play hell and I'd say, "Look lad you'll never get off the hill." It was a cover over in Singapore during the war, they said you'll never get off the hill island, I tell everyone that. And I'd always say to him every morning the same answer and any case after we found him and I'm sitting in the chopper later
- 42:00 were getting out, we had to move out of the area...

Tape 10

- 00:31 **I think you were just going into some discussion about many of the ambushes you did when you were at Nghok Travak?**
- Actually I was caught in an ambush there, a friend of mine had contact with the enemy he had two wounded and he wanted a stretcher and it was getting late in the afternoon and I grabbed two of my people out of the platoon, and to get to this area we
- 01:00 run along a track which is a no no and we were half a mile from our base and run straight through an ambush. There must of only been two people that fired at us, pretty bad shot, although they did take, I had a walkie talkie and they ripped it off my shoulder and I told them RD, run and drop, the only thing you do in a ambush you run or you die. I jumped over a sort of a bank down a cliff,
- 01:30 we dropped the stretcher and left it there, the two people with me they raced back down along the track itself and I moved down and came up onto the track. And they'd run about 2 or 3 hundred metres and waited and whoever was up on the ambush they fired a few shots and they must of taken off, we

were too early for them I think. But anyway that was one, the next one we were taking a platoon down along and old French

- 02:00 Highway, which was overgrown, and they have these mountain tribes, centuries and they knock sticks together, like these sticks the Aborigines have and make a hell of a noise. And we heard this and we saw movement in the low bush, people touch trees and the top shakes. Anyway, I had to throw a grenade just ahead of this and they stopped me they said, "Oh no, there just natives."
- 02:30 So anyway, which I didn't do and we moved further along and next thing hell broke loose and we had a front sort of ambush to our front. These troops were all new and wouldn't fire a shot, I got up alongside the machine gunner, this Frank was with me, and they'd grabbed our radio operator and taken our radio. This is the enemy had done this. And I said to Frank, "We'd better prepare to go down to this river
- 03:00 if something goes wrong, I think they're going to run away on us," which they did the whole platoon took off, except for the machine-gunner. We moved off this old trail did a half circle and came back on it and met some of our people. And one was sitting on a machine gun and he had all the ammunition wrapped around this and when I got there these voices are calling out and I suddenly recognised it was Chinese. So I thought they were our people, and I hollered out,
- 03:30 told them a few words I knew in Cantonese anyway, how good they were. And with that I woke up there was something wrong and I said to Frank, "Shh back up the track about 6 or 8 feet then I'll see you at the river," and we hadn't moved and all hell broke loose and I'm yelling out the enemy, but they had Chinese with them, cause it was Chinese words they were using. Any case the rest, as a matter of fact I saw the fellow sitting on the gun topple over and shots going around the gun. And
- 04:00 we had to go about two mile to this river, when we get there two of our people linked up with us and I said, "The best thing we move over the river so if they want to get us they've got to come through the river to us." So we set up there and the chap they'd caught, this sounds far fetched but it happened, all night you heard him screaming and we suddenly woke up they didn't want to kill us they wanted to capture us
- 04:30 and they knew who we were, didn't know we were Americans as far as they were concerned. And Frank said, "What are we going to do?" I said, "There's not much we can do they're setting him up for us to go back there and try and put him out of his misery." I said, "We've just got to put up with it." Any case the following day one of our boys with his Swisgood had strapped himself on the side of a chopper and we were in a NVA area at the time, and he flew
- 05:00 up and down a river and I had an air panel, that's a brilliant sort of piece of cloth that you signal planes with and you lay out for identification. And I just waved it and he put his thumb up straight away and took off in the chopper. Then he came back and he pointed to where they were going and I knew there was a LZ, landing zone on this hill near a old hut and it took us a day to get there. And before he'd, I'd identified ourselves
- 05:30 the company commander had just sent through a word that we were missing in action, cause they got a certain time then they've got to report it. Anyway, when we got to this LZ we weren't there 5 minutes and in came the chopper and grabbed us, and when we got in the chopper the rest of our people popped up around the bush everywhere and they stormed the chopper see and you can't get off the ground with too much weight, we were belting them away from the doorway to get out. Later we sent the chopper [helicopter] back for them, actually I had to go back
- 06:00 with the chopper and show they exactly where to go, it was another chopper see. But that was another ambush and we were lucky to get out of that. In actual fact we had code of everything from identification from air and everything with the radio, and the enemy, everything had to be changed. I suppose that was very lucky really, until, and that was
- 06:30 the last thing I can sort of say was an ambush, there's different shots fired around the place but until they put in the big attack and wanted to take us out. We had to leave that area mainly because we'd lost 15 marines, killed in action, two green berets, a fellow I told you about at the mortar site, our radio operator, and a young medic. And I went and personally spoke to him, he's
- 07:00 with a wounded noon and I had a look at the noon and he wasn't with this world for very long and I said to him "Were pulling out you'd better come with us." He said, "I can't leave my patient." I said, "Leave your patient." I said, "He's... You're paying him and that's all he's doing is what you pay him for." I said, "He'd leave you." "No," he said, "I'm staying with him." I said, "Have a look at him, he's not going to live." He said, "While he's alive I've got to stay with him." I said, "Well this is our plan. We're going to napalm up to our
- 07:30 position and burn everything up to us safely then were going to move out after it stops burning under the napalm and get to an area and the marine choppers are going to take us out." He still stayed there, so anyway I said, "I'm not going to try and twist your arm." Another Australian and myself were the last to move off the hill, he was still there. We'd got all the other wounded out and we moved out
- 08:00 and we had two pilots with us, they'd shot down Chinooks onto our position, two actually, and we had the crew. In any case just before we left I said to the company commander, "We have to destroy these things they've got heavy machine guns on them." So he said, "I'll leave it up to you." And we had what

they call a M72, its light anti tank weapon and you pull it out like a concertina and

- 08:30 you know I fired one end of the Chinook it went straight through it and never exploded, I thought well this is great. Anyway, we rounded up a few more and I destroyed the two Chinooks, actually they were right in front of where Frank and I had our pit. And when they came down we took off because the blade was going everywhere. And just as a side story when I got back to the base I was having breakfast about a week later and the,
- 09:00 one of the high ranking officers a bloke called Shoongool, he came up to me and he said, "I've got a letter for you." I said, "Who would be writing to me?" He said, "The American government, have a look at that." And they charged me for the price of two Chinooks, went into millions. And of course I jumped up and the Yanks like playing a trick on you but they don't like you playing one on them, he said, "If only I had my camera," and then I woke up they were pulling my leg. But anyway getting back to
- 09:30 the evacuation of Nghok Travak we moved out about 4 kilometres, the Marin choppers came in, the Chinooks, picked up all the troops, a friend of mine went out on the second last one, I was with the last one and we couldn't get off the ground. And there stripping these big 50 cal's [50 calibre machine guns] down and starting to throw them out, they wouldn't pull the firing pieces out and I said, "We'll wear those
- 10:00 one day, pull all the firing piece out and leave them here and we can chuck them out on the way out." And that's the only reason they threw them out then we got off the ground, but all the side windows were shot out, when we got up in the air it was freezing, we were laying on the floor freezing. Any case we got to the Special Forces camp, Kan Duc I think it was and as were going in oh they were under attack and it was a nice old mess. And I looked on the
- 10:30 edge of the airstrip and it was, this partner of mine Frank Lucas and White the officer, the captain came over to me and he said, "Do you know who that is?" I said, "It's Frank go and tell the Pilot to go down and pull right down along the ground and we'll grab him." Anyway, he did, he didn't hesitate and he could have been under fire and he went along about 6 feet off the ground and 3 of us formed a chain and we yelled to Frank and he run along and jumped and we grabbed him and hauled in him, otherwise he'd have been left
- 11:00 there too, he survived that and later he died of cancer here in WA, hell of a way to go. Anyway, that was the finish at Nghok Travak and I Corps, you got any more left? If you have we were transferred from I Corps, I'll put it this way when we got back all the noongs mutiny and they said to me "The captains
- 11:30 very unlucky." I said, "He kept you alive, if he never used spookie and that flying around us all night you'd have all been dead." "No he's bad, very bad, unlucky, he's no longer our boss." I said, "What about Mr Frank?" "Oh very bad Mr Frank." I said, "Why?" He said, "That man gets the tong man's body and throws it in corner of bunker." And we were in the bunker see
- 12:00 afterwards and we'd taken the place, re-taken it and were just sitting there and there's a case of beer there and Frank liked a beer or 6 and he said, "Look mate now's the time to break out," and he even had it in my hand and I said, "Bugger them there not going to make me break out," and I put it down. But to get it he'd picked up a Chinese body and just pushed him over on the side of where the beer and stuff was and he was the tong man, and they control everything the tong man. And they weren't going to have Frank
- 12:30 cause he'd thrown the tong man, so they said, "You are now captain." I said, "Right oh, let me explain something. I'm a warrant officer that fellow's a captain, he's my boss and I do as he tells me to do." "No if anyone stays you can stay but we don't want the other two." So the colonel had come up at this stage and he had a bit of a talk to Frank and he said, "Look this young officer, you reckon he's done a great job." I said he had. He said, "If you stay with him
- 13:00 I'll send you to 2 Corps to the mountain tribesman and you can work with them at a place called Play Cu." And I didn't care at the time and I wasn't very happy with the Chinese mercenaries. I said, "Well that suits me." I said, "What about you Frank?" He said, "Yeah, that will do me," so we went to 2 Corps to the mountain tribesman and that was around the Cambodian border. But White was with us, that was the captain and a funny part about it he's
- 13:30 brother was with the Field Force, with Australian soldiers with our equipment with support of our artillery and everything else and they were in a bit of an action down with the Field Force and his brother got the MC [Military Cross] and this blokes with all his old indigenous half trained people, he got a mention in dispatches. I said, "Oh gees that's a bit rough." But anyone that's junior cannot recommend a senior for a decoration, we spoke to the Colonel and we said, "He earned it well and truly
- 14:00 an MC," but he never ever got it. Anyway, I took over a training company, you still got some stuff left?

Yep?

And they went, moved, see after 6 months you could move and go to another posting, they went to headquarters of the Special Forces in Netrang and I stayed at Play Cu and I took over the training company for another Australian. We trained these people, it was the

14:30 2/11th Company, we had a Montagnard battalion at this stage. And when we finished training they approached me and said would I take the company over and I was only too pleased to take it over. And just as a sideline Western Australians would understand I called them the 2/11th and the Yanks would say "What's this so and so 2/11th?" I said, "Well that was one of our units during the war." They said, "But how do you get that?" I said, "Have a look at the name, 211,

15:00 2/11th." After that the Yanks, these crazy so and so up there naming these Montagnards after things that happened during the war, but that's what I called them, we were the senior platoon actually we were a company in the battalion. In the history books there of the unit my names down there as the company commander of the 211 Company. And that's where I operated or who I operated with until I got a bug and I was medivaced [medical evacuation] out.

What bug did you

15:30 **come down with?**

Hepatitis bloody near killed me.

How did you contract that?

Stinking water and anything else around the place, dead bodies around in the water, the funny part the Montagnards knew I had it and they speak a bit of French and a bit of Viet and their own language. And they come up and they said, dow is sick in Viet, bookoo French right and they pointed to me and said, "Bookoo dow." I

16:00 was yellow than they were and my eyes were yellow and everything else is yellow and purple. And I kept going to sleep, we had the maps there and when we were bringing artillery fire in I'd point out the areas to sort of cover and the Americans were brining the fire in. But then I woke up and I'm laying over the map and of course the troops started to panic, they reckon next thing it will be in with us. And I had an American sergeant with me and in

16:30 civvy life he was a golden gloves boxer, good Stanva lad, and he was what they called the Golden Knights Freefall, with the parachutes. And I said to this chap I said, "Looks like you're the company commander." "Oh," he said, "No way." I said, "What are you talking about? You've been doing the work for so long." "I couldn't do it," he said, "It's all right for you Australians." He said, "You're used to all that sort of stuff." He said, "We can't do an officer's job." I said, "Well you've got no option. You've got to do it."

17:00 Anyway, later I went home and all that sort of business and finished up getting out and one of the boys that went up there after me he said, "Oh a friend of yours sent a message to you," and he said, "When you get back to thay west," as they called us, WA he said, "If you find that grey haired old son of a B Cameron you tell him he was right I got the silver star and I'm now lined up for a commission." And he said

17:30 no, he was just brainwashed, he wasn't an officer and he couldn't do an officer's job, he couldn't see he was doing it all the time, I was glad to hear that anyway. He's probably still alive I hope. Anyway, got back to Australia I was down graded and that's it.

How did you get out of there, you came home?

I went to an airstrip and they put a bomber in, they flew me down to Play Cu where the unit

18:00 was, I was in hospital there. Oh and I had a great visitor come to see me in hospital and I was as sick as a dog too and they threw her in the jail, struth I can't think of her name. Anyway, she was Colonel, an Honorary Colonel in the Green Berets, Martha Ray. Have you ever seen Martha Raye in a film? She would be without a doubt the ugliest women in America and she always came out to where our unit

18:30 and she come up to see Cameron and she's drunk and they put her in the clink [jail], cause the boys all knew her, so they put her in the clink and fed her more booze. See I was contagious at the time and they couldn't bring them in anyway. But I always remember she came out to Tra Bong, she's got the green beret on and then the camouflages stuff, swear like a trooper. And all the boys reckon she was great so she got a big photo, she

19:00 wants to present this, this is a hill out on the edge of the jungle sort of. So they have a big sort of get together and she presents this photo of Martha Ray, Honorary Colonel of the Green Berets. And she writes the bottom in this big texta pen you'll have to bleep this out, but it had 'the meanest mother so and so in the valley' and that's what she wrote on it, Martha Ray. She's gone too now I

19:30 believe but I'll never forget that women.

Why was she made an Honorary Colonel?

She, because she used to go round to the Special Forces camps and, she was an actress and sort of put on a bit of a show for the boys and that. But I tell you what she didn't want to eat lemons, oh old Martha. Went down to Vung Tau to the Australian hospital the day after I got there an air force doctor came in and he said to me

20:00 "You know where you're going?" I said, "No but you're going to tell me." He said, "You're going home."

And at that stage it didn't suit me to go home, I said, "Well what can you do about what I've got?" He said, "Nothing," he said, "but you can't stay here." So anyway next thing I know I'm on a plane to Malaya, I finished up in hospital in Malaya. Then they put me on the C130, the pressurised job that was a medevac

- 20:30 and they made sure they were going to keep us quite cause when we got on they gave us a bomb each and I woke up in where, Brisbane, no I woke up in Sydney cause I finished up in Concord hospital. And I stayed there for about a week and then they broke every rule in the book they put me onto a private plane, private aircraft, Qantas, and sent me to West, gave me a new uniform, I had nothing just a blanket over me.
- 21:00 And someone, a friend of mine in the orderly room had sent my pay book through and that to the West. In any case they gave me a brand new uniform and they put me down the back of the plane and on the way over a girl come past and she said, "We know what's wrong with you and all the rest, but we'll give you your meal and then we've got to get rid of all the eating utensils, this that and the other," and I was aware of that. And she said, "Are you from the West would you like a West Australian paper?" and I said, "Oh yeah
- 21:30 I'll have a look at it," and I wasn't feeling the best. Anyway, I read an article then I put it down and it didn't ring a bell, then after I read it again and what it was my sister had won first prize in lotto and they'd put all this in, I'm not going away again she's used up all the luck. But it had, she had later on baby in the family sort of and it had first the baby then the prize. So I always remember reading that article.
- 22:00 I fronted two doctors back here at Karrakatta and asked them to upgrade me and their words were from there were "Forget it you won't be upgraded go down to William Street," that's where DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs] was in those days or it wasn't called DVA, "And put yourself down and you'll get a pension," that never eventuated. Later I went down and they weren't one bit interested in
- 22:30 and I was 6 months doing nothing, going backwards and forwards to specialists in West Perth. And any case the worst part about it was from A1 I went down to never to leave, go into a tropical area or north of a certain area, so I couldn't get away. So I said, "If you won't upgrade me it's no good me staying in the army." "Oh stay in the army we can do this and we can give you..." and all that sort of
- 23:00 caper I said, "You promise too much and it hasn't turned up, I sign on that dotted line for another 3 years you've got me, but if you upgrade me I'll sign on for 6 years." But they wouldn't do it. So that's the reason I got out and as I said the fellow I was going over to work with he got killed. But it was probably the luck of the game I'm still around and he's gone.

So what plans did you make for the future then?

Actually I wasn't too sure what I was going to do.

- 23:30 I went down in the Busselton area and got a war service home, I was getting work done by contractors on the land and my partner had been in dry cleaning most of her life and she had less education than I had, I'll put it that way and I said right oh I'll try something out down there and hopefully
- 24:00 my army training would help me in organisation and so on. So what I did I went back to Perth, I spoke to one of the chaps who was in dry cleaning, had a bit of a talk to him, he was an Ex RAAF Pilot, and he gave me advice, I said, "I'm not coming to go in competition with you but I'd like to know is it worth it and so and so." He advised me and then he told me what equipment to get, and what he reckon was the best. So I went round to other
- 24:30 dry cleaners and I asked about their machines, what they had, what they recommended, presses and so on and then I took an average on this and decided to buy German equipment direct from Germany. I had to raise collateral for this, I used the farm. Then I went round to the C class hospitals and found out how their sheets and table cloths and things were washed and ironed and all the rest of it, with the rollers, had to take my shirt off and work
- 25:00 with the girls there too, and I didn't do too much work actually. But I got my info that way and then I went to one of the experts on dry cleaning and asked him to make a plan of what he'd have if he was starting new dry cleaners off, which he did, came down and help us get set up. It was part of his job and I bought all this new equipment and we set up and they wouldn't allow me to set up in the town because they said it's like a
- 25:30 piggery, it's how do they word it again, anyway they sent me out to the industrial area but I had a shop in the town where I picked up all the dry cleaning and I set up depots from Bunbury through to Augusta, sorry Busselton through to Augusta. And I had a paper run to into that area so that sort of covered the expense of the vehicle that I had taking the clothing back. I gave
- 26:00 discounts, so much discount was taken from what I was owed from the people that collected the money for me and that covered paying anyone, to employ anyone to do that down in the little country towns. Later on...

Sounds like a lucrative business?

It's very sort of, it's competitive but I used a bit of TV, advertising and I had a bit of...

Golden West area?

26:30 Beg your pardon?

Golden West and that area?

Yep yep, down there with the Golden West and I called it Cameron's NU Dry Cleaners, NU, they said, "You can't spell." But anyway and I advertised rejuvenate your clothes with this, there was a new system they had out where they used this liquid which there was no smell to, cause it was damn dangerous, if it was in a gas form and it was very expensive. Anyway

27:00 we had the machines from Germany we had boilers and motors from Italy. I took, on the average of all the west the ones that recommended these things, I took an average on them and that's what we bought, and we were lucky and everything worked perfectly for us. We got everything set up and after we'd operated for a couple of years the people in opposition in the town

27:30 approached me, and I'd had it to by that time, they said, "One of us has got to go." I said, "Well it's not going to be me." They said, "Well if we give you a price of what your going to earn over the next few years plus what you've got here set up will you think about it?" I said, "Yep." Anyway, they offered me a good price and I wanted to go to the Northern Territory, so I said, "Right." In the meantime I had a Laundrette and a

28:00 Laundry and a Linen Service.....

Were you still married at this time?

No I had a partner, I'll put it that way, I was divorced in 1971, '72 something like that. Any case I decided I'd sell everything, including the farms and I'd go to either the Northern Territory or Queensland, in the back of my mind I'd been to Darwin

28:30 on the way to Korea and I said, "I wouldn't mind coming back here." And we were flying over the flood plains alongside the rivers, oh it was beautifully green and everything else and it was Laos'd with buffalo, and in my mind I thought we can do something with these. So that's one of the reasons I went to the Territory and another one was you don't pay land tax up there on rural land but you do in Queensland, and it runs into something like, those days about \$6,000 a year.

29:00 And any case we started to put in our set up up there, to make it sure the Government decided that buffalo were full of TB [tuberculosis], which was incorrect. In Arnhem Land where the Aborigines are there's no TB at all in buffalo. On the west coast in some places there are 5% and where we were it was 2% and more cattle had it than buffalo. And the

29:30 stupidity of it was you couldn't sell beef to Germany or Europe, you could sell wild pigs and how do they name them, game meat and the same with the buffalo, you could sell the buffalo and they were getting top prices for them, they were killing them and boning them and sending the choice meat to Germany. It's the only industry we had and what do they do, they get choppers with army weapons on them,

30:00 mainly the SLR [Self Loading Rifle] rifle and they stampeded it, I had two herds, out through my place through my fences out onto the Marrakai plains and they individually shot the cows and of course the calves died of starvation and anything else they could get their hands on, they just about wiped out the buffalo industry apart from along the north coast.

Who's they?

This is the government through the Agriculture Department. And oh don't worry I had a few words with them at different

30:30 times, didn't do much good. Then they came around and decided they'd buy all the land up along the Adelaide River and in that area, oh there's a lot of drugs growing there. They started off they offered a price, by the way this was freehold land we had, and actual we paid extra. If we'd have leased the land we wouldn't have had a problem, but they came in and gave us a acquisition order

31:00 paid us a minimum amount and that was it, so I left the area.

How do the laws differ between freehold and leasing?

Well freehold you never own it, freehold belongs to the Crown, which it never should be in this country, it should be belongs to the country. In any case you have a title deed if you have freehold to the area you've got, I was, had two mile along the Adelaide River, oh it was terrific,

31:30 and other high ground as well for it during the wet where the buffalo could get up out of the water and so on. Some of the people they offered them nothing, this black fellow and I knew him pretty well and he came to me and he said, "Read this that's what they want for my land, or give me for my land." I said, "Tear it up." And he was lucky he had a silent partner as a doctor and he wheeled a solicitor in on him then he got round the hundred thousand

32:00 but he should of got more cause he had buffalo on his place that he'd breed there and they were clean.

So did you get your money back or?

No we'd put in stock yards, I'd even bricked my own homestead and before that I'd done a crash course on bricklaying and built a couple of houses. But anyway all our yards we'd put up the whole lot of it, we had 3 leases, it was

32:30 originally a station broken up into certain leases and by the time I finished with a great overhead at the banks I paid that off, my partner finished up with of a million bucks out of it, he was jeweller, he wasn't satisfied with that he wanted to know what it was like in the other side. He went home and put a riffle in his mouth and blew his brains out, I'm damn if I know why.

33:00 And the thing I was crooked on his son found him and his son idolised his father. But that was his side of it, I got money and probably not enough to anywhere pay for what I had back here, but anyway that's history now, so now I whinge about the government. Oh who will I join that will upset them, somebody anyway.

33:30 You still haven't got stuff going have ya?

Yeah?

I've run out of talk.

No you haven't?

I have you know you'll have to ask me some questions then.

I was going to move on and ask you about the RSL [Returned and Services League] and what that means to you?

Not very much, I belong to the RSL and the only reason I belong to the RSL is the fact that we have troops overseas and I've got a little bit of a say around the place.

34:00 But I'll go back to Korea, now the casualties that we had in Korea, I'm talking Australian wise now, army, they were equal to the casualties in the First World War and they were horrendous, but we had for 3 years only 1 battalion over there and we had something like the battalion wiped out, 500 odd casualties and very seldom you were full strength in the

34:30 Battalion. two other battalions came after us, the 1st Battalion they never had a lot of casualties and the 2nd Battalion got there and they were only there for about 4 months, they had a big battle at the finish and they lost a few casualties but most of them come from 3. And when you work out 1 Battalion being there all that time and being wiped out it was equal as to what the casualties were in the First World War in the western front,

35:00 that'd had in France. So we came back here and you know the RSL wouldn't let us join the RSL, they said, "Oh no that's not a war that's a police action." Gees I'd like to have taken a few up there and put them in one of those trenches. It was quite a while before oh they decided they'd let us join the RSL. Okay that happened, most of us joined, I joined up down the bush and I think I started in Cowaramup

35:30 cause my place wasn't very far from there, where I had my land. Then I went to Busselton then I went to Coolgardie, I had mining leases there. From there on I went to the Territory and I belonged to North Darwin in the Territory, I came back here and I was out at Camboon for a while. I was their president for a year then they started altering everything and the chap who was the

36:00 president of the RSL in the west was a CMF chap and I objected to that seeing that they hesitated and they wouldn't let us join for a start, from Korea. And now anyone can join it if you've got a friend who's friend was in the services or you're of good character you can join the RSL, so why call it the RSL, call it ex-service or whatever you like. I thought I could see

36:30 me self over there, no it's a reflection.

And what about the DVA what role have they played in your post-war life?

Well when I was in the [Northern] Territory with Australia when you turn, if you're a returned soldier when you turn 60 you can get the normal pension, they call it the burnt out pension, that is 5 years before the ordinary

37:00 person can get it. I knew about this but I had quite a lot of collateral and things like that in the area and I didn't register till 3 years after I was due for it, I was 63 and they wanted to give me a gold card. That stage I was only on 50% pension and I didn't have much to do with them. Anyway, the chap that was in charge of DVA he's

37:30 passed on now, he was only a young bloke, ex-Vietnam lad, he had a stand up argument with me. I had a white card telling me what was wrong with me and gun shot wounds and this sort of stuff and he wanted to give me a gold card, I said, "Your not giving me that it doesn't tell me what's wrong with me and no one's going to take any notice of that." Anyway, I went back to the bush and had a think about it, I was living out on the property and my partner was living in Darwin, we had a unit there. In any case

then I went in to see him and he said

38:00 "Have you changed your mind?" I said, "Yeah I'll give you me white card." I wasn't very happy about it, he said, "You dopey old B you can get anything with this gold card [war veterans card provided by Australian government for items such as free health cover]." I mean it doesn't have to be war caused or anything else, I was dubious I didn't think it would happen. Anyway, I got the gold card and I've still got it and it's written on it when it was, they gave me, I forget he year it was any case. But when I come back here having treatment and things they'll

38:30 tell you nothing if you don't know and you can't get it from a doctor your in big trouble with them. Now they sooner accept anything that happened with us with the American cause there's no record of anything. See a lot of fellows, I got hit in the head at one stage and things like that, this is with shrapnel, and because there was no record of that they wouldn't accept it. And yet they would accept post traumatic stress. Any case they finished up they

39:00 upgraded my pension to a 100%, all of our blokes at that stage were either TPI, I was too old for that, or they had the EDA [Extreme Disablement Adjustment pension] which is 150% and that's as far as I can go. I might go and annoy them again and see if I can get a few extra bob, but if I do I'll get on the booze see.

Are you at a stalemate with the DVA at the moment?

No not really, I wanted some publications from them a week ago

39:30 I just rang them up told them who I was, the number on my gold card and they sent them out the next mail. There's a couple of things that ring true really, the old fellows there were, right oh there looking after the ex- prisoners of war cause there's not too many left, the Second World War blokes they got a pretty rough trot from, it wasn't DVA then but mostly the fellows that served,

40:00 now I've got nothing against the Nashos [National Service soldiers] that went away but I've got, I call them Nashos cause there conscripts, that's what it was conscription and they gave it another name and they did that back in Korea days. A lot of the fellows that did the training down at, I was instructing there for a while, down at Swanbourne they joined the regular army. But the fellows there were more or less coerced into going to Vietnam,

40:30 they never had much option, now if they have anything wrong with them they get full treatment and there's more TPIs that came out of that setup over there that ever came out of the Second World War. There's too much of a sort of a difference in the numbers, when you start looking at nearly a million people under arms during the war, that includes women and men and people that worked in the VDC [Volunteer Defence Corps] and things like that.

41:00 It's a big difference when you say looking at say 20,000 people that served in an area. I don't begrudge them anything but look after the Second World War blokes first.

Just winding up I think were very short on time on this, the end of this tape I was just going to ask you about Anzac Day and what that means to you?

I've

41:30 got my own ideas if you've got enough tape to put this down. I like to go and meet my old mates and all the rest of it and tell a lot of lies. But today my idea of the fellows that are getting a bit shaky, including myself the ideal way to have Anzac Day is to go down to the Esplanade and put a hundred thousand seats around and all the units put their colours in front of the seats and they sit there

42:00 then we march the youth of this state...

INTERVIEW ENDS