

Australians at War Film Archive

Reginald Bandy (Reg) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:40 **Where did you grow up?**

I grew up in a place called Jillinga which is about 100 Ks [kilometres] from Perth, north, on a farm, there was six in the family and it was during the Depression and life was very hard. We got up at half past four every morning, breakfast at quarter to six and everybody had to do

01:00 their chores so when I come up to join, when the war started, everybody wanted to go to the war.

What sort of chores did you have on the farm?

We had pigs and sheep and cattle and everything and Dad used to do a lot of contract work and the kids had to do all the work at home with Mum and we used to, the school was five miles away and five of us used to ride two horses, three on one horse and two on the other and it was good fun.

01:30 **What was school like?**

Very good, Charles Hamilton was the schoolteacher, we had one teacher for five classes, for 25 kids, and he was very good, a very good teacher. He even taught the girls sewing, he was very versatile and he was very fluent with the cane. If you misbehaved you got the cane and every time you got the cane you had to say 'Thank you sir,' so school was very well disciplined.

02:00 And in those days in the large families Mum was god, whatever Mum says, that was it you know. So you know, the army discipline didn't worry me at all.

How did the Depression affect your family?

Well it affected all families but families in the country were lucky because you always had something to eat. We had sheep and pigs and WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s [fowls] and plenty of wildlife. We used to shoot ducks and shoot parrots and all that and so the only thing we had to buy

02:30 was the main essentials and in Norcia then we had a flour mill during the depression they'd do it for nothing, we used to take over say 20 bags of wheat and they'd give you flour and bran and pollard and all that sort of stuff so we were all self supporting really.

This is at the monastery [in Norcia]?

Yeah.

So that's where your farm was - around that area?

Eleven miles from there it was, but I mean

03:00 time and space meant nothing in those days. You just got up earlier that's all.

What sort of sports did you enjoy?

When I was going to school I played hockey and cricket. Never much good at football. I was a good swimmer and a good runner. And Dad was always, in his family there were 16 in his family but they were all good sportsmen.

Sixteen?

Yeah, there

03:30 was 6 girls I think and 10 boys, but they were all good sportsmen, rodeo riders and runners and boxers and he taught us to run and when we used to have inter-school sports the blokes, the master would come along and say "Are you Tom Bandy's son?" and you'd say no because if you didn't he'd put you back two metres. Say 'no' and he'd say "Are you someone else's son?" and he'd put you up. But Dad had a very good name

04:00 right through the whole district because he used to do most of the contract work you see.

What sort of contract work?

Hay cutting, hay carting and fallowing. When the cart and hay we used to start at two o'clock in the morning and go and get a load of hay and then you'd put it in, have breakfast and then go and do the normal work and then after work at six o'clock stack it up. We had to make money. I mean shearers then only made two pound a hundred, now they get about a pound a sheep just about.

04:30 So, and wages, the first job I had I think was a pound a week and I had to work 12 hours a day, 6 days a week and you got lunch. So that's about two dollars now.

So with your running - did you enter professional competitions?

No, no, it was just that around the area, within say 20 miles of our school there were five other schools

05:00 and they had a central committee and they organised the sports, the dances, there was a dance every Saturday night in one of the places and everybody used to go and the dance would go from eight o'clock till four o'clock in the morning and somebody with a truck would come along and pick you up and away you go and the same thing with sports - every so often they had cricket, tennis, swimming and all that so it wasn't a small community it was competition all the time.

05:30 So therefore we used to have to train at our own school to compete with these other people and we always done pretty well.

How did you learn to swim?

Dad took us down and threw us in the river. On our farm about 200 yards from the house there was the Moore River and where we were there was a big pool about, in the summertime, about this time of the year the pool was about 200 yards long and about I suppose ten or fifteen yards wide and the

06:00 bank was about 4 foot high and when you were about four or five he'd say, "Come on, you're learning to swim." and if you weren't there at a certain time he'd come and get you. So we were never frightened of the water and when it flooded he took us down when we were about 8 or 9 and said, "Now this is how you swim a flooded stream, don't fight it, do this." and he'd swim it with us. And we were never frightened of water. So it was

06:30 very good. People will say, 'Oh it's stupid.' but it was good. Made us, he taught us to ride buck jumpers, they used to have rodeos every two months I suppose and they'd give you two, it was a good chance to earn money you know, you'd get five pound in three minutes and he taught us to ride and he used to make us ride.

How do you learn to ride a buck jumper?

When you're a kid you start off and it's easy

07:00 but bullocks are no good. They've got two foot of loose skin on them and it burns your bum. So you avoid them if you can but horses are alright. We used to make a fair bit of money.

That's got to be a bit dangerous.

Not really. I mean all this rubbish about helmets and all that crap now, I reckon it's stupid. We rode horses from the time we were, well as soon as you could walk, Dad would pull you up behind on the horse and tell you to

07:30 hang on and we were never frightened of horses and when we fell off and got thrown off buck jumping we never got hurt. I think they go stupid.

So you were on a horse since about 4 or 5?

Oh yeah and riding to school every day so you know three on a horse you've got to hang on pretty tight at the back if you're the third one on the stands. But no, we enjoyed it very much.

08:00 What sort of subjects did you enjoy at school?

Poetry, I loved poetry. Poetry and singing of all things. We had a schoolteacher, he used to always have, about every two months he'd have a Parents and Citizens' evening and all the kids had to perform and I had to say poetry or sing yeah. And I always remember he had a tuning fork and it meant nothing to me but he'd say, "This is Reg Bandy, he's going to sing so and so." and he'd knock the tuning fork on the thing

08:30 and say, "Is that alright?" and I'd say 'yeah' because it never worried me. I never knew what it was. But no, he was very good, very good yeah. But I was very good at maths when I started and they put me up a year, I missed a year and it was no good.

How did you miss a year?

Well I went from first to third, the whole year and because Mum used to, you know, give us a fair bit of

schooling and she was very good. But so, they said,

09:00 "Oh he can go up a grade." so they put me up to third grade but you know I don't think you can do that, it's too much. Or it was too much for me anyway.

Well from grade one to grade three that is quite hard.

Mmm. I could, reading, writing and all arithmetic and all that but when you get into the difficult maths later on I didn't have the background. I reckon anyway, so that's my story and I'm sticking to it.

09:30 **So where did you go to high school?**

I didn't go to high school. I left school when I was 14, had to to work because there were 6 kids in the family.

Where are you in the six?

Four girls and two boys, I'm fourth on the list. Boy, two girls, then me. The eldest one is 87 I think, 87, 86, 84 and I'm 80 going on 81.

You're looking very good for 80.

The youngest sister died. She was in Sydney

10:00 but all the rest are fighting fit.

Good genes.

And our sister, she's 85; she played tennis up till last year. She still goes swimming every morning at six o'clock. We've always been fairly active, fit family you know.

Use it or lose it.

Yeah well, if you worry about it you go mad.

10:30 **So leaving school at 14 - how did you feel about leaving school?**

Good. Well I was mad on riding horses and we had an eight horse team and I was mad, Dad taught us to operate all the machinery and he was very strict and taught us very well and we enjoyed it and we used to get a lot of jobs with other people, you know cutting hay and ploughing and all that sort of thing because they knew we could do it. The same as Mum

11:00 taught us to dance, Dad used to play the accordion at night after tea when all the washing up was done, Dad would play the accordion and Mum would teach us to dance so when we went to a dance at 14 all the girls knew we could dance so it was great, you could go and ask a girl to dance and you wouldn't get knocked back and they knew we could dance, the same with the girls. All the blokes knew that my sisters could dance so it was great. We were right on top from the word go. It was good fun and

11:30 you know it made us very welcome in everything I think. But I loved working on the farm. My brother and I didn't get on too well together but that was nothing, Dad used to fix that up.

This is the elder brother?

Yeah.

What was the main problem?

You know he's a bit bossy and I didn't like to be bossed around much. But Dad taught us to box and then he said, when he'd finished he said, "Now

12:00 you never fight one another, you fight other people and you work together." and we were boxing on one day and he gave us both a bloody good hiding [a beating] so that fixed that up. No more of it. But after that it was pretty good.

Did you do any professional boxing?

No. No. I joined the army then, a bit early and had plenty of other things to do.

12:30 **What was going on with the build up as far as the war was concerned?**

Well see, in those days, to me anyway and most of the young people wanted to travel. When I was 16 my mate and I put in for a job. We read in the paper that there was a job for two jackaroos in America so we applied for it and got it and Mum went over the moon. So we couldn't go.

13:00 And so you know, that's the sort of thing that country lads were at, everybody wanted to go and do something. Didn't matter what it was and then of course in 1939 they started recruiting people and they were pretty strict then on age and all that's sort of thing and gradually by '40 it got down a bit and if you were big enough you were old enough, so away it went and

13:30 never, ever got homesick. Never entered our heads. And luckily the three of us that joined up together,

we stuck together for the whole war. It wasn't till I went to Japan and they came home and got married that we split up but it was good. We were all the same age and two of us had been to school together.

How aware of the build up to the war were you by reading papers or...?

Not only reading papers but

14:00 mates writing to us you know, one mate joined the army and in seven days he was on a boat and off to the Middle East. They trained them in the Middle East. And he wrote back and said how hot it was but it was good, the booze was good and they had plenty of time off. We were working say from five o'clock in the morning till black dark at night, say eight o'clock and when you joined the army you didn't get up till half past six or six, breakfast was at seven, that was morning tea at home

14:30 and then knocking off at five o'clock, that was afternoon tea and we didn't know what to do with ourselves but the city people found it very hard and or the country people we used to do a lot of walking in those days because they reckoned, the theme was then for kids if you got plenty of fresh air and you walked you were pretty good, you're fit, and that was it. I mean we always slept out on the veranda, we never slept

15:00 in the house. We had a big veranda right around the house and we used to sleep out there all year round and so army life come very easy.

In comparison?

Oh yeah and getting three feeds and a bed was good.

Did you manage to talk to anyone who was in World War I when you were growing up?

Yeah my uncle was in World War I; my father later was in World War I. And you know I talked to my uncle and he said, "Just go and enjoy it."

15:30 He said, "Don't worry about the bad times, lap up the good ones." and that's what I did. And he said, "You'll never be out of money because if you're out of money you just stop in camp so all the money gets pocket money." So that was great and that's about the best advice he could have given me I think because there's nothing else, no good trying to tell a bloke about getting shot. That's rubbish.

So there was quite a glowing report about being involved in wars?

Oh it was a chance to

16:00 travel. You know and meet people and see the countries and do different things and that impressed us very much.

How eager were you to get out of Australia?

Oh, breaking my neck. Everybody was, well not everybody, some people didn't want to go but I mean we went into camp and the 2/4th [Battalion] were forming to go to Singapore and they called for, we'd done our training in machine guns

16:30 and a mate and I and a couple of others said, "We'll go and join the 2/4th." So we went over and the major, I can see him now, big bloke, he came over and had a look and he was chatting to everybody and he said, "Well, you're all big enough but you're not old enough." because you had to be 19 so...

Isn't there also a bit of a Manpower [government employment control] problem if you're working on a farm?

Oh yeah well I was Manpowered for four months I think, or five months. My father just got

17:00 to ring up and they say, 'You're going home,' so you go home and do whatever's to be done and I had to go home and take the crop off and put the other one in because until my brother got out, he joined the army in '39.

So while he was joining the army were you then in charge of the farm?

And Dad was getting on in years you know so they said, "Well one of you has got to get out." Well luckily the other brother had a prang [an accident] on a motorbike

17:30 and bugged his knee up [injured it seriously] and he had to get out and he couldn't go overseas so he got out and I went back in permanently.

That must have annoyed you a bit that you were stuck on the farm and your brother got to...?

Well yes we understood why it was and the thing was that they told you as well that the, you know, 'You can't all rush off to the war, you've got to be fed and the people in Australia have got to be fed' blah blah

18:00 and all the rubbish so you thought, 'Oh well, fair enough, as long as I'm not here all the time.' And they normally give you three months or six months and so you just go and do it but it's terrible going back to the farm because there's no-one there. See when we were on the farm we were 24 mile from Moora and

that was very, very strongly populated and majority girls, strange as it may seem.

18:30 **That can't be a bad thing?**

No, good thing it was, everybody used to go into Moora for dances and all that sort of thing and when I went back to, when I was Manpowered, I went back to Moora and they'd all gone because all the fellows joined up and all the girls went to Perth. Well most of them, so the country was dead, you know, which was a bit boring.

Do you think it ever recovered from that?

No, never. A lot of the young fellows went back

19:00 but not all of them but a lot of them stayed in the army and went all over the place went to different things. But Moora's never recovered, Moora was a very rich place at the end of the Depression.

Because it's quite a nice spot there.

Ooh yes, and Berkshire Valley up towards Walebing is all very rich country and they were all, farms have been there since yonks you know [for a long time], handed down three or four times in the family. Great big

19:30 old mansions and they had all the gear and everything so it was a pity really. It crept up a bit I suppose to about half what it was before. But now, it's terrible now, it's gone to pieces.

So how did you go about joining up?

Two of us came to Perth and...

Is that where you had to go?

No, no you could join up anywhere, but in our day, once you were 16 you wore

20:00 28 inch bottom pants and they were all silver-greys this was the deal in those days,

This is a fashion thing?

That's a fashion thing yeah, and they had a four inch belt and four buttons up the middle and two fob pockets and you know, a big deal. And anyway we went to Perth and the first bloke we went into which I knew was a sailor and of course he had bell bottom pants on. I said to him, "Mate, we might join the navy." and in those days the opposite the GPO [General Post Office] in Perth

20:30 there used to be a greengrocer on the corner, a fruit shop on the corner and just down there was a small alleyway I suppose, about two or three metres wide and they had the three recruiting offices in there - navy on the left, army, air force on the right and the army right up the back and we said, "Oh, we'll try the navy first." because, we didn't know anything about the bloody sea, it was just that the uniform struck us so walked in and said to the bloke, "Want to join the navy." and he said,

21:00 "I'm terribly sorry," he said, "The university students have got priority and you'll have to come back." and this was on I think the 4th of October, I'm not sure, September or October, and he said, "You'll have to come back after Christmas." and we said, "Oh, go to buggery!" so we walked into the air force and he said, "What do you want to be?" and I said, "A fighter pilot." So he gave us a quick test and he said, "I don't think that you'd qualify to be a pilot." and it's a pilot or nothing so we walked into the army and he said,

21:30 "Sign here." So we signed up and that was on the Friday I think or the Saturday, Saturday it was, we went home Saturday and Tuesday we got the papers. Mum went mad. But she eventually let us go. And we went into the camp, never looked back and it was great as far as we were concerned.

What did your dad have to say about it?

Dad was going to join the army because they were

22:00 dam sinking, six of the boys, they were always pranksters and they were going to sink the dam and then three of them were going to join the army. Anyway he was sitting on a ten pound keg of gunpowder and they used to play with the stuff, set it alight to it and throw it around and anyway someone threw and it went into the keg and he went about 30 foot up into the air so it bored holes into him, in his arms and one of his legs, burnt all the skin off

22:30 him and all that sort of thing, so he was in hospital for about six months so he didn't go.

That's crazy!

Oh they were crazy yeah. But that was the thing in those days; no-one was frightened of anything. It was just a prank didn't come off, that's all you know. But he didn't go in the army and neither did his other brother, but Sam his other brother went in the army and he went to World War I so he said, 'Good luck,' yeah.

23:00 **So you're in Perth - where's the first place that you're actually taken to?**

Melville, it's about two kilometres from the end of the tram line at East Fremantle. And of course in those days from Wireless Hill I think they call it down here, from there to East Fremantle it was all bush. No houses at all. And we used to go down, they used to bring us in by bus or go to Fremantle by

23:30 train, catch the tram and go to the end and walk. Didn't have to pay on the tram or the train so it didn't matter. So we were there three months I think and then we went to...

What sort of training did they put you through?

We had to do recruit training.

What did that involve?

Well you've got to learn to strip and assemble all the weapons, rifles and Owen guns and we were all mainly with machine guns, Vickers machine guns and you had to learn all the drill and how to dress and all that sort of thing. How to do guard and

24:00 all the basic things, and then after three months we went to Northam and there was 11,000 soldiers in Northam.

Because you would have been a pretty good shot considering you grew up on a farm?

Yeah we had fourteen guns on the farm and Dad taught us to shoot the lot of them. All the girls as well, everybody was treated the same, the girls had to learn to swim, ride horses and everything just as a boy. And when Dad was deer farming they used to, my elder sister that's 85 now,

24:30 she used to drive an eight horse team so everybody was the same then so we could shoot and handling guns was nothing to us, you know a lot of the city people were frightened of them, think they'll kill them, go off and we thought they were a bit ratty. But yeah, we did alright.

That would have pushed you a little bit above the pack, having that confidence?

Oh yeah and I was always a bit of a larrikin I suppose, I took after me old man

25:00 and I was only in the army three months and they made me a corporal. I don't know why but still, I never looked back after that.

Was Melville Camp at Wireless Hill, around that area?

No, no, further on. It's, I don't know roughly with the distance but it was about three quarters of the way between Wireless Hill and the end of the tram lines but the tram lines

25:30 were the closest.

And how many fellows were training there at the time?

Probably about 3000.

That's a lot.

Mmm. Well they had them everywhere, they were in tents there and they had to wait till some of the people went overseas from Northam and then they shunted them back into Northam.

Was Northam any better than Melville?

No, well there was 11,000 soldiers there and Northam was only a small town

26:00 and you had to be pretty smart. To go to a dance the girls went free but you couldn't get into the dance on your own so all the girls used to stand outside and you had to go up and say 'Do you want to go to the dance?' and you had to pay thruppence [threepence] and the service girls, there was an air force station at Cunderdin, that's about 100 k's from here I think, I'm not sure, and on Saturday nights, all

26:30 the WAAAFs [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force] used to come down from Cunderdin by bus, the air force used to provide the bus and they used to walk around outside and they knew well that blokes would pick them up and take them to the dance so...

Did they actually arrive at the dance in uniform?

Yeah, everybody went in uniform then, everywhere. Because everywhere you went you went free. I mean I could go to the races, I could go to the trots [trotting races] and I could go to the pictures [cinema] sometimes and you'd take your girlfriend for nothing as long as you were in uniform and

27:00 when you joined the army they took all your civvy [civilian] clothes and sent them home. You weren't allowed to have any civvy clothes at all so you know it never worried us and the only thing is that for a while we had to dance in boots which was pretty rough. And at one stage, when we were in the machine gunners we were attached to the Light Horse and they gave us, we had to wear leggings and spurs and we

27:30 used to wear those bandoliers and you had to go on leave like that and we went to a dance at the Town

Hall once and I swung her around and the spur caught a ladies dress and tore it off her. She wasn't too pleased but the CSM was there, Company Sergeant Major, and he paid for the dress. He said, "Go and buy another dress and we'll pay for it." that squared me off but that was the silly part about it. And later on when we became infantry, all your boots have got hobnails in them,

28:00 and the ones they gave us then were jungle boots and they had a Z, a brass strip, about...

Sorry - what is a hobnail?

Well a hobnail's something metal that you put in your boot and the ones they had during the war were Z-shaped like that and you put two tacks in them and that was it and you try and dance with them. They barred us from the ballrooms in Perth, you couldn't dance in them. But and right up through the army right up till

28:30 after Korea, all the time we were in Japan we had eleven studs in each boot and so it'd stop the boots wearing out. Normal boots with a normal leather sole, you wear them out in a couple of months you know. Route march after route march 25, 20, 30 miles something but that was the most difficult part but we used to cheat, we used to get some of the girls to bring a pair of shoes in or something and we'd change them

29:00 in the toilet and dance and then put our boots back on and go back.

Good plan. How did the training differ between Melville and Northam?

Bigger scale. We were in the unit and we trained as, where we were training there there was probably 130 and when we went to Northam there was 800 and it was, we were training for war. Down there we were just training to familiarise ourselves to become soldiers

29:30 but up there we were trained to go to war, like when the Japs come into the war in 18th December I think it was. Pearce Airstrip used to run from the hotel straight down to the sea, not like it does now and they sent us up there, my platoon was sent up there and we dug in under ground, we had two weeks there I think. They thought the Japs were going to land on, you know, paratroopers on Bullsbrook Airstrip.

30:00 So we weren't allowed up in the daytime at all, we had to stop up in the ground all day, we had machine guns see and come up at night like a rabbit. We were two weeks there and then we found out then that they couldn't get there so we went on and we patrolled then from Guilderton right up to Northampton. Because there were people on the shore, see the submarines from the Japanese,

30:30 the Japanese knew more about the coast of West Australia than anybody else.

Really?

Yeah because that's all they did in World War I, they were on our side but they just navigated everything. They even put a lot of weapons up at Jurien Bay, Jurien Bay or Cervantes one of those and they dug them up. They'd been there since World War I and they dug them up in '43 I think it was and they were still brand new. So the people used to go down to the beach and send up

31:00 flares.

What sort of people?

They were all breeds. We shot three I think between here and Guilderton, Northampton. Yugoslavs, you know, all foreigners. Sympathisers with the Germans mainly and the submarines would be out a couple of kilometres and they'd surface and they'd douse them with flares and so we were chasing these people for about two months I suppose.

That's extraordinary. I haven't heard that story before.

31:30 As a matter of a fact in Guilderton where the bar is, have you been to Moore River? They call it Guilderton now; we used to call it the Moore River.

Yeah.

There's a sandbar there, well I took my section out there and we used to go out on different parts of the coast and sit and watch all night and see what you could see. Anyway a boat came down the river and went out to sea and I reported it and they said,

32:00 "Let it go and see when it comes back." It went out about 9 o'clock and came back about three. And anyway they did a bit of checking up and found out it was the Keen sisters, they were twins, two gorgeous looking girls, they were about 17. They got kicked out of Northam for that specific reason, they were getting information and passing it on and they came down to Perth.

How were they getting information and passing it on?

Good looking girls get information off soldiers when they're drunk.

32:30 And they were two gorgeous looking chicks and actually they were a relation of mine so anyway they came down and underneath the Town Hall used to be a big open air café, they called it the Rosebud and

that was run by the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] or something down here and that was cheap. All the soldiers went there, it was always chock a block [full] and they got a job there as waitresses you see

33:00 and then they threw them out of that and then they were on this business, anyway two nights later they come again and so I arrested them and they knew me and they went right off because I arrested them and the two sisters had their brother with them. Older brother, he was about 40 I suppose and the boat was full of Jehovah Witness papers. It took them about three months I think before they deciphered what the message was, there was a bit on each paper you see. And they were taking them out to

33:30 the Germans and the Japanese but they were interned for the rest of the war. So that stopped that.

That's crazy. A couple of 17 year old girls!

Mmm, and good looking ones too. They must have been getting plenty of money off the Germans and the Japs I think. But then we headed off and we patrolled up and down all over the place until we reached Dongara and we were at Dongara for about a month I suppose.

Under canvas the whole time?

34:00 Yeah. Or sleeping in the open, doesn't matter.

How are you getting supplies?

We were organised as a company you know and they would have a CQ [company quartermaster] mess that would bring the rations up and everything and then we went from there to Northampton and we were at Northampton for about a couple of months, three months I think and we spotted a submarine there, north of.... Well we were out and my mate was on the post out north of

34:30 Northampton and...

It's got to be hard to spot a submarine?

It just come up like a big whale and he called in and he said - it was about four o'clock in the morning, just daylight - and he said, "There's a big grey thing here, it's just come up. It's not blowing water or anything like a whale." he said, "I don't know what it is." and anyway they checked up and they got onto Geraldton and the air force flew some old biscuit bombers down and they

35:00 bombed it and disabled it and it got back to Carnarvon and beached itself at Carnarvon and they arrested all the crew and one of the crew onboard had worked at the station out of Carnarvon for about five years and my other mate was the CSM of the company that went over to pick them up and he said to him, "Mate, listen, I'll go to jail alright." he said, "But can I go out and see me mate at the station because I worked there for five years." Spoke

35:30 good English. So anyway he said no so they locked him up down there for the rest of the time. And then they brought us back then to Moora, no, then we went to Mullewa because we attached to the armoured division to go to the Middle East which we thought was great and...

Is there anybody saying to you - you'll be moving on from Australia? Is there that carrot at the end of the stick at all?

Yeah when we got attached to, we knew the

36:00 armoured division was going to, they shifted them all over here and sent to Minanew [?] to get them acclimatised. Minanew is very hot and so they'd been there two months I think and they needed a reconnaissance regiment, you know battalion so we got the job. And they sent us out to Milawa near out from Mullewa, about 115 [degrees] in the water bag every day and even when we went for route marches we used to wear gas goggles because

36:30 it was so dusty and they train you, you had one water bottle of water a day and you had to do all your cooking and that and that was all your drinking and you had to shave as well.

How difficult is that?

Bloody difficult. Now it would be impossible now, but it was alright then. You sit your section down and you put about that much water in the bottom of a cup or a tin and you dip your brush in and you pass it down, everybody does that and then as soon as you did you'd shave.

37:00 And then you'd wipe it off with a towel because you've got no water but now people would grizzle about shaving with someone else's water but it didn't worry us. We just sent it down the line, you had to, that was it. And because that was the big thing in our day, conserving water, you got one water bottle and that was it. And they used to go for the old trick with a, pick up a stone about as big as a pea and put it underneath your tongue, then you don't get thirsty.

37:30 And it's great.

What?!

Yeah

How does that work?

Well it keeps your tongue off the bottom and it keeps your mouth, the saliva moving around your mouth and it doesn't go dry. It's a fact, we did it for years. I don't drink water now.

That's extraordinary. I haven't heard that before.

Yeah and when you're on route marches, you go for a 25 mile route march, you drank water when they told you and that was never. Only like

- 38:00 boil a billy, boil your cup for brew at breakfast, lunch and dinner and the other thing we used to have to do, as soon as you stopped and the route march lay down. They'd always stop near a bench or a bank and always lie down, had to put your feet up. We used to stop for ten minutes and for five minutes you've got to lay there on your back with your feet above your head.

Why's that?

Get the blood back into your body and it's great. They don't do it now because they don't do any route marches. But it does relieve your legs after 20

- 38:30 mile. We trained there, then we just, we did one exercise with the armoured and the war started to do very well so they said, "No, we don't want any more armoured over in the Middle East, we'll make them all infantry." so they sent us to Canungra [Jungle Training Centre].

What did you think of that?

No we came to Moora for a start. And we were in Moora for about three weeks I think and they called for volunteers for

- 39:00 special, they were going to send 30 blokes to Malaya. This was about mid '42 I think. And to act as guerrillas, so they called for volunteers and they got about 40 I think.

Did you volunteer?

My mate and I went down and we went to Harvey. We did a six week course there

What sort of things did they teach you to do?

Everything. You had to be able to ride a horse; you had to be able to drive a cart,

- 39:30 and they put pushbikes, motorbikes, motorbike and sidecars, cars, trucks, tanks, and you had to drive them all around the block. And then they lined up all the weapons, they didn't tell you much about them, just told you briefly about them and you had to be able to load them and fire them. And then we had piles of explosives, blowing trees down and blowing things up
- 40:00 and then physical fitness, we used to get up at four o'clock in the morning and do an hour and a half's physical training before reveille, reveille was at six o'clock. And the physical exercise was unarmed combat and bayonet fighting and then every three nights, you used to knock off at half past four and three nights after work you had to run ten mile
- 40:30 cross country and if you didn't get back for tea [dinner] at six o'clock well, that was bad luck, but it was easy after a while to do ten mile, no trouble at all.

You must have been incredibly fit.

Well the day we got there, we got there in the morning and to qualify to stay they put us through a test and they loaded us up with everything, pack, haversack, steel helmet the works. And a little officer come out and he was a very nice fellow and he said, "Right-o, we'll do a test now."

- 41:00 and we took off and we went eleven miles before we pulled up and we did that in about an hour and three quarters, he was rocking along. And as blokes dropped out, nine dropped out, they put them in the trucks and sent them straight home. So that was the beginning of it, so physical fitness was a big thing and they'd call you up at say three o'clock this afternoon and say, this was at Harvey, and they'd say, "We'll see you in Collie in the morning at six o'clock." How you get there they don't care.

That's a huge distance.

It's about 25 mile straight across, 30 mile but they'd put you into groups of five every week from the week one, every Friday they'd say to you, "Right, get a piece of paper and write down the three fellows you'd like to serve with." and then at the end of the fourth week they pick the five that...

Tape 2

- 00:31 **Can you describe the barracks at Northam?**

The barracks at Northam, I said before the theme was plenty of fresh air and plenty of walking and the

barracks were made out of galvanized iron, corrugated iron. They held about 25 soldiers and they had eight windows, four on each side and they had to be open 24 hours a day 7 days a week and you had a bed space of about seven foot

01:00 long by about four foot wide. You had a palliasse to sleep on which was made of straw and two blankets and that was it. For any valuables you used to have to roll your greatcoat around with your pockets on the inside and hang it up and put anything in there and if anybody pinched anything they were gone. In one case when we were going across to the eastern states, in South Australia there was a bit of a scare that

01:30 the place was going to be blown up so they took us off the train and over to Adelaide trotting track and there was 5000 of us and they said, "We'll sleep here tonight." and we woke up in the morning at about 5 o'clock and someone yelled out, "Someone's pinched five quid!" [five pounds] Anyway they chased him up and he jumped off the thing and killed himself and that was the thing in those days. If anyone was caught stealing you could belt it out of them and the old man [the commander] would send him to jail. It was the most serious offence in the army really.

02:00 **Zero tolerance?**

Yeah I wish it was now, but still. But and of course you could leave stuff around because you didn't have anything. Ever been to Northam? Northam is bloody cold in the winter and hot in the summer. Even the showers, we'd have cold showers but in the toilets the wall never touched the floor it was always a foot or eight inches off the floor. The CSM, Company Sergeant Major could walk along and see your head and see your feet you know, so you couldn't

02:30 bludge [laze] in the toilets. And they had one massive big shower room. It'd be like a quarter acre block I suppose, and every unit had one hot shower a week and they'd march you up there - our day was Tuesday - and they had Condyl's crystals [disinfectant] in big trays about four foot long and about three foot wide and about three inches deep and you had to walk through that

03:00 because that was the great thing to stop Tinea and any foot disease. Then you had three minutes under the shower, then you walked out the other side and through the thing. So you had a sock on for a while with Condyl's crystals. But all the mess were all the same thing, the whole thing was tin. The whole building. Had two canteens, one down the bottom and one up the top and they had everything of course that was required.

03:30 **Did you say 1100 or 11,000 men?**

11,000.

That's a bloody big influx of men.

You're telling me. On Sundays, you used to work Saturday morning but not Saturday afternoon and Sunday. Saturday afternoon they used to send a train up from Perth and Sunday morning they used to send two trains. The early train used to take all the singleys [single men] up and the one at, I think the early train got up there about half past eight or nine o'clock in the morning, The other one got up there at 11 o'clock and

04:00 that used to take all the families up so you know, on Sunday there was a train loads of girls would come up and there'd have blokes going everywhere. And then all the families would come up and Northam's got a big river running through it you know, and they had nice parks there then and it was good for the families. The blokes used to go into Northam and meet their families on the train and have a picnic with the kids on the foreshore there because there was no room in camp or anywhere in town.

04:30 You had to pick your time to get a meal and I think there were eleven pubs in the main street of Northam then and each unit had a pub and if you put your head in their and you weren't that unit they'd knock it off. So you sort of knew where your boundaries were but it worked pretty well. There weren't that many fights there. The only problem was it was three miles into Northam and it's alright going in, it's downhill, but you know, if you

05:00 miss the bus you've got to walk and it's a bloody long way to walk uphill.

Which direction from town was the camp?

Back towards Perth on top of the hill. Have you been to Northam? Coming out of Northam you climb that hill to where there's a radio thing. There. That's where the camp was on the left hand side.

So there were barracks there that could house 11,000 men?

Yep.

They didn't need tent rows or something?

No. They were all tin. All tin, yeah.

Have you ever been back to that site?

05:30 Yeah, yeah, several times.

Is it still there?

Some of them are still there. They pulled a lot of it down. After the war the CMF [Citizens Military Forces], A reserve as they call it now, and the cadets all used to go up there and train so I was with them for a while and we used to go back there. They put an airstrip in later on but the poor old farmers suffered a bit because you know for all around there 11,000 troops stomping through their paddocks and everything but there was no thieving

06:00 or anything like that or destruction of animals. There was a bit of pinching fruit but nothing much else.

Was a lot of that stomping to do with manoeuvres or exercises?

Yeah, and then of course every so often before a unit went away they'd take them out in the bush, mainly up the coast, and give them a run for a couple of weeks with the battalion and then send them away.

How were those weeks spent?

What? Up in the bush? Well mainly live firing and doing tactics.

06:30 And on reconnaissance and defence. A lot of digging in in those days. But that just toned them up for when they went overseas.

Did you do your machine gun training there?

We did part of our machine gun training there at Northam. But see at Northam we had a few people from Northam you see. The company that I was in, there was a platoon from Moora

07:00 and a platoon from Killaburra and one from down south. And of course they knew some of the people so we used to go out to this guy's farm and dig holes, mainly up the top of the hill because Northam was very rocky and very hilly and all our work was done say firing on targets say 1000 yards away, 1000/1500 yards away. We used to get up on the one range of hills and dig big holes and sandbag them and everything and

07:30 make a nice clubhouse and stay there for a couple of days. But yeah, and then we did a lot of work up near BullsBrook in Gingin.

Did you go up there in a company or in a platoon?

In a platoon. With a company. We went to BullsBrook the first time underground as a platoon but all the rest of it with the company. Part of a company you know.

What kinds of equipment did the company have during those patrols?

08:00 Well we always had the basic webbing like two basic pouches and the straps over your shoulders, one water bottle, one bayonet and a piece of rope. Later on they made them and issued them to you but a lot of blokes used to carry them and you'd get a pack and a haversack and a respirator and unfortunately we carried that bloody respirator everywhere, that gas mask but it was a nuisance.

08:30 What about transport equipment?

They had trucks with seats in the middle. You sit back to back when you've got trucks. A lot of the time with infantry battalions because you've got to get used to walking. If they were on a route march they'd put the band in the trucks and the band would play and the diggers would walk. Because it's a bit hard asking the band to march 25 or 30 miles and play music. And some of the units like the 2/4th when they

09:00 went overseas, they marched from Northam to Perth to catch the boat. Took them three days I think and they marched to Wellington Square and they got changed there and they marched through Perth and then marched to Fremantle and caught the boat so walking was nothing. It's terrible now to everybody, but I mean in those days you walked. That's it.

Everybody walked?

Yeah.

Can I ask you - what happened to the sympathisers that you shot up near the river?

We never seen them. They just, I mean you pass them back through the

09:30 line and they're gone.

Were you on those patrols when they were shot?

No. I was on the patrol when the rest of those three and the military police come and take them and they go through the courts and everything and they, what they call interned them. They put them in prison. They interned all the Germans and all the Italians for a start in big camps and

10:00 then of course they let the Italians out because they were no trouble but the others. You don't see them. We heard about it but that's all. You know, "Oh, one of the platoons shot a bloke last night." but you never see them and the military police take them and they're gone. We didn't even know who they were.

But you spared the King girls?

It's the same in action, normally

- 10:30 if a bloke is killed he's gone. The stretcher bearers look after that then, they're shunted back unless you're out on your own and you've got to do the carrying yourself. Then you see it but other than that you don't.

Were a lot of troops amassing in WA preparing for the Japanese landing?

Yeah there was about I suppose 50,000 yeah. 50,000 up. See there was troops from Perth

- 11:00 to Northampton from Milawa, down to Northam and York and back to Perth. That's plus what was overseas. After about mid-42, when the Japs come in the war, mid'42 they'd have found out that the Japs knew all about the coast so they then brought different units from the eastern states because they always reckoned the Japanese
- 11:30 knew so much about the west coast they were going to land here. Ship they brought two Scottish battalions over, they brought the armoured division that was here and they brought a lot of other, the A reserve as they call it now, it was called the CMF and they immediately called them up on full-time duty, all the young blokes and they sent them all over the place and sent most of them over here. There was two divisions
- 12:00 around; there was one division at Geraldton and one division at York, Northam, and around there, separate to the Northam camp altogether and there were troops everywhere.

What do you think of opinion today that there was little likelihood of a Japanese invasion of Australia?

Don't worry about that. No, that was on the cards because when we went to New Guinea we found

- 12:30 a pay office and it had occupation money for Australia, occupation money for New Guinea and they were all set for Australia, that's where they wanted to go and as a matter of fact in later years when I went to the occupation force in Japan and I was doing an NCOs [non commissioned officers] course and I had to give a lecture and they would have, lecture, one was left on the projector was the assault on Japan, the other was the Japanese assault on Australia and they were going to
- 13:00 land up north and they were going to send one spearhead down the east coast, one was going down the west coast and one down the centre and they reckon they would have cleaned it up in no time. And in those days they'd got so serious when they first thought the Japanese were going to land here they formed a sort of a line across from Geraldton right across Australia and then it got so serious when they were at Milne Bay and were going to attack Moresby that
- 13:30 they scrubbed Western Australia altogether and concentrated from Adelaide to Brisbane.

Is that the Brisbane Line [alleged last line of defence that separated Australia]?

Mmm. So we were going to be left out in the cold. And of course the Japs not only knew so much about Western Australia, but see they knew all the pearling was done by the Japs before the war so they knew all about the north and so they were home and hosed and they were pearling all over the place;

- 14:00 Derby and up in Darwin and all over the place so they knew everywhere. They'd have done alright but I don't think they'd have gone down the middle because they'd have died with lack of water and so forth but we'd the weight of numbers and the only thing we could have done would have been to fight guerrilla warfare. But the way they treated everybody would have been terrible for a while. But there's no doubt about it,
- 14:30 they wanted to, Australia was the pinnacle of their attack.

But there's still quite a degree of denial of that isn't there?

Oh yeah but you get people that, they're stupid, you can't talk to them about everything. I mean the thing that annoys me is that you know the way people have gone they reckon now, everybody says how good the SAS [Special Air Services] is and that sergeant that was killed,

- 15:00 got killed, he ran over a mine in Afghanistan and the weeping and wailing and oh crap, you'd have thought the King had died and that's normal practice and I mean they're still whingeing about it and this is detrimental to the service. I mean the other thing is with it now that people can join up and say, "Well I don't want to go overseas." I mean if you sign the dotted line that's it. You go where you're told, when you're told.
- 15:30 And that's it. Now they reckon that you can't go overseas anymore than four months which is rubbish. I think I had leave every third year I think. No one worries, you were fed and that's it. But it's a thing that's got into the younger people, I don't know why, a lot of them, and unfortunately those that it's got into have got loud mouths and they get all the fame.

16:00 **Once we've spent more time we'll come back to that at the end of the day. Can we pick up where you left off when you were in Harvey?**

Yeah. We used to run ten mile every night or three nights a week and then the last two weeks they put us in groups of five and we used to do exercise and they send you out say to go from Harvey to Collie.

16:30 No food or anything, you've got to get your own food so they train you to go to the houses, two of you front up to the house you see and you get a bottle of tomato sauce or something and smear it all over a bloke's leg or his shoulder and bandage it up and you carry him into the veranda of the farm house and the wife comes out and she's all very sympathetic and while she's looking after that bloke the other bloke gets in the back pinching stuff.

17:00 But they teach you to pinch it and then you come around and you tell them what you've got and you give them a piece of paper and they send that into the army and the army pays them but that's the way they trained us.

Any interesting tales of those practices?

Yeah. When say a woman's on her own you can understand it if she's out in the bush halfway to Collie and she's probably got two or three kids and she's

17:30 very sympathetic to the bloke whose got his leg bandaged up and she's doing her best to help him and then she realises that some bugger's in the kitchen taking bread and butter. Some of them go a bit hysterical but most of them say they realised because they'd been told to watch out for it.

So you were caught red-handed a few times?

If the police catch you yeah they dob you in [inform on you] and they sent us to infiltrate into the cream factory at Harvey and they

18:00 tell everybody weeks before you know; "There's likely to be a raid on your cream factory." and then they just call your group, the five of you up, there ended up 30 of us there. There were six groups of five and they say to you, "Right, as for tonight you've got three days to get into the cream factory and do this and do that." and they give you diagrams of it and they give you little sticky things over it represents sticky bombs and

18:30 you put it on the different machinery to destroy it and then you can do what you like. You get into civvy clothes; you can do what you like, lounge around. You've got to find out what's what. And we found out that there was a stormwater drain, which there's a lot around Harvey, used to run close to it and so we sailed into that. We got in there and they were after us. When they found out we were in there

19:00 but it was good fun. When the coppers were onto you it was realistic. They'd lock you up and give you a hell of a right time too.

Were you suggesting you got trapped in the drain?

No, no, no. That's the way we got into the compound. And once we got into the compound we were right. But you can't get over the fence because it's electrocuted or there's guards on it and so you've got to do something that people don't think you can do.

19:30 Something that's extra hard or supposed to be impossible. And once you get in well it's pretty easy then. As long as you're quick.

Those sound like fun war games.

And they used to do exercises, like they had to give you something to do in the bush and they'd sit blokes up in trees with live ammunition and they'd, it was all done by live ammunition and if you were

20:00 doing something wrong they'd fire at you or close to you, you know. Fire three or four shots over there and you'd soon wake up that you'd done something wrong and they wounded three I think, while we were there. But that was nothing in those days, you had plenty of training, you're allowed so many people to be wounded you know because it was supposed to be, it was, it was realistic training.

So the stakes were high during training?

Oh yeah. Do as you're told and do it quick. And be fit.

20:30 **What happened when you left Harvey?**

Well, they sent us back to, we had a big party at the finish, the lieutenant was very pleased and he was going to take us I think and they, a colonel came over from the eastern states and he gave us a big lecture on top secret, what we were going to do and so forth or about what we're going to do and then we came back to personnel depot - they used to have a big depot at Claremont Showgrounds where everybody used to assemble when

21:00 you're moving in and out of the state - so they sent us back there for a week and we laid around there for a while and suddenly the colonel came and said, "I'm terribly sorry it's all off. You go back to your unit." So we went back to our unit and then we went over to Canungra, they changed everybody then. Everybody that wasn't infantry in Australia went to infantry.

Did you know then or do you know now why

21:30 **it was called off?**

I found out, that was in 1942 I did the course and I found out in 1963, I met the colonel that, well before I went to Vietnam I went and done what they call a 'Sneaky-Pete course' [spy course] which is something like that at Swan Island and he come over to, he was the big-wig, he was then the brigadier I think. He came over to address the class and I thought, 'Jeez, I know him.' So

22:00 anyway afterwards we were having a cup of tea and I said to him, "Were you over in Perth during the war?" and he said, "Yeah, yeah." and so we got talking and he said, "Oh I'll tell you what." he tell us then what it was going to be, put in submarines at Rottnest [Island] and take us and land us at different places in Malaya and we would have survived there as guerrillas till they thought to pick us up. He was going to be the boss so you know it was a relief to know exactly what we were going to do.

Did you find out why it fell through?

Because it was

22:30 too dangerous. At that time you see the Japanese owned the sea really and everybody, Malaya hadn't been taken. It had only been taken about three or four months so the Japs hadn't really settled in, they were really alert. And they thought it would be suicide to send us so, that's the best really.

Just have to take their word for that. Right, let's get back to Canungra.

23:00 Then they brought us down to Perth and they gave us the weekend leave and then they sent us over to Canungra and that's when they put us off the train and they killed that bloke.

Sorry?

When they got off the train at Adelaide and the bloke jumped off the thing and killed himself for pinching money. That's when it happened and then we went on to Canungra and we had to do a 28 day course. The 6th, 7th and 9th Divisions went to the

23:30 Tablelands up north of Cairns and all the odd units, small units went to Canungra and we did a 28 day course and everything we did there was sent to try you. In fact we got off the train, the trains in Queensland at that time going to Canungra the engine driver used to stop and open the gate and he'd pull up and the guard would shut the gate so it was that slow - took us about 4 hours I think.

24:00 And anyway when we get there the train pulled up and they're onto you straightaway. They'd blow five whistles and say you've got to do this, you've got to do that and we were in and out of the train about four times I think before the captain was satisfied. Of course we hadn't done much marching and that; we'd be bludging for about a month going across Australia.

What was that trip like?

Well it was... See we got off at Adelaide and then we got to Rooty Hill [in Sydney]

24:30 just past Parramatta and they took us off the train there for three weeks. We did nothing. Only going to annoy the nurses and get drunk. And of course we were pretty casual about things then and he said, "Righto, form up in three ranks." and we marched up this bastard great hill that's about 140 at the minute, got to the parade ground and they had nothing there. There was a tent fly. You know what a tent fly is?

25:00 Just a single piece of canvas and it comes down to about that far off the ground and then they had white sand and they had little poles about that thick around the bottom of the thing and six people had to sleep in there and you weren't allowed to roll the flaps down and in Queensland it rains and you get four inches in an hour. All you had to do was put your mosquito net up and we had a blanket and a ground sheet and that's all you had to sleep in. They put the white sand in there so they could put fleas in it to annoy you.

25:30 Everything was to annoy you, you see. To simulate actual service. They had a white line painted on the ground for a mess hall. On the tree they had a piece of board about two foot by two foot which was the servery, the only thing that they had was they had one tent for a kitchen and we were on two thirds rations; we used to get a piece of bacon about two inches long, get half an egg and they used to make dog biscuit porridge. You know

26:00 what dog biscuits are? They're the hard biscuits, they reckon they're made out of horsemeat and meal but I don't know what they are but they're very good. But they soak them overnight and they go all soggy and they pour milk over and they give you two spoonfuls of that for breakfast and half an egg and this rasher of bacon and a round of bread.

Half an egg?

Yeah and a cup of tea or a cup of coffee and you've got to sit on the sand in this would be mess hall and of when it rains you're bloody hungry as hell and

26:30 you're trying to protect all your gear before it floods and I was fined two quid there because I went and stood under a tree.

You weren't playing?

No, well I was hungry and they used to, there was no ablutions or anything, they'd get you up at six o'clock in the morning, you'd get dressed, they'd call the roll, and they'd run you two mile down the road and they'd give you three minutes to shave and shower so all you did was dive straight in the water and sit in it up to your neck,

27:00 shave with no shaving cream and wash yourself and run out wet and they'd run you back two mile and you'd have breakfast, what was made of it, and then you'd start training and Monday and Thursday you had to clean clothes, not press them or anything but clean, and there was a river about a mile away and they'd come along and inspect you and they'd march you straight in the river up to your neck in the water

27:30 just to annoy you. And it was good training for New Guinea, when we got to New Guinea we were a piece of soda you know, but you weren't allowed, you were allowed one letter. You weren't allowed any parcels and of course in those days they used to have special tins, they used to call them 'soldiers' cake tins'. Your parents used to get them to send you cakes and they'd built an arc mesh cage and they built shells in it and they'd sit the

28:00 cake with the name on it facing out so you could see it but you couldn't have it and after a month they gave us the cake. Tuesday was our stand down day and if one bloke wanted to go and do washing the whole 130 had to go so they only catch you once. After that no-one wants to do anything and they gave us, the first Tuesday about three o'clock in the afternoon they brought down a keg of beer in a

28:30 trailer, they tapped it and it was as hot as hell so everybody, just to defy them, they drank it, went out with their dixie and we drank it but we didn't get anymore. But everything was... you were wet all the time and you were hungry all the time and the fleas, the sergeant major said in the morning, "Are there any problems in the lines?" and I said, "Yeah, the fleas are eating us." "Oh, I'll give you some stuff."

29:00 So they gave us some stuff but all it did was feed them. You could see them, they were jumping around all up in your face but they did nothing about it so you just shut your mouth.

You mentioned earlier you stood under a tree - did any of the troops kick up about the treatment?

No. No-one worried about it then. You were there to do as you were told and if you wanted to step out well you stepped out, if you didn't, you didn't. And if you got

29:30 punishment just away from Mount Tambourine, overlooking Canungra Camp and there's three plateaus and if you got minor punishment they'd come along at five o'clock on stand down day, Tuesday, and give you a flag and you've got to walk up there on that plateau and you keep waving it till the orderly sergeant answers you and he won't answer you till lunchtime and then

30:00 you come back. But that's all you know... There was a chap with us he'd been there four months trying to get through and he was mad, mad as a snake.

So if you didn't get through you'd just be put through it again?

Go back again. Well, after two weeks they used to give you what they called a physical test and they'd give you two handfuls of rice. Now they don't tell you, you go on parade this morning and you've got your rifle and everything, you can't put it on the ground, so they say

30:30 "Right-o, put your hands out we'll give you your rations." so you put your rifle between your knees and put your hands out. Now, you can't ask anybody to open your basic pouch, so you're trying to open your basic pouch and save every grain of this rice and you put it in your pouch and they marched you for thirty hours, you stopped for ten minutes every hour and you're allowed one water bottle of water and you've got to eat this rice, that's all the food they give you for thirty hours.

31:00 And they march you, there's a big range of hills about 2000 foot high around Canungra and they march you over the hill and over the mountain and back again and along the mountain. Can kill 28 hours I suppose and you come to this big clearing in the jungle and they've got kitchens set up there, coppers full of stew and beautiful apple pie and all that sort of stuff and plenty of coffee but they fill up the, because the rice

31:30 binds you up, they fill this stew up with Epsom salts to clean you out you see, and they always, always drugged the coffee with Bromide which is supposed to stop your desire to chase women and you can eat as much as you like and of course you're hungry as hell and you eat all this stuff and then they give you an hour off, just enough time for the Epsom salts to work and you've got about another three miles to walk to march

32:00 back to camp, and this is about 11 o'clock at night for us, and of course as soon as your body gets hot the Epsom salts works and boy, it really hits the fan, blokes tearing their pants off and all sorts of things and it cleans you all out and they take you back and if you fail they send you back to start again. So we were lucky that we went through as a unit and blokes helped one another. Like the platoon I was in,

we'd been together

32:30 for about two years so everybody knew everybody and any big noters we pulled them into gear and we had a little Aboriginal bloke was our instructor and he was a good little bloke but we all got through but some of them were there.... And you couldn't go anywhere, they had military police posted. Like there was a ridge line between the camp and Canungra itself and they had military police patrolling that all the time and if they caught you

33:00 they'd back squad you again so and then we marched out of there and they gave us all a cake so we opened them all and the whole company turned up out on the parade ground and we opened up all these cakes and the whole 130 of us ate them all before we left. Bugger me; we weren't going to give them to the instructors.

Were there any times for fooling around or a joke or two?

33:30 Well you'd joke amongst yourselves because you've got to otherwise you'd go mad. You've got to play tricks on one another all the time and because it gets very boring, particularly when you're bloody tired and you're mad in the heat - it's a very humid heat, you sit down and you're sweating - they make you march up and down these hills for thirty hours, you'd lose a couple of stone.

Do you remember any of the jokes?

34:00 Not really. Some of them I couldn't tell you. But if I'd had got a leave pass I'd have run to Perth, I reckon I was that fit but...

What would you do during a ten minute stop during a route march of 30 hours?

Sit on your butt. Find a place to sit down and if there's water there, because there's lots of water running off the mountain, sit under it.

34:30 You don't worry about getting wet. Because you weren't allowed to drink but you could sit under the water, you'd get a mouthful if you went past occasionally but get all the tricks of the trade.

You'd be wet with perspiration wouldn't you?

Saturated. Yeah but you'd sit under the cold water coming down out of the mountain you know, it was lovely.

Did you have the energy to chat amongst yourselves?

Oh yeah. You never let it get you down, you know, never think you can't do it. Always encourage people to think that you can do it.

35:00 You're going to be tired and you're going to be this and you're going to be that but you can do it.

Sounds like you thrived on the challenge?

Well you've got to. If you don't, well it's no good going in these hard times and that's what's wrong with a lot of people today, they want to big note themselves but they can't do it. If you look through the books of SAS the blokes that have joined up. I know most of them, they'd have gone through there, the first two years anyway and some of the blokes

35:30 were shockers. They only lasted a couple of months but they'll tell you they're in SAS and that's the way life goes on. But in the infantry battalion it's different altogether. They're rough as guts but they'll never let you down. I was always taught when I was first promoted, an old sergeant major said to me he said, "You don't have to be liked but you must always be hard, fair and helpful and if you work on those three words," he said, "You'll get on."

36:00 And I always did. And diggers [soldiers] will do anything for you as long as you'll help them and look after them and you know, they always sort of look up to you.

Who were your instructors at Canungra?

I don't know their names now. This little dark bloke was our main instructor. But you had to watch it you see, they couldn't get people to stop there and I was a corporal and I'd done a fair bit of bayonet fighting with a bloke called Mikithic, he was an Australian bayonet fighter, he used to go all around Australia.

36:30 **Where had you done that, sorry?**

At Northam. And anyway he said, one day the physical training sergeant was crook [ill] and they said would I take it, so I said yes, and I took it for two or three days and the company commander called me up and he said, "I'll get you posted here." and I said, "Like hell you will!" so you've got to watch your step and just do what you're told otherwise

37:00 you'll get a job.

Could you talk me through a bayonet drill?

You know, a bayonet's on the end of the rifle and you teach people to sort of lunge, keep their balance mainly and to lunge forward and it's like batting at cricket, if you stick your bayonet out someone will take it

37:30 off you. So you teach people to keep their balance and move their feet all the time and be like a boxer, you know, you bounce around. And then you put up a bag of straw or something like that, or two or three of them and you teach them to run and bayonet the thing and they call it parry and pull it back and hold your bayonet up, you never run with your bayonet sticking out in front, you always run with it up at what they call a high port.

38:00 So there you've got control of the weapon and your body's on balance all the time, that's the main thing, that's about all and physical fitness.

Do you do any jousting in a bayonet exercise?

Not really because, you can do it if they've done a lot of bayonet fighting, you leave the scabbard on the bayonet so it can't hurt anybody and you do a lot of parrying.

38:30 The main thing is to keep the bloke on balance and then it's just common sense because it's only you and him and if he gives in first well then you're gone.

No second chances. What about physical training?

Physical training mainly what they do now. We used to do a lot of squats and sits and kicking in the air and waving arms about, put your arms out and do so many circles and then they used to do,

39:00 sit ups were very hard in those days. They reckon they done a lot of damage to you but I don't think they did, but they'd hold your feet and you'd have to keep your legs together and they'd hold your feet and you'd go right back on the ground with your hands behind your head and then come right up and it's pretty difficult by the time you do about 30 of them. But it's all in building up and doing, but the infantry do mainly running and sitting up and

39:30 leg and arm exercises because that's the main part of your body.

Did physical training include hand to hand fighting combat?

Yeah, you do unarmed combat. Unarmed combat is very difficult to teach because you've got to be very realistic or it's no good and I mean they talk about Jujitsu and all this rubbish now but unarmed combat

40:00 to me is the only thing to teach people, because you teach people unarmed combat to act against instant actions whereas with all this other stuff you've got to work them into a certain position. Well, in war time if you're going to use unarmed combat a lot of the time, it happens in a split second so you know people say to me, "Why don't you practice it?" "Well I don't think it's any

40:30 good." "Oh yeah?" Black belts and all that. It's alright, it looks good and in certain situations it'd be good but I don't think it's any good in war at all. Unarmed combat's the only thing and I mean you've got to instil in people that, like bayonet fighting and unarmed combat, it's not a joke. You've got to have it in your brain that you're there to kill a bloke because otherwise he'll kill you and once you instil that in and they learn all the mechanics of it

41:00 it's very good.

You must learn some specific moves to kill a man?

Well you've got things like if a bloke attacks you with a knife, now if a bloke attacks you with a knife, if he hand's off balance, if he's up or down he's a (UNCLEAR). Because if his arm's up you can knock it up and there's no way he can hang onto the knife. Or the same way if it's down.

What would your next offensive move be? Would you go in and strike him?

41:30 Oh yeah. Bloody anything. There's the in-step, the testicles and the throat and their eyes. Eyes is the easiest thing in the world. I mean once a bloke can't see, I've seen it several times, people are talking away and if you just jab your two fingers in a bloke's eyes he's useless. Straightaway. Because I mean it hurts and you can't see. So what

42:00 are you going to do? And people say, 'That's terrible.' But I mean...

Tape 3

00:34 **Were you allotted to a unit after your training?**

After you went to Canungra they just pooled everybody and see the division had to be filled up, 6th, 7th and 9th Division, and strange as it may seem the people that, they called the allocation officers and some were hopeless. We went up, you front up in front of them and the bloke said, "Where do you want

to go?" and I said, "I want to go to infantry." and he said,

01:00 "Alright." he said - I was a corporal and three of my mates were diggers and we all wanted to go together - and he said, "The three diggers can go to 2/28th Battalion but," he said, "We'll have to send you somewhere else as a cook." I said, "You can go to buggery, I'm not going to be the cook!" and he said, "Well, you can revert to a private to go with them if you like." Well, see when I joined the army I was supporting Mum and Dad so

01:30 if I paid, I paid a pound a week I think it was and the army put two pound to it so she got three pound fifty a week or something, now if I'd drop down to corporal I couldn't have paid it so I said, 'I can't do it,' so they said alright. So then they sent us to a landing craft company to drive barges in in New Guinea so ended up with 100 of us I think. Mainly the NCOs. Went down to a place called Coochiemudlo out

02:00 of Brisbane and we spent a couple of months there I think training driving barges and being on the farm, I knew a fair bit about Indians so that was alright.

How difficult is it to drive one of these things?

It's not difficult. It's common sense. You've got to, it's like sailing, you've got to understand the water, the tides and which way the winds blowing and all this sort of thing, but

02:30 to a bloke from the country it's pretty simple and most of the blokes were from the country so they did very well and then they took us up to Brisbane to get on the boat to go to New Guinea and and they decided then that they couldn't put us on the boat at Brisbane so they took us up to Rockhampton and then we went to Townsville on the train and we stayed at Townsville overnight and

03:00 then they brought us back to Rockhampton and put us on a, it used to be a Sydney ferry, and they put 150 of us and 1000 Yanks I think on board and there should have only been about 600 on and it was rough as guts [rough seas] and everybody was sick and it was an old coal-fired engine and they detailed you to go down below and shovel coal

03:30 and it's about 140 [degrees] in the water back and everybody was sick and we were machine gunners and they had a twin Vickers machine gun up on the... for aircraft and both of these, the chap in charge on board he said, "Does anybody know about machine guns?" so six of us put our hands up and they put us up there, we laid back, I toffed [took it easy] for the rest of the trip. It was about eight days to get to New Guinea though it should have taken about two and ...

04:00 **Is that because the sea was so rough?**

The sea was rough and it was only an old ferry just chugging along and we went to a place called Finschhafen and the divisions had just taken it then.

What were your first impressions of Finschhafen?

Finschhafen was like going into Sydney. There were troops everywhere, there were trucks everywhere, there were barges everywhere and everybody's going everywhere and you

04:30 could hear all the noise in the distance though there was nothing happening right where we were. But it was like a real busy town and it never stopped. You know, people going all the time and we were there about a month I think on a little island about a half acre I suppose.

What were your living conditions like?

Terrible. We were living on top of one another. Everybody was. And then we went from there down to Lae

05:00 as they...

What were you actually doing in Finschhafen?

Driving barges, carting stuff around for soldiers and carting soldiers around and carting equipment and picking up wounded and anything like that that they wanted and then we moved down. The war come down to Lae and we moved down to Lae and we were there for a while and gradually moved down the coast; Lae, Finschhafen, Itabi and the 6th Division landed at Itabi and we supplied them for a long time and then

05:30 **What sort of supplies were you taking across?**

Anything they want and I mean it was pretty rough because they'd call you up and tell you that they want you to land supplies to such and such a grid reference and you'd never seen it before and you've got to watch out, got to know all about the sea so you study the sea and where the rocks are and reefs and when you can land and so forth but you don't really know how rough it is

06:00 and of course the other thing is you've got to land at night and you've got to rely on, they'd tee up a signal, you'd come in 100 metres off the shore and you'd flash a torch three times and they'll flash twice if it's them. Now you don't really know if it's them or the Japs you know so you sneak in and land and pray like hell that there's anybody from the 6th Division and they unload the stores and then you take

back wounded and all sorts

06:30 of stuff like that.

Where would you take the wounded back to?

To the nearest field station and then they'd send them off to hospital and we'd take them back to Lae or Itabi and...

Would that be just a couple of hours away?

Or could be an hour away and for anybody that was very seriously ill they had an air sea rescue boat. It used to do about 50 miles an hour

07:00 and it was set up for rescuing pilots that were shot down over sea but if you had people that were very seriously injured they'd come along and take them and be there in a flash. And then the 6th Division sort of moved away into the bush and we moved down to a place called Katwong and we did a landing there with the commandos, I think it was the 2/5th but I wouldn't be sure. It was a peninsula

07:30 that come out and they wanted to get round the other side of the peninsula and it was, they reckoned it was better to land, do a landing than it was to slash their way through the jungle so we picked them up and took them round and landed them.

How many?

There was about 60 of them.

So these are kind of like commandos?

Yeah they were 2/5th Commandos and we landed them there and it gets hot while it's landing but it's fun.

08:00 Well everything's happening so you, once you get over the initial fear, once the first few shots are fired, up till a few shots are fired you know things are dead silent and you think, 'Crap, you know a man could get knocked over here.' but once it starts you're too busy.

How much gun fire were you experiencing in those landings?

Lots. Lots. Artilleries firing and the ships at sea are firing and then of course

08:30 when - the Japs are firing from the shore - and then of course once you land them you're on the shore and the diggers, when they initially strike the gaps there's plenty of fire then.

That's a pretty precarious situation to be in.

But it's just like something that's unfolding and you're too busy once you start, you've got to do your bit to keep the thing moving.

Are the Americans doing any of these sorts of supply runs and landings as well?

09:00 Yeah all the time yeah. Well they've got big ships that take six or eight trucks and they've got other LCMs [landing craft mechanised] as they call them that carry soldiers only and you'll see them on them. They climb down a rope ladder to get on the barges and I had a go at that for a... we were attached the Americans for a little while and

09:30 driving their barges and they're marvellous. Got 225 horse power diesel in them and they're only cardboard. They go like mad and you drive them up on the beach and the soldiers run off and they float and you'd get away. With ours it's a bit difficult because they're not made that way.

What did you think of the Americans?

They've got all the gear but as I said they're brainwashed and they're dedicated to their country.

10:00 You get the Marines and the airborne, the American's nothing, the Americans that's it. They don't care about dying for their country. They train their officers very well but down in the corporals and sergeants are not very well trained at all and the soldiers are trained to do as they're told whereas we train our soldiers to do specific things. I mean

10:30 if you're moving along when they call an ack-ack formation, you know five metres apart and you're fired upon. You always look to your front, right front or left front and in your mind you've got to teach your soldier to think, 'If I'm fired on I'm going to get to get behind that lounge there. If I'm fired on I'm going to get there.' So everybody's got somewhere to go. If not, people rush for some place and you get two or three soldiers in the one place and they get killed.

11:00 And I always used to say to these you know, "No dreaming of my darling love of thee now, get on the job because you're likely to get killed." and once you train them it's marvellous. You know because something happens and you know where they are. And they know what you're going to do and we used to train, we had a company commander in Japan and he used to train us to go, this was when we were training to go into Korea. We had to do certain things in a certain time

11:30 so everything's got to happen like greased lightning and it proved dividends because in the first eleven months in Korea we lost a few blokes killed. We lost a bundle wounded but that's alright, they can come home, but other companies got them killed because the soldiers didn't, things didn't happen quick. So I'll tell you something later on in Korea about things but that's what you've got to do and the Americans don't do that. The Americans amass.

12:00 World War II suited them in Europe. Vietnam didn't suit them at all because they were lost. They're very poor at navigation and in the jungle you can't have anything that's different to a normal body. That means you can't have shaving cream and you can't have anything like Lux soap because they smell you. We could smell, after a

12:30 while you go along a trail in New Guinea and you could tell straightaway. You could smell the Japs because they've got a certain smell about them. And I mean if you're walking slowly through the jungle and you smell something different you've got to stop and find out what it is. So you can't afford to have any of that crap at all. You just shave with water and you don't, unless you're back at base you don't use soap otherwise you just give yourself away.

13:00 So it's a..

What you're saying is the Americans would give themselves away?

Well the Americans are mad on, instead of having a bath they just splash themselves with aftershave and all sorts of crap like that and you know you can smell them a mile away and you can't do that if you want to stay alive. And that's the whole aim of the thing; if you can teach diggers to when they hear people say, 'Oh we got drunk and we got into trouble.' the diggers don't do that if they're well trained.

13:30 They do it when they know they can get away with it and some of them will come and tell you, "I can get some booze." and you say, "Alright, go and get it." and you drink and you leave them alone but once you get that set up you're right. But the Americans don't have that; we concentrate on sergeants and warrant officers and corporals as the old saying is: 'Officers come and go but NCOs stay forever.'

14:00 And once you get that you're right. And you get a platoon, I had a platoon for three years and they wouldn't take promotion, they didn't want to go. They just wanted to stop together because they know what they're going to do you see. But yeah.

So how long were you doing supply runs and landing missions?

About two years.

Did you ever get onto the New Guinea mainland?

Yeah

What sort of things would you do as part

14:30 **of that?**

Well we had a base camp and well we had several base camps and with the barges once it come daylight you've got to get up the river and get camouflaged out of the way or else you'll get, the Nips [Japanese] would knock you over [kill you] but for the first year, the last year was alright, you could camp anyway because they were getting done.

How many of them were there around when you first arrived?

15:00 There'd probably be about I think three or four divisions in New Guinea when we were there. About 100,000 I suppose.

So would you camouflage your boat and then go and find somewhere to camp?

No we used to sleep on the barge. We had our cooking gear and everything like that. Only you'd probably do a month on there and then you'd have a spell for a couple of days, you know maintenance and so forth so you'd go to the base camp and

15:30 eat at the base camp and you know just, might go to the pictures a couple of times. But nothing, sitting in New Guinea to be sitting at the pictures and suddenly there's movement behind the screen and then they'd go and arrest a couple of Japs because they'd got lost and they thought it was good-o watching the pictures. But you didn't worry too much about it.

What was base camp like?

Base camp was a tent.

16:00 They had a marquee for a mess hall and camouflaged under a bit of jungle and the tents spread about the place with stretchers in them, stretchers and blankets so it was alright yeah. Once you got off the ground. But it's difficult to sleep in a bed after sleeping on the ground. When I come home from New Guinea in I think 1944 and my sister lived at Leederburn, she had the latest

16:30 mattress and everything and I couldn't sleep on it. I slept on a mat on the floor because it's too soft you know, it doesn't give any support at all and you're uncomfortable but get on the floor and jiggle your hip around and you're in business.

Were you ever attacked by Japs when you were camouflaged on your boat?

No. No we were too smart for that.

17:00 **How would you go about making sue that you were safe?**

Well you get briefed every couple of days or every day it depends. They might send you off on a job for a week and they'd brief you what's there and what's going to happen and then where it is and everything and you pay a fair bit of attention to that and if anything happens in between you've got to radio so they call you on the radio and tell you and then when you go back to get debriefed they tell you what's happened since then.

17:30 **What sort of things would happen in a debriefing?**

They'd tell you mainly who's what and what supplies had come in. What troops were going out, whose likely to go into action in a few days and there's going to be a lot of casualties so you're going to operate in this area for a few nights and you've got to familiarise yourself with the map and where the hospitals are and where all the depots are and where the ships are and so forth so

18:00 it's like planning the town. You know where everything is. And if they asked you to go somewhere they surmised that you knew where to go and if it's night-time it's not that crash hot. But that's the normal briefing and debriefing. Just general daily routine of what's happening.

Did you enjoy this phase of your life?

Yeah because we were together. The three of us stuck together for the whole time. The whole three years and

18:30 you know we didn't mind the loneliness because we'd been on the farm before and we were saving money hand over fist too, being in New Guinea.

Did you miss the company of women?

No. Well we never see any women. All the women in New Guinea were nurses and most of the senior officers had jeeps and of course they were back at the base and we were never at the base and they never came to our base camp but

19:00 the base camps about divisional headquarters and all that well there was too much going on there to... the only time you saw them there was when you were going to hospital. They were very good. Marvellous nurses. Look after you, write letters and talk to you.

Would you get any mail in New Guinea?

Yeah you'd get your mail pretty regular. That's one thing the army does is you get mail nearly every day.

19:30 That's to New Guinea, whether it gets to your unit it depends what you're doing. If you're out on a weeks patrol well you don't get your mail till you get back but it's always there. And it's all free; you don't have to pay for any stamps or anything. The only thing is you've got to write a letter and you've got to put it in to be censored so you can't say anything. You can't tell them where you are and what it is or they'd cut it out. And if you put too much in and they were going to cut too much out well they'd call you up and say,

20:00 "You've got to watch your step. Are you a sympathiser to the Japs?" or just that kind of thing and once they start you're in trouble because it never ends. Goes right back through your family and the whole works when they start checking up on you.

Did you ever see any cases of that?

No. Not in our outfit but there were in some. But they get rid of them pretty quick and put them in prison and leave them there.

So what do you talk about if you can't talk about anything?

20:30 Yes. You know, 'It's a nice day, the seas calm, the water's salt.' the same old thing. And yeah I used to write to my mother every week and my four sisters they used to write to me but I wouldn't write to them because you can't. Mum used to distribute all the information, just tell them you're fit and well and sometimes there'll be a few odd things that you can let them know where you are but...

21:00 **So they didn't even know you were in New Guinea?**

Oh they did after a while but they don't tell anybody but that exactly know where you are. They know you're in New Guinea but they don't know exactly where you are but you know they don't worry too much as long as they get a letter I think. If they get a letter you're alive. But later on when we went to Korea you could talk about anything really.

21:30 But in World War II they were very strict on it.

So how did you move on from being on the landing craft?

Well when the war finished in '45 our CO was single and he called us up and called us all back to base and lined us up and said, "Well, they're going to

22:00 send a contingent to Japan. You've got to sign on for 18 months." and everybody said, "Oh I want to go home!" and he said, "Well, I'll tell you what. The married people with children will go home within a week, the married will go home within a couple of weeks, the people who are engaged will go home next and you singleys will lump all this gear that's in New Guinea back to Australia." So I said to my mates, "Bugger this, we'll go to Japan." So we went to Japan.

22:30 **All three of you?**

No only two of us. The other bloke came home and got married and the other, another fellow that we were friendly with, he stopped in New Guinea and we came home on leave. We went to Japan in '46 and we came in '47 for leave and he'd just got home. He was in Sydney when we got home so he spent the 18 months, '46 and half of '47 in New Britain and New Guinea

23:00 back loading stuff home so I'm bloody pleased we went.

How did you actually find out that the war was over?

Well it was over a couple of days before we knew because we were out on a job and we came back and someone said, "Oh, you can park on the beach because the war's over." and it just went round by word of mouth and everybody just sort of did nothing and the

23:30 band of course they, it was actually four days from the time of the war that we got word that the war had finished an American aircraft carrier pulled into Cape Wong [?] and took all the marrieds with children and then about a fortnight later a British aircraft carrier came and took all the married blokes without kids and the blokes that were engaged so in a matter of three weeks all the people that they reckoned should be home were home. All the singleys were left up there.

24:00 And then we, they put us on a boat and they took us to Morotai all those that were going into the occupation force and we were supposed to go to Japan in December but there was a strike and a fair bit of argument over who was going to control what in Japan and they put us back till, we went I think end of January '46.

What sort of things are they telling you about the expectations of what you're supposed to do in Japan?

24:30 Well we were supposed to firstly patrol over Japan and find out where the tunnels were and what the Japanese were doing and if they'd hid anything and all that sort of stuff and mainly ceremonial you know parade ground because the Brits were there and the Americans were there and all the countries and everybody had to be up to scratch so we had, that was the

25:00 hardest part of going to the occupation force. The first month we, well I'd never been on parade for two years you know.

How was your fitness considering you'd been on landing craft for...?

You keep yourself fit. You've got to. But we went to Morotai and we were on the parade ground eight hours a day, six hours, six days a week and up there it's about 110 in the water bag every day and they

25:30 expected you to whiten your webbing and you had to wash it in salt water and put powder on it and all sorts of silly looking things to try and do it properly and a lot of people got jack of it [were sick of it]. See again a lot of people joined up just to Japan to big note themselves I think. And they had a strike, they said that, they paraded to the general and said they wanted to go straightaway or go home.

So there were people actually joining up just to be part of the peacekeeping force?

Yes a lot of, well the people who went from the islands

26:00 really to see something instead of staying where they were to back load all the equipment but some went just because they wanted to see what it was like and of course they didn't want to do any hard work so when we were on the parade ground for so long they said, "No this is no good. We want to go home or go to Japan." So they sorted out all the ones that were giving trouble and sent them home.

26:30 **What did you think about these fellows who were causing trouble?**

Well they were big noters; they just wanted to go to Japan and come home and say, "I've been to Japan. I've done this and I've done that." and they didn't have any concept of the army really at all or what an occupation was about. And so they sent them home which was a godsend and the group that went were really keen on going and we had a very good reputation there in Japan and we arrived in

27:00 Japan in January, end of January I think, early February and you've great to realise we went from 115, 120 degrees heat to snow. The second day out before we landed in Kure in Japan it snowed and we'd

never seen snow before. And we were the typical Aussie you know, army greatcoat and so forth, hobnail boots and then it snowed all day, all night and the boat was cold.

27:30 And we arrived about six in the morning I think.

Did they give you any sort of protection from the cold?

No.

So what were you actually wearing?

Just like I'm wearing here but with the uniform and a greatcoat which is useless.

It must have been freezing?

It was. We got all, froze up all the back of our legs here from marching on cement and stuff but they fixed it up after we got pullovers and things. It was

28:00 quite good afterwards and all the barracks were steam heated anyway so.

All the what?

The barracks. The first barracks weren't. We got off the boat and in Japan, in Kure there was no bitumen roads it was all dirt roads and when it snows it gets, first snows it gets very soggy the first two inches of ground is all mud and here we are with all highly polished boots an everything. We get off and the band strikes up and we all march

28:30 up the main street of Kure.

The band strikes up?

Yeah and marches out up there and everybody's stood at the side of the road looking really sterling. They said, "Oh, this is a nice old place." Anyway we packed the wheel around the corner and go down another street about two hundred yards to the station and some young blokes in Japan must have woke up and they put loudspeakers all along the side of the road and they

29:00 got this record, 'You Are My Sunshine' from somewhere and they started it full bore. Went round this corner, the band's playing and all of a sudden this thing comes out, 'You are my sunshine...' and all the diggers started laughing, all the people started to laugh and they started to clap and it was just like being home and they marched us in and put us in a train and it stunk like mad and they took us down to an ammunition depot which, it's a big building, tin roof with

29:30 cement floor and they put the whole 1000 of us in there and it was bloody freezing. We grabbed 44 gallon drums from everywhere and filled them up with wood and burnt them and heated the place up and then they sent us to a barracks in, they called it the steel barracks and they were good, they were heated and they were good-o and we were there for about 18 months and we patrolled in Hiroshima for 12 months.

30:00 **Before we get to Hiroshima - what were you told about what the army expected you to do as part of being the forces in Japan?**

We were to be sent off in company groups to patrol all the villages and all the main cities and particularly Kure we had to patrol around there and find all the tunnels and they had tunnel everywhere and they'd be a kilometre long. One tunnel we found, it was full of motorcars, Mercedes motorcars, brand new ones

30:30 and miles of rolls of curtain material and it was very expensive. I sent some home and they reckoned it was about two pound for about a square foot or something but we just, you weren't allowed to take a lot of it but we just took enough of it, you see the sergeants, we had a room to ourselves, so we just got enough to carpet our room and put up curtains on the windows and things like, it was all free, and so we spent about

31:00 ten or eleven months doing that. They just sent us all say, they'd send one company out to Geraldton, and one up to Kalgoorlie and one up to Bunbury and one down to Albany and you had to go to the village and go and see the chief of police and the mayor and he'd put you up in a hotel and you had your cook and everything with you and then you had to patrol within 3000 metres with that point in the centre. So we got smart and we used to patrol by foot

31:30 all in the town, you see in a platoon there's three sections of ten men so you had to keep ten men on alert in case anything happened and the other two lots used to patrol around and you'd find out where all the beer halls are and where all the girls are and you know everything about the city and then you send another lot out further on pushbikes to find out if there's any tunnels and then we used to, if there's any horses

32:00 around there, grab them and ride them out 3000 metres and all around the hills and have a look around there but the people were, when you first went there, see the Americans were there before us and people don't realise that the first American occupation in Japan was all soldiers straight from America, they'd never been in action. So they didn't know what the Japs were like, they didn't know what

anybody was like and we took over from one lot in Hiroshima and they told the Japs that we were black, big,

32:30 eat babies on toast like nobody's business. So when we arrived we went for a route march, the whole thing was bad. Mum and the kids were inside looking out and of course you've got to realise that all the houses are paper so when we got leave we used to go along and punch holes in them with our finger and talk to the kids and we had piles of chewing gum and chocolate so we used to show them this and give it to them and it was only a matter of a week and as soon as you walk in the street the kids would rush out

33:00 'Chocolate and chewing gum!' and we were [speaks Japanese] I was a sergeant you see. [speaks Japanese] that's an Australian sergeant and you'd hear the kids saying '[speaks Japanese]!' and they'd all run out to get the chocolate and chewing gum so we were in like Flynn, but they sent all the girls from 12 years of age upwards up in the mountains till they found out what we were like. And the Americans used to go on leave with pistols and rifles and the CO said to us, "Go on leave as if you're in Australia."

33:30 He said, "Any trouble we'll fix it up." and we never had any trouble at all. We'd go in the beer halls and in the café and all the beer halls were run by women and it was a funny thing because women had no say at all up till then but they well they had the right idea, they were frightened that the soldier would get aggressive and you know in all the beer halls that I was in I never seen one fight because

34:00 a digger would be full and he's start mouthing off and old mama-san as we called them, they were about forty years of age would rush over and put her arms around him and take him over and sit him down, buy him another beer and get him something to eat, an egg omelette or something. And there was no men in the beer halls at all, all women and it proved dividends in the finish because there was no trouble at all. The police never even come in there.

That's surprising.

34:30 No, well seeing as they had these two or three mama-sans and they'd rush around and give them a cuddle and buy them a beer and of course most of the soldiers were pretty young so that smoothed them over.

Sounds very friendly.

Yeah. No trouble at all.

What were your expectations of the Japanese before you arrived in Japan?

Well fortunately we'd seen some, but you see back in Australia the only thing you could was horn - rimmed glasses

35:00 and bucked teeth and so forth and so on and it was different altogether. I mean we knew they were small and bar some of the people were big but most of them were small or average and we knew all about them. What their habits were like and how barbaric they were and see in Japan a married man would walk along or whatever and he'd buy something and she'd have to carry it and she'd have to walk five paces behind him.

35:30 And they'd only talk to them when they had to and of course when we went there we were talking to them all the time and then they, we were in Hiroshima and they started, the Hiroshima station was blown to pieces and they still had the train running, they fixed the lines up because the line was blown to pieces, they'd melted it. And there'd be 5000 people catching

36:00 the train and of course all the young ones would just push the women aside and the old blokes, they'd catch the train. So they decided they'd have a big democratic drive, teach people the decent way that women would sit down and they'd go first and all this sort of garbage so I got sent up to Hiroshima station, I'd been there before, and we got up there at 4 o'clock in the morning and we had to line them up;

36:30 old women, young women, old men then young fellows and there was about 5000 waiting to catch the train and boy, did they play up, so we ended up firing a few shots and locking about ten up because as a sergeant you could lock them up till further notice.

So young men were so violently against this...

Oh, particularly the Koreans, a lot of Koreans in Japan at that time and so anyway just locked them up. Called the police and locked them up and fired a few shots and straightened things out

37:00 and that was alright and then they were good. They used to line up and of course the old mama-sans they were terrified that their husbands would belt them for leaving them behind. The young girls didn't mind at all. They liked the attention. And then we found out that when they got in the train there was a bit of nonsense going on, an old man would go crook [become angry] so we used to put two or three diggers on each train and make the men get up and

37:30 let the women sit down but the trouble was the women would get up, the man would get up but the woman wouldn't sit down. She was terrified you see and if you touched her, lots of times they'd report

you. So you had to talk to them and manipulate them around to make them sit down and you'd then have to stop there for a while because the man would be there frothing at the mouth because he had to stand up. But after about a month it worked alright.

38:00 **Because that is just completely opposite to Australian culture.**

That's right yeah but of course that was good for us because the women thought we were marvellous. We were looking after them so anywhere we went we were number one and we never had any trouble at all and even when we left to go to Korea they put up a big banner on the side of the mountain about fifteen feet long and about two foot deep and we were known as 3 Battalion, 'Sun bootai' and they put up there in Japanese

38:30 'Sun bootai is going to Korea; war will be over in two weeks.' Wish it had of been. But still they reckoned we were marvellous. Yeah so we patrolled all around there and found out all the skiing places and recorded everything in our area and then we went back to doing training and doing guards and of course it all happens in the officers' mess

39:00 and if there's different countries they're all arguing about who was the best so they decided they would have a drill competition and the Pommy [English] guards were there and the Americans and the Indians and every bugger but we won anyway so we used to give them hell then and of course then every American general would come into our area wanted a guard of honour. He wanted to have a look at Australians and they'd go along and talk to everyone and go on but they couldn't understand, the Americans

39:30 couldn't understand that we were supposed to be so barbaric and we were so good, so disciplined.

It's kind of crazy that that rumour went around in the first place.

Well they didn't know you see. They'd never seen an Australian at all and of course when that proved that we weren't doing that it went very well for us. And bar for you know they have celebration days like we have Australia Day here and Anzac Day well they have different

40:00 days and 20,000 or 30,000 will get drunk on rice wine, Saki they call it, turns you mad and they'd all get together when they were full and they'd start chanting and they'll end up say 6 abreast and about 10,000 of them and they would chant from here to Perth and of course the police can't handle them so they just called up and they'd send a company about us on trucks.

40:30 We weren't allowed to get off the trucks but we had all our combat gear, weapons and everything and ammunition and if the police needed us we would have helped but we'd just sit in the truck and sleep you know and wait for something to happen, it might go on, it might start lunch time today and follow on today and tonight and tomorrow morning they'd start to sober up and they started to dribble off so we used to go home and we helped them with the elections.

41:00 The democratic process was, [General] MacArthur done a marvellous job in Japan and he started the democratic process straight away in '46.

Tape 4

00:36 **You were just going to discuss the election process ?**

They wanted to have a democratic election so they were afraid that the people would attack the electoral system depots they had so they had Australian interpreters and then they had so many people that were

01:00 detailed to go along and drive for the election or secure the election post and that took about three months or more. And it worked well, it went very well.

What was your role in that process?

I wasn't in that at all. I was back in the battalion as a platoon sergeant but they took so many from each unit. Some drivers, some interpreters, well the interpreters came from the interpreter unit but some of the drivers

01:30 went from our place and some of the soldiers as protection went on it and they just had three months holiday. That's all. Living in the best hotel.

On tour?

Yeah on tour.

So were you based at Hitachi your entire time?

Yeah, we were in Hitachi in '46 and part of '47 and mainly dealing with Hiroshima we were then.

- 02:00 And whilst, see it took about three to six months I suppose before any of the soldiers started to come back and when they started to come back they put all the soldiers that went were in China or Southeast Asia came back through Hiroshima. They put a depot there. The Yanks were operating it, a few were coming back, but what the Yanks used to do was they were supposed to strip them off,
- 02:30 fumigate them with DDT [pesticide] on their feet, their crotch, their armpits and their hair and then search their gear and if there was any gear that you wanted to take you took it, you know it belonged to a soldier, and instead of the Americans giving it back to them they used to take all their army gear and they had a hell of a big heap of it and then they just used to turn them out, some of the soldiers lived 600 mile away and when we took over in Hiroshima they used to call 'the Bongkuras' like these louts would run around pinching everything and
- 03:00 everybody was complaining so anyway we had the authority to send them anyway so what we used to do was 5000 would come in, line them up in big rows and you had blokes with knapsack sprays and strip them off and just walk along and have a look at them and spray them under the arms and everything and that, tip all their gear out and if there wasn't anything there that you wanted or that belonged to an ex-servicemen just have them pack it up
- 03:30 and we used to march them back to the train, sign the docket to say that they deliver these people and so they'd send them home. So that went over big with the soldiers and of course all these Bongkuras come back and said, "Can we go?" and we said, "Yeah, we'll put you on the train. It doesn't matter to us." So we cleared Hiroshima out of all these Bongkuras and of course the public reaction was great, we did everything to help them and
- 04:00 everything we did seemed to go over very well with them. They decided then that they'd start thinning the people out so they sent the Indian brigade, Indian division home first because they were a bit of trouble with VD [venereal disease] and all sorts of bloody things with women so they sent them home and they were at a place called Okayama and they sent us up, our battalion
- 04:30 up to Okayama to take over that area. See 66 Battalion had all the Kure, Hiroshima, Kure-Hiro area and 65 Battalion which Don was in, they went up to Fujiyama which was an air base or a navy base and we were up at Okayama to look after all the Indian set-up and the Poms had all down the south and we were there
- 05:00 '48, oh we were there for nearly a year I think and they started to send the battalions out then and 66 Battalion was the first one to come home and we came back '48 we came back to Hiro where they'd built the barrack for us, for 66 Battalion and we stayed in Hiro for the rest of the time
- 05:30 bar going to Tokyo for six weeks every six months and we did all our work out from there and we took over the Haramura training field training centre which is now occupied by the Japanese, I think they've got about 50,000 soldiers there now but all we did at Okayama was exactly the same as what we did at Kure, at Hitachi, patrol all over

06:00 the place and keep law and order.

If we could begin with Hitachi, could you describe the base?

The base? It was, see in Japan if you had a large factory like the fuel works you had to supply quarters for them and these were two storey buildings with a corridor down one side and all the rooms slept four people and they had built in cupboards

06:30 if you could call them cupboards down one end of the building but it would house four, we could get four stretchers in there with all their gear and the place was heated so at night you could walk around in your underclothes you know it was bloody good. And in the summer time it was seemed to be that way, it had all removable windows and on the inner wall so you could take them out and it was quite cool around the heat.

07:00 But they were quite good barracks and they had a big mess hall which was far too big for us because we only had 1000 and they were feeding about 5000 I think in the steel works so that was great and they had a big entertainment centre and they had just what we wanted, double storey headquarters which was full of offices and everything and it suited the battalion fine. And all the walkways were all covered over; all had shelters over the top so you could walk all over the battalion area and stop

07:30 in neither rain and snow. It was quite good.

What was your daily routine?

Daily routine was get up at six o'clock and breakfast at seven, have a barrack inspection and a parade at nine o'clock and then sent off on different duties. Whatever you had to do, some do guard at Hiroshima station, some would have to do, there were a lot, a company to do guard duty,

08:00 a company to do basic training and a company to do field training and then you rotated after a month.

Could you explore each of those separately?

Well the company that did all the guard duties, if the general came and you had to supply a guard of 100 well you supplied it. If there was escorts to escort prisoners anywhere you supplied it. If they

wanted extra staff up at Hiroshima or something you had to supply them and so you had to be ready with all

08:30 your gear all the time. It was pretty demanding that was because our blokes were just as silly as them. You know they wanted people escorted with white webbing and guns and all that sort of garbage all the time and in the basic training well you went right back to learn to be a soldier. You know they'd check your dress and check your stance and make sure your drill was correct and test you on weapon training and on all your weapon training

09:00 and then the other company that went up the bush we did all field tactics. Section attacks, platoon attacks, section patrolling, digging in for defensive positions, doing withdrawals so it kept the battalion balanced all the time.

Did you do a guard for the palace?

Yeah we were up there quite often. We used to go up there six weeks every six months I think it was. It was funny the first guard Don was on that I think but they

09:30 picked 100 from the three battalions and we went up by train, American train or Japanese train with American markings on it and we pulled in to the station, 24 or 26 stations in Tokyo's main station and we pulled into Station 22 I think it was and we got off, we were all dressed ready to go and as soon as the train pulled up it was all a big showcase you know.

10:00 The band filed off in single file and you had to go downstairs in a tunnel and come out the other end you see and when they got in the tunnel they formed up as they normally would, we marched off in single file and formed up in three ranks and marched out and outside the station was an area about a quarter acre I suppose which was for parking and that so we took that over and the RSM paraded us all there and the whole battalion in our company

10:30 and of course when we appeared there was I suppose there'd be oh, millions of Japs but the Yanks, they'd never seen us and they were screaming, "Where did you get that cowboy hat from?" you know and the RSM said, "If anybody opens their mouth you'll go to jail." so anyway we just marched out and done what we were told and he had a hell of a good voice on him and he was ripping and roaring. Anyway we had, we were supposed to march two mile to catch the buses to go to a place called Ebisu camp in Tokyo and

11:00 we started off and only went about 100 yards and the crowd was so bloody massive that it stopped us so we had to stand there and they got two companies of military police and cleared the area and no-one said a word, they marched us two miles, got us in the buses and went out to Ebisu camp and of course in the papers in the morning the Japanese papers, "Where did these cowboys come from and who they were?" and of course the Americans couldn't tell them because they didn't know and then

11:30 we were there a week I think and we had to do a guard change, there was eleven posts on the Emperor's palace. His palace is on an island and it's got a big moat around it about ten or fifteen metres wide and I don't know how deep it is but it goes right around and there's eleven bridges across and the Americans had a soldier on each one and so we had to mount guard and put one on each post.

12:00 And we marched two miles through Tokyo I think up to the Emperor's palace, or the Emperor's parade ground, no-one goes on there and we went in there and did a guard mount - yelling and screaming and going and everybody thought it was marvellous and then we mounted guard and we worked on a system where when you put a sentry at a place you don't just stand there, you give them a beat, you know you say, "Right, this is your post but you go five paces that way

12:30 and ten paces that way." And of course the RSM he was very good and he said, "No slackness, don't start talking to these Yanks or anything." and of course we mounted the sentries and they're marching up and down and wouldn't talk to the Yanks and they're standing there gobbling [talking] to everybody. They thought we were mad and of course it wasn't long before word got around, "These strange people are doing sentry duties." and we mounted at eleven o'clock I think and by two

13:00 o'clock - I was a guard sergeant - and you had to keep going round and hunting the people away because the digger couldn't say anything and you know American girls were going up and kissing him and they were mauling him all over and he daren't bloody move and so we had to send blokes around to keep them away but the Yanks thought we were mad. But it really brought the place down with the discipline as I said the American blokes their company commander said,

13:30 "I just can't understand," he said, "I've seen you blokes in World War II but how can you be so disciplined?" and I said, "Oh it's easy you know." It wasn't but. But yeah and of course there were so many officers and different outfits that you're supposed to salute them all so the RSM said, "Right, you'll march up and down for twenty minutes, you'll stand still for ten minutes and you'll stand to present." that's a salute that covers everybody from lieutenant to a general you see and of course all the

14:00 hierarchy thought we were very well disciplined as far as paying compliments to them and so forth so then they wanted us to go everywhere. They had, what did they call it? I can't think of the name of the house now. Some Brit name and it was all full of senior officers and there was, in the entrance of the building was about, oh as big as this room I suppose and the

- 14:30 door was there and they all walked down here and go upstairs you see so they said, "Well, could you put two sentries, one on each side of the corridor?" so you had to salute everybody, so we used to do march up and down for so long and stand still for so long and they'd say, 'Good morning,' and then you'd stand there and look at them you know - you weren't allowed to talk and they thought, the Americans thought it was great having these people here and then every time
- 15:00 MacArthur had a formal function he'd asked for an Australian sergeant and six soldiers and he used to have it at the Marinichi Hotel with is a great big flash bloody place, lights everywhere and you had to line up, he'd drive along the side of the road and between the road and the building you'd put the soldiers on either side and dressed in white webbing and all this, slouch hats were the thing that drew everything
- 15:30 and we had a red sash on and all that and you'd have to open the door and salute MacArthur and he'd talk to all the diggers and he'd talk to us under the arch and go upstairs and you'd have to stay there for probably an hour until all his official guests arrive and he'd take you upstairs to a room and you could drink booze and eat tucker till midnight so it was a good lurk but everywhere they wanted us to go then they said, "Alright, seeing as you're in Tokyo,
- 16:00 we want you to guard all the embassies." so every morning we'd mount 135 sentries, 135 soldiers which is a whole company and 33 would do the Emperor's palace and the others would go to all the embassies and delegations around the place and very, we were very popular. Blokes behaved themselves very well and they used to, if there was a do at the certain embassy and blokes had been there
- 16:30 three or four times they'd invite them out. Diggers thought it was great.

Sounds very civilised.

Yeah.

Did you get the opportunity to talk to MacArthur?

Yeah, see every year the generals sort of interchanged messages, formal messages you know? On, I think it's Thanksgiving Day, 4th of July General Robinson

- 17:00 used to have an official message for him and I got the job once to get a tailor-made set of clothes and you get dressed up in your white webbing and red sash and everything and you, I went to MacArthur's headquarters in Tokyo and he's got a big revolving door, four sentries are on it and you sign your name at each sentry as the revolving door goes around and you go upstairs, and the corridor would be about fifteen metres long
- 17:30 and I think he had eleven sentries standing on either side of the thing and they all stand to attention as you march on because they don't know who the hell you are and you go in and his office had in the front of it he's got a fairly big office and he had a lieutenant colonel and a colonel in there in their link roles and get his cigars and so forth and he's behind a coloured glass thing in his office at the back and he knows you're coming and
- 18:00 in the office there's a guide for you after you see MacArthur so the guide jumps up and says, "I'm so and so and so and so, I'm your guide for the time you're here." because you're there about a week and then he takes you in to MacArthur and it's quite interesting. He's a fairly big bloke but he's got corn cob pipes all over the place, and he's as easy to talk to as anything you know. Because he knows why
- 18:30 you're there. And then he just says to the guide, "Well, look after him." and then they had a parade through Tokyo and you go and stand with MacArthur on the parade as the second senior person on the parade and you present him, on that day you present him with the message and you read a message over the microphone to all the peasants that are around the place.

Can I ask you what you talked about with MacArthur?

- 19:00 Yeah, he tells you all about Australia, "I've been to Australia, where do you come from?" "Western Australia." "Yeah, no I didn't get over there." And, "Were you in New Guinea?" and you know, just general conversation. It only goes for about a minute you know because the official thing is on the parade, it's just that he gets introduced to you and he also tells your aide, the bloke that's guiding you, "Ask him what he wants." and everything that you want he'll give you. The bloke said to me,
- 19:30 "We'll go into PX [canteen] today - do you want anything?" and I said, "I wouldn't mind that radio." and when I left they presented it to me. So you get a present and they do the same thing, oh and twice I went up to Hikiro which is right up the north of Korea to the airborne. No-one wanted to go and I'd been before so I wanted to go so I stayed up there about eight days. They give you a job judging competitions and just, you walk around with the general and
- 20:00 if he's got to do something you get a job too but it's, I found it very good, I enjoyed it. But you've got to be on the ball all the time that's all.

So you caught him in a candid moment unlike all the newsreel footage we see of him?

No, well every time I seen MacArthur, I've seen him two or three times and he's always been very, he knows all about Australia and he knows a fair bit about Australians so he's very easy to talk to.

20:30 He just talks back with normal conversation, not like drinking beer or chasing sheilas [women] or anything like that but I mean where he's been and what he's been and how he likes the Australians and, "I'll see you over there." and I saw him in Korea a couple of times and he'd tell you he thought, he reckoned in World War II that the Marines were the best soldiers in the world but he said after he had something to do with them in Korea

21:00 he said he thought he'd take the Australians first before he'd take the Marines so that was a hell of a good compliment he made.

That's a beauty. While we're in Japan, when and why did the Aussies take over the depot where the Japanese soldiers were returning?

Because that was in our area. See you get allotted certain areas, say we had Hiroshima which was like Perth and

21:30 attached to that is probably Wanneroo and Mandurah and the station for Hiroshima was say at, well much like say Fremantle so that was central for them to form a depot there, make a... there was an area there, an old army camp in which they sort of cleaned out so it could hold a couple of thousand soldiers, not to live there

22:00 just a big open space that you could strip them down and check them and everybody had to be checked and because we took over Hiroshima area that was in our responsibility.

It sounds like you did a responsible job too.

Well we understood what's, we used to talk about it. Say if they'd have taken our country we'd have wanted to go home so we got the authority to send them home and if someone was playing up

22:30 see if we caught a bloke thieving or something I'd just call the police and if you were a sergeant you could lock them up and yeah, the police would contact us after a couple of weeks and say, "Do you want to keep this bloke locked up or let him out?" or if we wanted to try him and we'd say, "How is he?" and they'd say, "Oh, I think he's learned his lesson. Let him out." So you know, it was just using your brain sort of matter.

What were the defeated Japanese soldiers like?

They never said anything. I think

23:00 because we treated them so well when we demobbed [demobilised] them if you like and put them in the trains and sent them home, they were so pleased to be home that they thought we were pretty good and another story I was going to tell you - when we were in New Guinea my mate was in charge of the POW [prisoner of war] camp and I went up to see him to tell him I was going to Morotai and we had a couple of beers and talking round and there was a Jap walking round, sergeant he were,

23:30 and anyway when we came out he said in good English; "Are you going to Japan soon?" and I said, "Yes I am." he said, "My mother hasn't heard from me for four years," he said, "If I write a letter will you take it and post it in Japan?" and I said yeah. After a while I thought, 'Bugger it,' you know so anyway he wrote the letter and I took it and we were in Japan about a month I think and I got to know a few policemen because we'd been at Hiroshima station and she lived in Hiroshima and I said to this policeman, "Do you know where this place is?"

24:00 and he said, "Yeah," he said, "I'll take you there." and I said, "Well, make it next Sunday." so my mate and I went out and it was terrible embarrassing, as soon as he announced - he went and knocked on the door and said, "There's an Australian here and he's seen your son and he's got a letter from him." and she immediately chucked a willy you know, [became very upset] 'Boahhhhh!' as they do screaming and going on, threw herself on the floor, some other bloke rushed out and said one of this fellow's

24:30 Australian mates was there and the whole village turned out and they were all crying and old mama-san got up off the floor and she hung off me for bloody about an hour and then they supplied booze and tucker [alcohol and food] and we drank and celebrated all day and she used to say, "Oh please come back, please come back." We only came back a couple of times though but she hadn't heard from him in four years and you know she, the whole village just about went mad when they

25:00 found he was still alive and he looked like coming home but and people used to say, "Oh, you're bloody mad taking that letter." and I said, "Well, what's the difference? They're finished. We're going over now. What can happen?"

What impression did that make on you?

Well, mothers are all the same anywhere, regardless of if they are Australian, Brits or Japs or what the hell they are. They're the poor buggers that are suffering you know. And she hadn't heard from him in four years and

25:30 as far as she was concerned I was the god given son and she used to tell the copper, "He's number one fellow this. Come here any time." but as the diggers used to say, mothers are all the same all over the place you know. They just love their sons whether they're good or bad. What are you going to do about it?

Sounds like your impressions of the Japs must have changed quite a bit when you were in the occupational forces?

Well the Japs are

- 26:00 very industrial, industrious and MacArthur set them right, he got all the people from America, all the business people and all that and set them right and he had the troops there if anything happened to quell anything so they weren't mad, they thought, 'Well, this won't be too bad, we'll try it,' and it worked out very well and they got very well treated and they got a lot of employment from the, see we employed hundreds
- 26:30 of the Japanese like there was the stewardesses in the sergeants' and the officers' messes, there were house-girls in the sergeants' mess, house girls or house boys in the officers' mess and the sergeants' mess, there was a house girl or a house boy to every two sergeants and a house girl to every one officer so they got a lot of employment, the young people got a lot of employment and of course later
- 27:00 on like all young people they wanted to learn English so in 12 months all the people that we had working for us could speak English. All the young ones and they loved it, they could speak English, they could speak Japanese and they could go anywhere. And we just treated them like normal family here at home, you know and the house girl we had, she was very good and my sister used to work for Easy Walkings so I wrote to her and said, "Send me up a pair of
- 27:30 white shoes for her." and she thought it was bloody great. You'd have thought I gave her a thousand bucks when I gave her a pair of shoes and when could go out in the beer halls and get drunk and regard them, any of the cafes and they never give any crook tucker, we always got good tucker and they treated us very well and we sort of responded to that. And we didn't go,
- 28:00 oh we had one case of a rape when we were there and they jailed him for life so that got rid of that and there were no more.

Was there much fraternisation with the local Japanese girls?

Well there was a non-fraternisation ban but all it did was teach the infantry soldiers in good field craft. They used to get in and get out and not be seen. There was a lot of fraternisation but I mean it was done as I say the military police would pick you up

- 28:30 if they caught you but the soldiers with field craft, they were too bloody smart for that you know and of course we had bed checks at twelve o'clock every midnight and if you weren't there you were charged so there was no sort of skulduggery after midnight sort if thing.

Not after dark at least.

Well after dark at night or midnight was alright but because we had the bed checks it kept everybody under control.

29:00 What about the prostitution?

Well Japan was always noted for prostitution. There's prostitution and geisha girls, not the geisha girls, there's no sex at all with geisha girls, they are highly trained entertainers, they can play those semi-semis and they know everything. They can talk about anything and their trade is to go through all the tea routines and all that and for entertaining

- 29:30 senior Japanese people that just talk rubbish to one another and the sheilas there playing this semi-semi and giving him tea and whiskey and whatever he wants, they go over well. But there's no fraternisation with them. There is also the same as we've got here roughly, that you've got the local prostitution and probably there was a little bit more I suppose when we first got there but when
- 30:00 that settled down and the blokes started going steady with the one girl there was, at one stage we did have a licensed brothel, the battalion did and when I say licensed it was okay with the police and we had our doctor check the girls and also we had a medic there with
- 30:30 all the prophylactics that you could have or use and it did very well but some smart bugger burned it down after about three months so that finished that.

I think in one of the earlier interviews I did I heard that a female journalist came up there, a do-gooder?

Yeah from Pix [Magazine] and she was a TCH [?] and she thought everybody should fall all over her because there was only

- 31:00 white women in Japan then, not when we first went there, I think it was '47 she came over and she went around all the units and she was a pain in the butt to everybody so she came home and she wrote up in the Pix she wrote; 'Every soldier in Japan had VD, they should be quarantined for six months before they're allowed to come home'. Anyway there was a hell of a kerfuffle [fuss] and she got the sack from Pix
- 31:30 and they didn't change the system. But oh yeah she was a shocker. As far as we were concerned anyway.

During another interview I heard a story about some Yankee guards shooting the Emperor's ducks.

No, New Zealanders.

Was it?

They were on the moat. See the New Zealanders used to take over from us

32:00 and the moat, there's a lot of ducks on the moat because people used to feed them and the people used to, Japs used to go and feed the ducks hoping they'd see the Emperor well they'd never see him. And these New Zealanders they'd do anything anyway, I'd just taken our sentries off, it was about two o'clock in the morning and the New Zealanders were on and anyway all of a sudden there was bloody sirens going everywhere and people are going

32:30 and it come through that someone had shot an Emperor's duck and a New Zealander shot it but he'd cleaned his weapon up and went out patrolling and oh, they turned out about ten to fifteen thousand police and soldiers but they never found out who shot him. But it was the old Kiwi [New Zealander], he knew who shot him and the Yanks knew that the, the Yanks said the Kiwi, I don't know why he said the Yank, the Yank never said, he said he never heard a shot at all.

33:00 Probably the Kiwi said I'll shoot you if you....

How did the different nationalities get along?

Well the reason we used to get on well until we went to Tokyo. See in the Commonwealth sector we never allowed girls in the sergeants' mess or the officers' mess or into the diggers' mess like to dance and so forth.

33:30 In Tokyo where most of the Americans were stationed they could take their girlfriend in for lunch in the mess hall or they'd have a dance in the battalion and they'd take them in there and of course the thing was that the Americans weren't soldiering much at all in Japan, they were just there on show spending money and they had piles of it. And of course when we went there they used to take us down to the beer halls and throw

34:00 their money around like a man with no arms but sometimes they'd get on your goat and you'd get rid of them but... and in the Ginza beer hall particularly when, it wasn't so bad until we went to Korea and of course the Yanks used to bring up, 'I'm going to Korea,' and we used to say, 'Well we've bloody been,' you know and of course they had the 45th Commander

34:30 I think it was, Pom, they had him at Ebisu in Tokyo and they used to get up every morning at four o'clock and do unarmed combat and physical training from four till six and then they had the rest of the day off. Well all the Poms, officers and all only got 36 shillings a fortnight which doesn't go very far and they used to go into the big Ginza beer hall that would hold about 3000 people I suppose and

35:00 you get blameys [a glass], you know a bottle cut off about that big. That's all you could buy and of course they'd go in and buy one round and they'd be broke where the Yanks were throwing money around like a man with no arms and we went in there once with them and there was 8 of us Australians and about 6 of these 45th Commando blokes, and one bloke's a little fellow. Anyway we went in there and we were drinking away under way and we lent them some money and next to us was a table of about 20 Americans

35:30 throwing beer all around the place, they were going to Korea, the hadn't been to Korea you see and anyway this little digger, this little Pommy bloke he had a grenade, have you seen a grenade?

Not in real life

Well it's about like your fist and it's got a base plate you screw out and you put a det [detonator] up in it. Anyway he didn't have the det but what he did was he let them all fill up with their blameys then he put a cigarette

36:00 butt up in the grenade and it smoked and he walked over and he just put it on the table and he said, "Share that amongst you." and they were in the rafters in about 30 seconds and the Poms rushed over and drank all their beer and there was a hell of a fight. And they called the military police and anyway there was a bundle of us so we said to the copper, "Right-o, mind your business." so one bloke gave a lot of cheek [insults], one Pommy rushed outside and took the hubcaps off the jeep which

36:30 has got 'military police' on it and he tied a boot lace in it and he hung it on, he got the tallest bloke there, about six foot six and he made him kneel up on the table in the beer hall and he put this thing over his head and he said, "I want you to recite after me; 'I shall not arrest British Commonwealth soldiers' in front of these 3000 bloody people." It caused a hell of a fuss then the riot company which is about 200 strong of fighting soldiers

37:00 and of course they rang them up and they come and luckily they were ex-wounded most of them 25th Division which we'd been attached to and I knew the major. He said, "What's going on?" and I said, "Oh, just the Poms having a bit of fun." and so he sat and had a drink and went off. But yeah, it caused a bit of concern for a while.

Did you have a few fights yourself?

Oh yeah I'd give a hand now and then you know.

What was word on the street?

- 37:30 Oh no, you know they were just spontaneous fights, there were no... not like there was in Brisbane. In Brisbane during the war they ganged up and it looked very bad there for a while in I think '44, '43 or '44. They shot a few Americans. An American belted a bloke up from one of the divisions that had just come home. Anyway
- 38:00 one thing led to another and the one of the battalions from the division stomped into Brisbane with Brens and rifles and everything ready for combat and if an American had poked his head out they would have shot him. But they didn't, they kept them quiet and they sent the division down to Sydney and sent the Brisbane Americans up to Rockhampton somewhere to get rid of them, but it looked very bad for a while. But none of that
- 38:30 in Japan. It was just you know, because we were only there for six weeks. There was bits of, what used to cause it like they had hundreds and hundreds of provosts and military police in Tokyo and of course they took over different beer halls and all the girls that worked in the beer halls were their girlfriends you see and when they turned them into dance beer halls you'd go in there and you had to buy a ticket you see and every
- 39:00 time you dance with a girl you had to give her a ticket and of course some of the blokes used to get a bit familiar and fresh with the sheilas and of course 'snowdrop' we called them, they'd come over and cap you on the shoulder and say, 'That's my girl' and he'd whiz in - bom!- and knock him over and of course then it'd start a bit of trouble.

What about the black market?

Oh the black market was always on. The thing was that the Americans,

- 39:30 when we went to Japan all the families had piles of money but they had nothing, they were starving and we used to get like two kilos of sugar but it was cocoa with sugar and milk in it so you just had to put a couple of spoonfuls in a mug of hot water and you had a mug of cocoa and of course you see the starving kids and Australian soldiers were suckers for kids. So they'd go around and a bloke would say, "Jeez there's a family up at such and such. She's got four kids and the poor little buggers are starving." so some
- 40:00 bloke would say, "Oh give her this bloody packet of cocoa." you know. And of course then they, we found out they had plenty of money and when we first went to Japan we had, I had 17 sets of green clothes and they changed it from green to khaki so they were useless and one of the Japs working there he said to me, "Oh I'll give you two pounds for them." so he give me
- 40:30 two quid. And of course word goes round so I ended up selling the lot and we were buying beer for a penny ha'penny which is about half a cent now for a 750ml bottle of beer, we were paying sixpence for a packet of cigarettes and one and tuppence in those days for a two ounce packet, a tin of Log Cabin tobacco
- 41:00 with a packet of cigarette papers. Now if you brought that for one and tuppence you could sell it for three quid so you could drink for a fortnight. So that's how it worked.

You were on easy street?

No worries at all. People, there was no, in the infantry there was no thieving to solve. In some of the other places, in the hospital there was a bit of it for a while till they stomped it out but see the discipline was so strong in the

- 41:30 battalions that no-one was game to branch out to pinch stuff and sell it but it was okay to sell your own gear.

Free enterprise.

Yeah well you just... and of course the brewery, the Asahi brewery was in our area at Kitachi and as long as you had white webbing and a red sash on they knew who you were, they knew you were a 'gunzo'. So you could walk in there

- 42:00 and march in and say 'Good morning and they had a big book of reparations in it and there was a bloke...

Tape 5

- 00:33 **I wanted to get your impressions of Hiroshima when you first got there...**

Hiroshima was burnt, was flat. The only things that were still standing were a few bricks as you've got to realise all the houses are built out of bamboo and paper so they dropped it in the right place, it was just - poof! And in Hiroshima it's all reclaimed land

- 01:00 and there's a big range of mountains that run from the sea right around, it's about two mile back from the beach and it runs down behind Kitachi so they dropped it right up in the nook where it comes out to the sea so the blast had to go down. I spoke to a priest that was up on the mountain and he said that he saw the whole thing. But he said all it did was it got very hot. But he said it was just a flash and of course it
- 01:30 was, just with the wind, with the blast and everything, went through houses and the paper and everything and it was just a hell of a mess. To give you an idea they dropped the bomb on a little island and about 300 yards away was the cement railway bridge with a two foot awning on the side. It snapped that clean off, the awning. It disappeared and it stretched the railway lines from here to that road out there where you turned off. Never broke them, just in a big circle.
- 02:00 Some of the railway was about that thick by the time it fell down. Just across the river from it, there was a big building with an inch, or half inch bars in the windows and the heat was so strong that whatever was the weakest point of that bar broke it, some were broken off down, some were broken in half and they were bent dead straight the way that the flash went. No one could have ever bent it as neat.
- 02:30 Sitting down on the steps in front of that building was a bloke and the imprint of the cheeks of his behind is about a quarter of an inch in the one thing and where he had his feet the same thing, complete imprint of the cheeks of his bottom and his two feet. Down to Hiroshima station which would be about two miles from where they dropped the bomb there was a vault belonged to a bank. The walls were about
- 03:00 two foot, two foot six thick and it was a room about 12 by 12 or 10 by 10 and it cut it off level by the ground and pushed it back one foot. So you can imagine the force that hit it. So the people never knew what hit them. Now this is again the Japanese stupidity, the planes flew over and dropped leaflets and told them exactly the time that they were going to drop the bomb.
- 03:30 Anybody that was caught picking up a pamphlet was shot. So consequently very few people knew. Not even in the army, there was a division of soldiers just away from Hiroshima, they were in Hiroshima just about a mile away from Hiroshima station and they were on parade when it dropped and it killed every one of them. They never seen any more of them. They just went away in dust. So it was the stupidity of the Japanese military that so many people got killed. But I suppose
- 04:00 you know they didn't want to let on that they were frightened. So it was terrible to see and after seeing phosphorus and stuff burn in action, a bloke come to me once and his face was just dripping away because he'd been burnt with phosphorus, well that's how it was with them. They were cooked so much that when they moved the meat was falling off the bone. And of course they had very little
- 04:30 back up or medical or anything because it was all burnt. The Americans come to the party afterwards and took most of the people over there and fixed them up. It was devastating to see and of course the thing was that they're going on now about cancer in soldiers but no-one ever said anything to us about radiation. You know they said, "You're going to Hiroshima." "Okay." So we went to Hiroshima. We were camped there, we ate the food that they cooked there, we drank their beer
- 05:00 and you know, but now there'd be hell to pay. You wouldn't be able to go there for years and years but we were there six months after it was dropped. But the whole place was devastated. And well, as I said, they dropped it in the right place; the others didn't do so much damage because they weren't dropped in the right place.

Must have been a bit of a shortage of food for the locals?

They were starving. They had piles of money but they

- 05:30 were starving. You know there was no milk for the kids and there was no, there was a bit of fruit but they had plenty of rice. And of course they subsidised their meals, well, a lot of the fishing was bugged up through dropping the bombs and so forth and they used to fish in the paddy fields and catch those little fish and they'd cook them and eat them with their rice and of course the (war... UNCLEAR) reckon we're mad because we go to a Chinese place and we order all meals
- 06:00 and the last thing we order is rice whereas they order rice and they order a little dish with each one that was cheap. So that's the way they work in Japan as well. But yeah that's why they'd buy anything off us. Any coffee or tea or anything for the kids but we used to get a lot of chocolate and chewing gum and we used to give it to the kids. You know, break it all up and take it over and little kids as soon as
- 06:30 they learned to walk they could say, 'Chewing gum,' and 'chocolate'. And it made us very popular with the kids you know.

Before we continue I'm going to move your mike. Was there any sort of clearing or rebuilding in Hiroshima from the peacekeeping forces?

No. Engineers cleared a lot of it but

- 07:00 Japanese see they've got, there's millions of them and once the occupation force gave them the go ahead and helped them organise the construction of the place it went up in no time and they were very pleased with it. All the work that we had done in the camps had to be done by Japanese construction people under the supervision of the engineer units that we had. And they'd show them what they wanted
- 07:30 done and inspect it and pay them and they helped the Japanese exactly as the Japanese wanted a street cleared or an old building knocked down or something, the engineers would take a bulldozer out and they'd do it. And do it for nothing and helped them that way but not physically building places. They helped them with the know-how, that's all and they responded very well.

What about social

08:00 occasions? Were there big social gatherings?

With the Japanese? No, what used to happen was they had what they called a sukiyaki party and if a building contractor got a contract to say build or renovate the sergeants' mess or something when he finished he might invite say half a dozen sergeants up to his place which were allowed to go and he put on this party and what they do is they have a

- 08:30 what they call a Hibachi. It's an earthen pot like a big pot plant you'd get and they'd put burnt straw in the bottom for about six inches deep and then they get two chunks of coal about that big and they put it in there and they put the thing on top and cook it that way. And they've got a big flat bowl, basin about that big round and about two inches high and in the middle they chopped the meat up into little squares and they put that on
- 09:00 first and that liquid runs out of the meat and they put sections in, they put eggs in, they put cabbage in, and carrots and all the veggies in it and they cook it and it's a marvellous thing. Really good. And they have that in the centre of the room and all around they have cushions on which you sit on and to each person you've got a girl that looks after you to serve you drinks and to wipe your brow and to get he tucker for you. All you've got to do is drink
- 09:30 and eat and go to sleep. And that goes on for a couple of hours and you do, you just lay down and have a sleep on the floor. And you know that's the only thing, bar from we used to have a lot of functions in the sergeants' mess, you know playing darts and games nights and things like that but we got, the nurses used to love coming over to the mess but they had an old matron, she was a bit of an old bat and we had in a plaque up at the end of the sergeants' mess with different
- 10:00 things on it and underneath it we had 'Nil bastardo carborundum' - 'Don't let the bastards grind you down' and she objected to that. She said she wouldn't allow her girls to come there if we're going to have this thing there and the RSM [regimental sergeant major] said, "Well your girls won't come because that's staying there." We didn't see them anymore which was stupid because the girls were screaming like mad, they just wanted to go for the company that's all. So it was left to us ourselves to
- 10:30 entertain ourselves and of course when we went to Tokyo there were beer halls and picture theatres to go to which was alright.

What did you think of Tokyo?

Tokyo's like Sydney. Big, fast town you know but there's bundles of roads in it but of course it was spoilt by the Americans with money. They had piles of money and I mean even they had a WAAC battalion there, a WAAC [Women's American Army Corps] battalion

- 11:00 a battalion of girls and they were camped in a hotel in Tokyo and the ground floor was their mess hall and entertainment, beer hall and beautiful place, beautiful hotel. And they'd begining you to come and, because they had the money, they'd begining you to come and have a drink with them and you couldn't pay, the law was that if you went with them in there they paid for everything and often in pay week when we were broke we used to go down there and
- 11:30 they'd take you in and you'd drink booze and have food and dance and play up like buggery but they had piles of money. Same as the blokes did so didn't worry us. But that spoilt Tokyo because everything revolved around what the Americans did, spoilt the Japanese I think. But MacArthur as far as the little bloke was concerned but the big business bloke; MacArthur had him under control all the time.

12:00 So you think the Americans spoilt the culture of the Japanese?

To a certain degree. They started off very well but then of course the local Yanks, everything revolved around women and booze mainly and money and they had, the culture didn't fit in too well at all. And they did silly things like there was a lot of Japanese interned in America and they of course had children and by the time the war finished and

- 12:30 so forth some of them had American fathers and so forth and they called them 'Niseis' - they were half Japanese, half Americans and they were mainly girls - beautiful looking girls, about seventeen and they sent about 400 of them back to Japan. They couldn't speak Japanese and they didn't want to speak Japanese, they reckoned they were English, like American and at one stage we had to guard them.

- 13:00 They put them in, the girls had the top three floors and the American officers had the bottom two and they sent us in there for a week to guard them and stop the blokes going up into their rooms and annoying them. And then they'd got the right idea, the Americans employed them all but it was stupid sending them back in the first place. The Americans should have worked it out, employed them and then sent them back you know but they do some silly things but it all revolves around
- 13:30 money and what goes with it.
- So how long in total were you in Japan?**
- Four and a half years.
- Which is quite some time.**
- Yeah. Good. Because we had, an infantry soldier goes from sleeping on the floor to an inner sprung mattress, sheets, pillow slips, carpet on the floor and a house girl to look after you. No washing to do and I mean we used to travel around a fair bit and you'd teach your house girl to, we had a metal foot locker like a case and
- 14:00 you'd say to her, "This is how you pack my trunk." - only got to show them once and every time you say, "I'm going to Tokyo." and it's packed the same way - they're marvellous, marvellous servants you know. And you know we were living it up, we didn't want to go home.
- So how did you come home?**
- Well I went to Korea.
- So you didn't actually go back to Australia before you went to Korea?**
- I came home in all my service I was on leave in '42, come home on leave in '44
- 14:30 '47 and '51. So leave wasn't a big thing. It was a privilege. You know, once you were told you were going home it was good stuff.
- What did you do when you had the opportunity to go home?**
- I went home straight away. As soon as possible and yeah it was good to get into civvy clothes you know and relax but when you come home you've got to
- 15:00 after a couple of days you've got to get away. You've got to get back with the mob you know, you get home and like I came home on Saturday, that's alright, Saturday and Sunday all the folks were there, Monday Mum and Dad were the only ones there. And you know Mum's got work to do and Dad wants to do something else so you think, 'Well, I'll put up with it for a couple of days.' but then you sort of go from, I don't know, busy life to total relaxation which is
- 15:30 no good to me anyway, so I used to say to them, "Alright, I'm going away for a couple of days to go into town." and you gradually wound down after a couple of days and say three or four days and then you're alright.
- So hard to wind down?**
- It is yeah because you're used to, not used to sitting around watching, listening to the radio and reading the papers and all that sort of garbage. That's by the board. Yeah but
- 16:00 when you go back to the battalion it's like going home. Because you know everybody and everybody's been on leave and so forth and so on and it's very good, very relaxing.
- So how did you actually get posted to Korea? What happened?**
- Well we knew more about the war, see it started really in May of '50 and as it's just across the river and all the rest we knew more about what was going on and
- 16:30 when it was likely to start and so forth and as we were there we could, the talk that was going through Japan and from MacArthur we knew MacArthur was going to be the commander because he was the senior bloke there and we were well in with him and he'd take us so contrary to what other people said, we started training early. We kept up the system of one company doing ceremonial, one doing basic training
- 17:00 and one up at Haramura doing field training so we were well ready as a company to go into the battalion set up to go to Korea and when they warned us to go to Korea we had about six weeks I think, and we trained very, very hard. The training area was twenty-one and three quarter miles away. We used to get up at about four o'clock on Monday morning and have a cup of tea and a couple of rounds
- 17:30 of toast or something and march twenty miles in five hours and they'd give us breakfast and we'd train all day, all night, all day, all the next night and then we'd have a , you learnt to cat nap, you know sleep whenever you can and you used to go on till Wednesday night and on Thursday morning we'd do what they called a withdrawal, that's another tactical situation back to a certain spot and we used to get back there by about four o'clock on Thursday afternoon and

- 18:00 at five o'clock they'd bring up the kitchen with tucker, give us a great feed and say, "Right-o, we'll see you back at Hiro." so we'd march another twenty-two mile back to Hiro, get back there at about 11 o'clock at night, clean all our weapons and get everything ready for the next week and then we'd go to sleep and go to bed and you'd have Friday, Saturday and Sunday off. And anybody that did anything wrong had to do the duties. As long as you kept your nose
- 18:30 clean you got the time off so this happened for about a month and I mean you get fit marching around.
- That's gruelling.**
- And when we went to Korea we were as fit as mallee bulls, fit as anybody has ever been over there before and they warned us to go and they changed the CO because the CO we had was no good and they got Colonel Greene who was an ex-7/11th commander in New Guinea
- 19:00 and he was very good and he was just what we wanted. We had a very tough company commander named Dennison and when he said jump everybody jumped and everybody did everything right. Everything was done by time. And then of course when Greene came he was very articulate, the same and we got on very well and then on the 28th of September they put us on a boat and away we went. 27th.
- 19:30 **What were you briefed about conditions in Korea?**
- Nothing. We were going to Korea, we had the normal gear, the old uniform and greatcoat and we were going to war, that's all. And everybody was pleased as punch. And strange as it may seem, because we were regular army we had to volunteer to go and they had a battalion parade in which we had an old RSM he, I don't know, we reckoned he was 65
- 20:00 when he went to Japan, when he was fit. And he wanted to go to Korea but General Robinson said that he wouldn't go so Robbie came out and read a note out that said, "RSM Harward is of valuable material and he will not go to Korea. I will send him over to visit you." So we got another RSM and he was a rabbit, but the CO was marvellous and we had the parade and they said, "All those that volunteer to go to Korea when I tell you take a pace forward." and of course all the diggers said to me,
- 20:30 "Are you going?" and I said, "No, I'm not going." When they said step forward I stepped forward and you should have heard them, so anyway they all went. We had two sets of twins with their mothers, one in our company, one in another company and their mothers said to them that they couldn't go together because the Americans had lost five of the one family during World War II and Wiggs family from up Kalamunda, they lost four out of their five sons in one morning because they were all together in the Middle East.
- 21:00 So there was a rule they couldn't go without their mother's permission, so the CO came along and I said, "These are twins, they can't go unless they get permission from their mother." so he took them in and he rang their mother and told her the situation and she said, "Well - naturally - can you make sure they're not killed?" and he said, "No I can't. But," he said, "I can keep them apart so that they don't get, don't go mad when they see the other one killed." So they both made it,
- 21:30 she agreed to let them go. And one got wounded, that's all luckily but they kept them apart all the time. If one was in action the other one wasn't so, but that was the only drawback we had and then...
- Was there the same kind of rule for brothers?**
- Yeah. Any close family. See during World War II if I was the eldest and my four brothers joined up I could claim them. They could all come to my unit and that's what happened to Wigg's brothers 'cause I knew
- 22:00 them, I used to knock around with them and the brother claimed the lot of them and one bloke got killed in Bardia I think it was and within two hours four of them were dead because they were going to beat the German Army themselves, stupid. But anyway, so we got that out of the thing and then we sailed on the night of the 27th I think it was, and we arrived in Korea the morning of the, the afternoon of the 28th, about two o'clock.
- 22:30 And of course the Yanks were there playing hoop dee doo on a band and the Koreans were there to give the CO a bouquet and all this sort of thing and then we marched straight off the ship, marched up about a mile I think it was to Pusan station, got on the train and American pilot come along and he said, "Put all the windows down and if you can't put them down break them, because the snipers will shoot them as you're going along." and all this crap
- 23:00 and of course all the diggers are looking around saying, "Cripes! We're in a strange country and we're in a train!" you know. Anyway, the train took off about half past six I think and at eleven o'clock at night it pulled up and we were up the front. And we marched through part of the area and back into an area, a safe area and we stayed there that night. And there were so many soldiers on the
- 23:30 ground that you couldn't move, you had a certain time to move. Our time to move was from nine o'clock to quarter to ten and other than that you had to stop where you were. We were living; everybody was sitting as close together as you and I are, closer. The artillery were, the diggers were sometimes when the tide was in were knee deep in water because there was no room for the guns anywhere so they

pushed them all back into a tight perimeter and then MacArthur landed

24:00 the Marines at Inchon behind the lines and then they attacked out of Pusan place and of course the Koreans went everywhere. They ran up thousands of them and we were sent out, they called them shake down exercises you know when you go to an area so they sent us out around Taigoo and...

Sorry is this the same night?

No, about three days later.

24:30 To see if there was any prisoners and so forth and as soon as the Marines took Seoul they marched us back to Taigoo airstrip, put us in planes and we flew to Kimpo airstrip, the American Marines had filled in all the holes and put metal stripping across and anyway they flew us in anything. There were three different, like we flew in an old box car which has got two fuselages. Anyway we were the last

25:00 company to land and when we landed, because there's no doors or windows in the plane, you sit on the floor, and when we landed the fuselage bent down, it didn't break off, it just bent down and ripped up these metal strippings. Should have heard the noise and the dust and the pilot, he was an old bloke and he said, "Don't worry Aussie," he said, "We'll pull up soon. It's alright." So we pulled up and we got out and they put us on trucks and

25:30 took us straight up to the Marines up through Seoul. We joined the Marines and we stayed with the Marines for a couple of days I think till they took [UNCLEAR].

What were the conditions like as you met the Marines?

Seoul was a mess. Just a tangly mess of wires and cement and buildings falling down, it was you know, you couldn't walk a metre without tripping over something. And they had bulldozers running along clearing the

26:00 road so the trucks could go through and we were bloody pleased to get out of it really, to go through it. But then we were with the Marines a couple of days and they pulled out to go out and do another landing at Wan San on the east coast and they sent up the 1st Cav and the 1st Cav really was four blokes to every, there was a vehicle to every four soldiers. And there was 18,000 soldiers in the thing and when

26:30 they come it was like Worth's circus, they were swinging off 50 cal machine guns and 30 cal and backs of jeeps and all sorts of things and we thought it was a joke. Because we only had six trucks for the whole battalion, we waled most of the time or bummed a ride on artillery, anything at all. Anyway...

Were you carrying any guns with you?

Yeah but you carry all your gear on yourself. You know the Vickers and mortars and all they carry them.

27:00 **I'm just wondering if the Americans were going to supply you or if you were carrying your own?**

No, no, no, no we had all our own weapons. We were attached to another two British battalions and formed the 27th Brigade. And anyway, the Cav arrived and they didn't, walking was right out of it. And of course when they come out they had to get rid of most of their vehicles and because it was mostly walking they weren't too happy at all and of course we were in the unfortunate

27:30 position that we were attached to the Americans you see. We got attached to the Marines, then we got attached to the 1st Cav, then we got attached to the 25th Division and then it went on and on so every time that we got to attach to another division they'd say, "Well, you've been here for a while, you lead the push for a while." and the Cav, we pushed through about a week before they decided to come up and relieve us.

Had you been given any different sort of a uniform by this point?

28:00 No. It wasn't till it started to snow on the 4th of December and I think they gave us a combat packet about somewhere around that time, the Yanks did.

Seems like madness.

But the rest of the time we were keeping warm running and walking. And we covered about, we landed there on the 28th of September and we were within fifteen miles of the Yalu River by the 29th of October so

28:30 we'd covered about 300 miles. We had 7 battles, so and we'd lost 120 blokes killed I think, something like that. So it was a pretty hectic bloody time but to carry on from where we were when the 1st Cav took over. We'd pushed on to up to, no we were pushing towards Pyongyang.

29:00 And there was a fork in the road a few miles before Pyongyang so the general said that he wanted the 1st Cav to be in Ponyang first so he diverted us around to the right to a place called Sarawong and we were waiting there in the junction of the road to, about two mile out of Pyongyang for the Americans to take it and then we were going to go through there.

What could you see in front of you?

Nothing. Only hills.

29:30 And while we were waiting it was about dark and we hear this 'chomp, chomp, chomp'. Their 2IC was with us, Major Ferguson, so he woke up straight away it, what it was, it was marching soldiers and it could be only enemy because no-one was there. So he jumped in the tank and the tank had a loud hailer on it and he said, "Pull up!" and they pulled up and they thought we were Russians you see because we had long coats on and they kept saying, "Ruski! Ruski!" and he said,

30:00 "You're totally surrounded by Australians, drop your weapons or you'll be murdered." and it only took a few seconds but it felt like ten minutes and there was dead silence and they just give all their weapons up and we captured 1900 I think, prisoners. But I tell you they were wild too because we took all the weapons off them and took them over to a paddy field and sat them down and had to guard them all night and they

30:30 were crook [angry] because 1900 of them had given up and there was only 130 of us there. But we handed them over to the, I forget the name of them now, some special name they had for the South Korean people looking after prisoners of war but we found out afterwards they shot most of them.

The South Koreans?

Oh they were terrible shooting one another. And anyway we went through into

31:00 Pyongyang the next morning and there were people shooting one another, there were people trying to get rid of their army uniforms, there were people ripping down the bloody president's pictures because they had to have them up, they were made to put them up and there were people trying to get them off, so the CO said, "Bugger this!" so we went straight on through Pyongyang and we always had to camp on a hill, we were never able to stop on the flat.

31:30 So we dug in there and eleven o'clock that night they, in the meantime there was a POW train with about five or six hundred Americans on it and they knew we were pretty close to it so they decided they'd drop the navy 2nd Airborne about forty miles in front of us to block them off and I don't know someone must have told them they were coming but they got done like a dinner. They landed

32:00 right in a North Korean regiment.

How can that happen?

I don't know but they got belted like hell and we got, we'd dug in and there was about eleven o'clock at night I think and the company commander, I was the platoon commander then and he called us down and he said, "Listen, we want you on the tanks - they'd got tanks up to take us." - and we had half a platoon in each tank. He said, "The Americans are getting very badly mauled." and he said, "We've got to rescue them

32:30 so we'll leave about three o'clock in the morning. Doesn't matter who shoots at you don't shoot back because we haven't got the time. We're going to get through."

How far away from the Americans are you?

We're about thirty miles I think roughly. Anyway, we arrived there early in the morning and they were in, the North Koreans were on a ridge around about a couple of hundred feet high I suppose and there was a cutting in the road and we knew where we were and we were ready to

33:00 go and...

Did you have accurate survey maps of the area?

When we first went there they gave us Japanese maps. But we were pretty good at map reading so you could do the, you could map it on the roads and everything, railways and that but anything that was a fixture was okay. Later the Americans gave us mud maps, they were moulded and they were very good. But anyway we were coming up and the tank slowed down because the OC was pretty right and

33:30 suddenly, the sentry must have been asleep I think, and he fired a shot at the first tank and we'd been trained to get off the tanks as soon as there's a shot and form up into combat order so we did and he called the CO and said, "We're being fired upon." and the CO called up and he said, "Well you can't use any support weapons, you'll have to do it with the bayonets and bullets because we don't know where the Americans are." So the boss said, 'Okay,' so we charged up the hill and we killed about 100 I suppose and

34:00 we were on top of the hill in 15 minutes and we settled down just you know fanned out and were very pleased with what we'd done and we looked down the bottom and there's 2000 soldiers down the bottom in the paddy fields so we changed, they were having breakfast so we changed the menu there pretty smartly, killed about 400 I think and captured two or three hundred and they were going to behead the Yanks. See they had a lot of Americans in, they had one lot in

34:30 a school and they were just having a bit of a bonfire and ceremonial breakfast they were going to behead all the Yanks. They'd killed 500 in the tunnel of the POW, the POW train we were after; they'd

killed all them in the tunnel so they didn't get much sympathy from us. And then one platoon slipped round the side and met up with the Americans and it was very good because the first battle our battalion had been in and in our company there

35:00 was only about six had been in action before, they were all young soldiers but because they'd done as they were told and were trained well they done very well.

Because that must have been pretty confronting this while situation to a soldier whose never been in any sort of conflict before?

But it was quick. There was no, now it would take a company about two and a half hours and it took us fifteen minutes. Because the soldiers knew what to do and they knew they were at war and they didn't know what to expect but if they'd done as they were told

35:30 they thought they'd be alright which they did. And it was very good and we had seven wounded, none killed at all and of course they thought that was great.

That's extraordinary.

And the OC got an MC [Military Cross] and the platoon commander got a Silver Star and a couple of other blokes got decorated which was good and of course we were the youngest company in the battalion and of course they give all the old diggers the, they used to say, "You buggers, we know what to do now." and

36:00 then we went on and...

What did you do that evening?

Well as soon as we met up with the Americans we handed over to the CO and all the administrative staff and we went on. Went out and dug holes and based up for the night.

So you just separated yourself?

Yeah don't hang around like that.

What do you do with all the dead bodies?

That's nothing to do with us. The battalion gets onto another group, brigade and they come up and pick them

36:30 up or bulldoze them in or if there's a lot they just dig deep trenches and put them in. But that's nothing to do with the fighting side; you keep them right away from there. And then we pressed on to Pak Chong and the other company took Pak Chong village and the road, one road went off to the left across the Pak Chong river and the other one went further up towards

37:00 the centre of North Korea and the retreating blokes had knocked one panel of the bridge down and it was a cement bridge and we didn't have much so the CO said, "Well dig in." so we dug in and about six o'clock I think he said, oh he sent a platoon over the bridge, we made a ladder, or two ladders as a matter of a fact and we sent a platoon over to do a reconnaissance and they found

37:30 out all the North Koreans did was wave to them. So anyway he come back, the patrol commander come back and he said, "They're over there but," he said, "They're pretty friendly so there must be some backup somewhere." so the CO said, "Well, we'll go over." So he sent two companies over that night and about nine o'clock I think it was they, that was an advance party, the North Koreans

38:00 were going to send a regiment down to dig in on the other side of the river so just as well we went across the night before. And of course we set about them and then another company got knocked about so my platoon got sent over two o'clock in the morning to get over this bloody bridge and everything and we got over there, joined A Company and I lost one bloke, he got shot about four o'clock in the morning, I was sitting next to him when he got shot. A sniper got him in the neck but a Bren gunner down the front got him so we

38:30 evened the score there.

What do you do when a mate of yours gets shot like that and you're in...?

Call the stretcher bearers and get rid of him. You've got to get on with the job; you've got to look after the platoon. They look after him, take him back and fix it up. You don't have anything to do with it at all. And then the next morning there was still a lot of fighting, they called in the American shooting stars, the jets and 77 Squadron

39:00 and it was like watching the pictures. It was terrific because it takes the jets seven mile to turn around and they'd come in and bomb and strafe and circle around and we're sitting up the hill laughing and watching them and everything.

You were far enough away not to be involved in that?

They weren't firing back at us; they were too busy with them. As soon as the jets went we attacked. And

we were fighting all that day and all the night and all the next day.

Is it the mission of the jets to make them a bit more of a softer target?

39:30 Yeah, yeah well it stirred them up and a lot of them had got over their pits and gone down the back and once we got them on the run we kept them on the run.

And how many of them were there?

There was probably about 15,000 I suppose.

That's enormous.

We lost I can't tell you now, probably about 30 blokes I think got killed there.

How outnumbered were you?

Always outnumbered. We were up to; well we never fought a battle

40:00 that was under 10 or 20 to 1. And at Kapyong there were 500 or 1000 of us – there were 500 Canadians, and there was probably about 60,000 Chinese so we were pretty well outnumbered there.

How do you keep your morale up when you can see you're so obviously outnumbered?

Well the first battle was so good at the Apple Orchard that we done very well in Pak Chong and the

40:30 diggers thought that if they did the right thing they would, always stuck together, we never ever, we were one of the only units in Korea that was never overrun. So that was, give the diggers a bit of heart.

Tape 6

00:32 **You mentioned there were several days and nights fighting at Pak Chong?**

It was from Pak Chong Bridge up to a place called Jong Yju.

Just before we go to Jong Yju can you talk about those several days fighting in a bit more detail?

Well only it was severe, savage fighting. They were holding on for grim death and we were wanted to get the war over with pretty quickly and I think in that two days and a night we lost ten killed

01:00 and 35 wounded all told. So it was pretty full-on and...

Can you describe the landscape there and how you created defences?

The landscape was, it's on the western side which is a multitude of low hills. You know, about 100 feet high, a couple of hundred feet high, some of them maybe 300 feet high and they just fought for every one of them so we had to save them,

01:30 give them time to dig in, we had to attack and one company went through each and see each company would probably fight for an hour or so and take a certain position and to keep them on the run another company would follow up and go through them and take up the fight as well and they'd sort of leap frog all the day and the night so as that you keep them on the run and in the night time to keep them stirred up you dig in a defensive position

02:00 and then you aggressively patrol with say three men, ten men and anything that comes up, well, you lash into it, if you meet fifty you get into them, if you meet five you get into them and you keep the enemy on their toes and that's what happened in the two days and a night.

Can you describe those patrols?

Well all patrols are practically the same is that you go on patrol with, you might if the OC wants to do a reconnaissance, if he hears

02:30 a noise or something happening he might send three men out, so you go out so you rely on speed and stealth. You see without being seen and you you know without being heard. You get your information and get back and you know you can get up to within three or four metres of a bloke and not let him know you're there and if you don't want to die and you're good at your job.

How do you actually manage that kind of stealth?

Just being physically fit mainly and being

03:00 able to stop dead in a split second and stand perfectly still. See if they put up a flare and you stop perfectly still it's very hard to pick up. Don't look at it, you just keep your head slightly down and stand perfectly still and you look like a stick or a tree but you just move any part of you and you're gone. So you've got to have confidence in yourself to be able to stand still and you've got to be in physical fitness,

fit enough to

03:30 stand still if the flares a minute, it's a bloody long time when you're standing there terrified you're going to get shot. But it's just a matter of training and believing in yourself. And the people that are with you, you take two or three diggers that you know and you know they're good and you don't have to give them any orders, they just do as you do. If you stop they stop. If you go to the left they go to the left. And they know and you know what they're going to do so you don't worry about looking back to see where they are.

04:00 So it's just a built in camaraderie/physical fitness sort of business. Mainly acting like an animal, that's what an animal does when they're after their prey or not. It's something similar. It's hard work but it's very rewarding because you can see so much.

How outnumbered were you at Pak Chong?

Pak Chong - I suppose there was, the battalion was there that's all.

04:30 Another two battalions behind us but there would probably be about 10,000 there and there'd be four or five hundred of us. But the CO Greene was soon to have an inbuilt vision of what's going to happen. And as I say if we hadn't attacked that, if we hadn't gone across the bridge that night we'd have never got across. Or we would have got across with probably 50 casualties but as it was we got across with a few.

05:00 During those days how did you suffer the casualties?

If the battalion functions properly it's a built in system where you don't, the platoon commander or the section commander knows how many's been wounded or how many's been killed and see lots of blokes will go all day wounded before they tell you and then they might

05:30 start to get a bit stiff so they'll have to go out, if they're not badly treated, like if you get a bit of shrap or something like that it's just like scratching yourself on barbed wire but you've got to get it treated because the likely infection you see, but the blokes that are dead the medic comes straight away and he gets other people and they take them away and you don't see them, so at the end of the day when you're, or as you're going along, the bloke will say, "Well I've only got six in the section because I lost two killed in that

06:00 in there." and it rolls on like that and then at the end of the day and two nights well you've got to put in a return, you know, how much ammunition you've got, how much ammunition have you used, how far you've travelled and how many you've got killed and how many you've got wounded, have you lost any weapons and all that sort of thing so then you get the grand total.

Any men killed in your section at that point?

I lost one and I was sitting back to back to him at Pak Chong the night we first went over the bridge.

06:30 But he got shot by a sniper and he didn't know what hit him and I didn't know what hit him either. It hit him here, just there, and killed him stone dead and the only reason I knew he was, he was a larrikin too, we used to call him Jerry Lewis and he was my runner, and we'd got lazy, we didn't dig a full trench, we only dug it down about two feet and sat in it and we were, our shoulders were just above the ground and we were lying back to back and he's

07:00 always laying on you and always doing the wrong thing and all of a sudden he laid on me and I give him a shove and sent him off and he rolled off into the pit and he was dead. And just then the Bren gunner that was down the front of me about fifteen metres I suppose he saw this bloke fire and he opened up and killed him. So we got two snipers for one of our blokes so it wasn't too bad but that's the only bloke who got killed in the whole 12 months.

Did you take any further precautions for the rest of that night?

07:30 No. It's just one of those things that happened. Just keep your eyes open more if you can.

Or lie lower.

Yeah. And we moved on as soon as it got real daylight so it didn't worry us too much. You don't sort of, when you go into position you look at everything and you record everything like a mental note of all the bushes, all the trees and all that where people are likely to get in during the night and if the breeze is going to blow whether it's going to annoy you

08:00 because there's nothing worse than to sit down at night and see a tree rolling backwards and forwards and the Chinese particularly they had a very bad habit of you're in a defensive position, they'd crawl up, if there's a bush say five or six yards in front of your pit they'd crawl up in the dark of the night about 11 o'clock or midnight and they'd tie a string on it and then they'd go back 30 or 40 yards in the safe and every now and then they'd give it a good shake and of course you're away straightaway. And if you fire at them they

08:30 register that with a compass and in the morning as soon as it's daylight they'll give you merry hell with all the machine guns. So you've got to work out when you get there what's likely to happen, you know perfectly well if the bush rattles there's no bloke there, it's a bloke well back pulling it.

Had that been learnt before you got to Korea?

No. But we wake up to those things, the Japs used to do those silly things you know. So...

Is it something you could only learn the hard way then?

09:00 Well you pass it on to the diggers, you know, "Watch out. Just make sure you register every tree or every leaf or every thing that's likely to move during the night." because you can't move around a great deal at night, can't yell out. You as a platoon commander or section commander have got to move around and talk to the diggers every now and then but other than that stock still.

What marked the end of the fighting at Pak Chong?

They'd got a pretty good hiding and the thing was that we didn't

09:30 know at that stage, we were about fifteen miles from the Yalu River then and the only part of Korea , North Korea that wasn't taken was a strip about fifty miles long across Korea and fifteen miles deep. But we were, there was a bridge across the Yalu River and we were never allowed to bomb it or anything. We could patrol it and have a look at it but you couldn't destroy it and I think it was the 28th of October, yeah I think

10:00 the CO got killed and that night 150,000 Chows [Chinese] trotted across that bridge in the dark and they fanned out and they dig holes about, depends on how big you are, as wide as your shoulders and they dig it down about three feet and they scoop it out and they sit in there cross-legged with just their heads out and they're pretty hard to see. And they did that and on the 29th, the afternoon of the 29th, the 1st Cav moved

10:30 up because they were there before us, they were going to big deal get to the Yalu River. And there was 18,000 in the Cav and they went up that night and 200 come back next morning. They killed or captured the rest of them and that was the start of the Chinese coming into the war.

What separated you from the conflict between the Cav and the Chinese?

About ten miles, fifteen miles. That's all. We could hear a lot of stuff going on.

Why had the Cav advanced ahead of you?

11:00 Because they were there before us you know. And the Americans had been there before us so they said that they thought it was right and proper that an American unit do it. We didn't mind anyway, we'd had a couple of days and we wanted a rest.

And that's when your CO was lost?

Yeah well then the CO had been up for about 48 hours you know directing the battle and he was pretty tired so the 2IC put a tent up and we'd dug in and they put a tent up and said, "Well you go and have a couple of hours rest."

11:30 And he'd just got to bed and a stray shell come in, hit the only tree that was in the area and a piece of shrap went straight through here and took all his belly out. And they took him out but he was just about dead when he left.

So it was an unlucky incident?

Oh, well he was meant to die everybody said. Because otherwise it wouldn't have happened. But you know he always used to walk around up the front with us

12:00 and he was a very good CO. And then we got, then of course once the Chinese come into the war that changed the set-up straightaway.

How?

Well the Marines, they were up on the east coast from us, they were guarding the power station that was giving power to the Chinese and the water so of course the Chinese attacked everywhere, 150,000 over our way and there was about 200,000 odd

12:30 over in front of the Marines and they all hit at once. Just the weight of numbers and they just keep coming. I mean they haven't all got weapons. When the Chinese attack a hill, the first six waves have got small arms like machine guns, grenades and so forth and all the rest in lines behind and as the bloke drops dead in front they pick up the weapon and start fighting. And they don't worry about

13:00 people getting killed, that's just a part of the system. The area where they are, they do pick up the wounded but they're not too fussy about picking up the dead. But of course we had to withdraw then from where we were back to Pak Chong road junction to, because they didn't want the Chinese to get down and cut them all off, you know

13:30 get behind them. So we went back to Pak Chong and we stayed in Pak Chong village about 36 hours I suppose and no-one...

Before you go back to Pak Chong, when you encounter all those Chinese that have entered,

can you describe your position and what took place as those waves of Chinese...

No we didn't encounter the Chinese then the 1st Cav did and because the 1st Cav lost about 16,000 out of 18,000 the Americans

- 14:00 decided then to come back and form a defensive line. They knew they had to withdraw so you've got to leap frog over one another, so we were immediately sent back to the Pak Chong Bridge, the broken bridge which is the junction of the road and to wait there to make sure that we checked the American unit through. Well, no-one come through in about 24 hours so another company and an air company patrolled about 9 miles up the road and we couldn't
- 14:30 find anybody so we turned back and we decided to withdraw. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon I suppose and everybody was happy, there was no-one around and we had trucks this time and we were driving along and the river was, as we were going back on the right hand side and the ridge of hills was on the left hand side about two or three hundred yards away and 77th Fighter Squadron flew over and he said - we had
- 15:00 an air contact team that you could talk to - and he said, 'Who's supposed to be in the paddy field?' and we said, 'Nobody.' and he said, 'Watch this.' and he dropped a napalm bomb which burns at 2000 degrees and there were 5000 there. And of course we had no option, they had us, do we stop the trucks and off the trucks, and you never, ever attack with the whole battalion, you know four companies. You've always got to keep some in reserve but there was so many there and we were caught in the open. So
- 15:30 we flew off the trucks and lined up in companies and attacked them. And mortars and that and all the support company people, some of them fired off the machine guns off the backs of their trucks. And it took us eleven hours I think and we cleared, pushed them back off the flat over the hill and onto the hill and we killed about 3000 I think. In one re-entrant, you know a re-entrant that
- 16:00 runs up towards a hill, they kept attacking up there and they put a Vickers machine gun and two Brens there and they were seven or eight feet high dead and they were still trying to get over the top from up this re-entrant. They're mad. And the company CSM from A Company, he was walking around checking the soldiers and a Chinese soldier's pulled the pin out of a grenade and put it in his shirt and rushed up and grabbed him and it blew them both to pieces. And we were down, we formed a perimeter, and
- 16:30 we joined A Company and they were getting belted from A Company and they were running down the hill and they find out what they are and they scream out, 'Don't shoot it's A Company!' Well we knew it wasn't A Company but they get up as close as what she is to you. You know you've got to and they're belting along at a fair speed so you've got to knock them off or else they'll run over you.

That must put a lot of fear into you.

No it keeps you alert. It's you or them. And the diggers are alert

- 17:00 you know. Sleep doesn't worry you. In the first two and a half months we averaged two hours sleep a night. All the rest of the time you're awake. And you know you get tired and a bit groggy but you learn to cat nap. That means if, say for instance, say, 'Right-o, you've got 20 minutes now.' just lay down and go to sleep. And keep one sentry on and you get 20 minutes here and half an hour there and it makes up a bit of it but you've got to stay on sentry duty at night so you've got to keep awake you know.
- 17:30 And then we were there, that's, I shouldn't say but we had a new CO, then he ran away and left us. And...

Do you want to explain?

Do I? No, less said best meant. The 2IC was Major Ferguson who'd been with us for years in Japan and everybody knew him and he was marvellous. Tough as nails. So in the morning the general comes up and promoted him, or the brigadier, and promoted him to half colonel [lieutenant colonel] and he took over the battalion. And

- 18:00 saved the day really.

Was there any ceremony that went with that?

No. He was gone. He dismissed him straight away. But then we, they pulled us back on, some Americans came up the road a bit and we pulled back and we were going to a place called Anju was where we were supposed to meet the Americans. And as we were entering Anju the CO got a message that they'd sent 5000

- 18:30 Turks over there and because the 2nd Division Americans were having trouble at - what's the name of the place here? At Kunaree which is more into the centre of Korea, we had to go about 20 miles I suppose, and we get up there and the 5000 Turks, they're mad on fighting with the bayonet. They love it.
- 19:00 And they come up and helped the American division to withdraw for the fighting but the Americans pulled back and left them there and the Turks lost about 1000 I think and they were bloody wild, they

were going to kill every American they got hold of so we got sent there to keep them apart and help the Turks get out.

What did that involve?

We had to go by trucks and get over there as quick as we could and then make contact with the Turks and wherever they've got trouble you send a

- 19:30 company to help them and we got, we broke contact with the enemy. And in the meantime they found out the enemy, that a large force had gone around behind us and cut the road off and there's only one road back and it was either go by road or walk over this great big mountain so we had a Pommy [English] brigadier with us, he had a meeting with the American general and the Turkish
- 20:00 brigadier and the thing was that we don't just sort of bug out [retreat] like the Americans do, we fight a rear guard. That means we leap frog over one another all the time. Keep in contact with the enemy, so the general said, "Alright, well when we clear this we'll start." Anyway, the brigadier said, "We've got to walk over the hill." and the American general said, "I'll smash this road block with my division." so we walked all night I think. Took us eleven
- 20:30 or twelve hours or something over this mountain and he crashed the road block alright, he lost 8,000 killed that night because the Chows had occupied all the little spurs that run off the hill and they let half of the division get in there and then they set about them and they had nowhere to go. So he lost 8,000 there in about 6 hours I think. So that didn't impress people too much.

Sounds like a bloodbath.

And we walked out over the hills and we got out about seven o'clock in the

- 21:00 morning and we were just having a rest when word comes up to say would we go back up along the road to help the 2nd Division get out. So they then named the battalion 'Old Faithful', and that went right through the set up and it's still 'Old Faithful' now. And so then they had another meeting and decided that they would so this fighting the rear guard so the Australian and the British started it and 200 mile later we're still fighting it. The Yanks kept on
- 21:30 moving on. But at one stage after that the convoy on the road was about 110 miles long and if some vehicle broke down they just called a bulldozer or something and just pushed it off the road. And the Americans got a system by where they put a triangular plate, it's got a hole that goes over the tow bar and the other, the old GMC's [trucks] had two hooks in the front of the truck and they'd drop them over there and the bloke in the back goes
- 22:00 to sleep and the other truck follows them. Amazing. Frightened hell out of me the first time but it follows alright, he's off to sleep. But yeah and the biggest problem for us fighting the rearguard was when you fight a rearguard they send, say we stop here, and they'll send a platoon down to Victoria Park or something on a hill and you make contact with the enemy. And it doesn't matter how many enemy there, you've got all the support in the world, the air force, the army, the artillery and mortars and
- 22:30 machine guns, and you let them get right up close and belt the hell out of them and then go, take off. And it's a bit hair raising but... it's not fun but it's probably the worst part of the army, particularly we were sitting out there one night and I had 30 soldiers I think. You've got all the support in the world and everybody's protecting you but the CO called up and he said, "The last message I got," he said, "The enemy were 58,000 strong and there's 30 of you so
- 23:00 you don't strike them all at once but you strike their advance guard you see, probably a couple of hundred or something." But we done pretty well. We didn't get very many casualties at war because we trained for that and if you've got good section commanders that keep control and don't panic you're okay. But the Americans are terrible; they just bug out and leave. We used to find blokes all over the place. We attacked the hill one night, one afternoon
- 23:30 and that night about nine o'clock you could hear 'Hey! Hey!' all over the place and we ended up with 20 I think. Some blokes wounded, some others were just left. We always keep two soldiers in a pit together and we work on a system where there's ten men in a section so we put the main firepower there and then we put the pit there to protect it and a pit there to protect it and they're about 15 metres apart and then we've got two pits back here to protect them and
- 24:00 the platoon does that and the company does that so you've got three lines of defence. Well the Yanks don't, they put one line across and put a digger in each pit. Well imagine what it's like, you're sitting there on your own and there's no-one there, the next bloke's about 15 metres away, you can't talk to him, he's the same so as soon as you hear a noise, someone running back, you run. And that's what they do. But we don't do that, we put two men to a pit and keep control all the time.
- 24:30 But so we fought right back then to Seoul and when we got to Seoul, oh it was bloody chaotic. There was the British tanks, they were protecting one of our flanks and on the Centurion tank they've got a piece of metal that's put up when the turret goes round to stop any sticks or anything jamming in it. And what the Poms were doing, they were holed down in the tank, you know sealed up and the
- 25:00 bloke behind was shooting with his thirty cal to shoot them off because there were thousands on the

tank, you couldn't see the bloody tank and every now and then the gunner would turn the turret around and it would break their ankles that were standing there. It was terrible to watch but still it proved a point. And we had to protect the engineers were waiting to blow the bridge, the pontoon bridges they'd put across and

25:30 we went down and they couldn't fulfil their duty because they were getting shot at from up the hill up on the side and all the infantry had gone so we had to attack that hill and clear it and then help them, protect them while they set it and then we went across and there was no need anyway because the river had frozen and the water, they were driving CMC trucks straight across the river because the ice was three and four foot thick and we didn't realise that until we'd got across and when we got across they realised that, or some stupid truck driver, they

26:00 reckon he just launched straight across and got across so then they had to stop the Chinese from following us up, they had to call the artillery up and keep on pounding the river till they broke it up so the Chinese couldn't run across it and we went back to a place called Yu Jong Bu and that's the first spell we'd had for two months. We hadn't had a bath for two months, all we'd done was wash our face and shave and you couldn't take your clothes off. And they gave us some winter gear there.

26:30 I think it was about mid-December.

So you still hadn't received winter gear?

No. They give us a combat jacket I think somewhere along the line or we pinched it and for head gear, when we were going up to Pak Chong we had Chinese headgear on. But they gave us a pile cap then and everything. And they gave us; the Poms gave us the latter part of the winter a track suit. It's a fleecy lined set up,

27:00 it's got elastic for about four inches up there and there, around your ankles and around your neck. They think you're a priest. And you never take it off, there's a slit in the back for when you go to the toilet you just hold the slit open if you're a good shot you're okay, if you're not... But you never take it off because you'd die, you'd freeze to death. Because it got down at one stage it was down to 36 degrees below zero which to me is that - when it freezes, you know you breathe and like steam comes out

27:30 you know and as it gets colder and colder say no oxygen in the air and it's more steam, bigger train we used to reckon. But you get very tired. I mean you'd be halfway up a hill and all of a sudden you run out of steam, you just go 'ugh', and sit down and rest a few minutes and you're right again. And when you come down off the hill, off the mountains, all you want to do is sleep. The difference in the oxygen in the air. But we

28:00 didn't have many frostbites because we had a doctor who found out that, see when you get frostbite you squeeze at whatever part's frostbitten. You squeeze it normally and it goes white and then comes back, well when you squeeze it and it's frostbitten no colour comes back and then it gets black and then you can break it off because they're rotten. And anyway he found out that, we used to get issued with Barbasol shaving cream in tubes

28:30 about that big and he confiscated, the lieutenant, because it's got a lot of lanolin in it and if you've got, when he inspected your foot if he thought you had any sign of frostbite at all he'd make you bathe your foot for half an hour in hot water, in a basin and sit there while he was there and massage half a tube into each foot. Bloody takes you about an hour and a half. But it saved it. I got one toe off but it saved a lot of blokes from frostbite.

29:00 You just can't do anything about it.

When did you have your toe off?

When I came home. It was alright in the battalion because they all knew, see I used to go and he used to treat it with powder and stuff, penicillin powder and stuff he had there. I came home and they panicked like hell and raced me into Hollywood Hospital and they'd never seen it before. There was about 14 specialists in the operating theatre I think and they before I was operated on I was

29:30 isolated. They shaved me from the tops of my shoulder to my feet. Felt like a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK that's been plucked. And then they washed me down with methylated spirits and then they bandaged me up like a dummy and then they put these big white pants on you and a big white jacket and I wasn't allowed to do anything, get out of bed, anything at all. Couldn't blow your nose you had to call a nurse. It was all bunkum you know and I went in the operating theatre and then I was in,

30:00 kept me in bed six weeks. And I'd just come home. I'd only been home a week and I was fighting fit and rearing to get out into the town and here I am laying in bed and they put my foot in a cage, you know it was like a bird, I used to sit there and rock it and whistle to it. And I was six weeks like that. And I eventually convinced the doctor I was okay and he sent me home for two months on sick leave. But later on

30:30 it grew again, the bone grew and I went back to the same doctor and he just give me a local anaesthetic and cut it off. But that was the frostbite.

Frostbite would be pretty rare in WA [Western Australia]?

Yeah, yeah. But a lot of blokes got frostbite on odd fingers and on their ears mainly. But you get your, my nails and fingernails in the winter time, that's the only part that gets cold and gloves are no good at all. You've just got to rub them against your skin or put them in your mouth

31:00 and steams alright, that'll keep them warm.

Why are gloves no good?

It's just that the nails are affected and it's no good at all. It's got to have instant warmth so you know, if you put them over the steam in a kettle or something like that or when mine get cold I normally put them in my mouth and breathe on them and rub them on yourself but I tried hand warmers and all sorts of things but they're no good. And the doctor's

31:30 said it'll never get any better because it's done.

So this is now?

Yeah. Still get it now and I've got what they used to call it 'fibriouiscycus' [fibrosus?] I don't know what they call the thing now but your left cheek got frostbite in and every so often it'll start dancing around all over the place and I think me eyes going to fall out. And in a couple of days it'll go away now with this weather. But they can't

32:00 do much for it. It's just one of those things; you know what it is so no worry.

Shall we jump back into Korea?

We'd got into Yu Jong Bu and we had Christmas there and we thought we were in a rest area but it wasn't it was in the front line. And they decided then after Christmas, we had Christmas which was good, we had one Christmas Day and the officers had another day and the diggers had another day and in between Christmas

32:30 and New Year's Day they wanted to find out where the enemy were so they sent us out to find them and my platoon went out first, we went 25 mile before we found them and you're walking, you know, it's alright to see these blokes now with helicopters, like when we were in Vietnam we used helicopters but when you go out like that in those days you go out ten miles and you've got to have a relay station for the sigs [signallers] to keep in contact and they sit out there poor little buggers,

33:00 about five of them in no man's land and then we went on another fifteen mile I think and we stayed overnight and you listen and look and you know walk around and do a few patrols to see what you can find and we found out they were there and we came back and then two days later the company went out and we found out how many was there and what was there and A Company went out there and the Chows jumped straight into them straightaway.

33:30 So then we, that was all, we didn't find any for a long time and on New Year's Eve the Argyle and Southern Highlanders were there, Scotch battalion and they drink whiskey of course so they had a New Year's party. And the CO, it was quiet so they let us, about ten of us go down to the sergeants' mess and we were drinking whiskey, straight whiskey about an inch in the bottom of a cup you know. And the Scotch were singing songs and

34:00 anyway about half past ten I suppose word comes through, "Go back to the battalion, you're wanted." So we hop in the truck and go back and we didn't realise that the driver had been drinking too and halfway back he ran off the road and tipped us all into the paddy field and they sent the ambulance out to pick us up and when we got back to the battalion the whole battalion's ready packed up on the trucks and everything and here we are three parts stupid and the CO give us a tongue lashing and

34:30 gave us orders and rushed off to our platoons and we went straight into action then, we went out about ten mile and jumped off the trucks and attacked a hill and we were there, we frightened hell out of them and then we had to patrol out and there was too many, there was thousands of them everywhere. So we pulled back from there and New Year's Day, New Year's night and the next day I think it was and we ended up breaking contact with them and came back and joined the

35:00 rest of the mob and it was alright then. And...

Interesting way to see the New Year in.

Yeah it was. I tell you what you've got a bit of a hangover, we hadn't had a drink in three months and you're sitting there, bah! Soon keeps you on the ball though. And then we went, they decided then that they'd pull right back south of Seoul and form a line and reorganise all the army.

35:30 And they were in the process of doing that and they asked us, the Americans have got a terrible habit, they asked us, "Can you patrol and find out if there's anybody in such and such hill?" Anyway we patrolled on a place called 614 which was well in the news after we left and we said, "Yeah, there's enemy there." They said, "Can you take it?" and we naturally, you say yes. And we did but we lost quite a few blokes there,

36:00 we lost about 14 killed and 12 wounded I think.

Can you talk us through that attack in detail?

The thing was that they were, it was a few ridge lines run into a pinnacle you know what I mean, in the middle? And what they'd done, they'd dug like a well down about ten feet and they had machine guns in that and they dug down and they got board somewhere and they'd put board across so you could stand on it and when

36:30 we called the air force in, or the artillery, they'd just pull these boards across and go down the bottom of the well you see. And then as soon as the noise stopped they'd come up and was just too far for us to get at them before they got up so Delta Company lost some blokes and we didn't lose any, A Company lost some and then a chap called Len Opie,

37:00 which they're interviewing now in Adelaide, he's a mate of mine, he was a sergeant in my company, or a corporal and he come up and he said he'd take it himself. So he organised the artillery and the napalm bombs and he organised the artillery to open up while he was moving up the hill and there was a block about as big as that I suppose, might be bit higher about fifteen metres from the top of the hill

37:30 where the fire was coming from, so he said he'd get the artillery to keep firing till he got up near that and he organised the air force I think to drop thirteen napalms or something and the thirteenth one was to drop over well over the hill and as soon as the twelfth one fizzled out he started running. And of course they were waiting for the noise and he dashed up there and when they opened the trapdoor he was there.

38:00 And he filled them up with lead, killed the whole lot of them. And they recommended him for VC [Victoria Cross] but in those days there was no medals you see, it was a peace action so he didn't get a VC. I think ten months later they sent him a DCM, a Distinguished Conduct Medal in the post. It was terrible because he done a very good job, saved loads of lives. And then we went on and of course it was coming

38:30 **You said that you then left that hill you came back?**

Well once you clear them out and kill them or chase them out, you know where they've gone, well they went back north to their people. And we followed them up and we struck them on another hill and we cleaned that out. And then in was coming up April you see and the Turks were there and the Turks were all keen to celebrate Anzac Day together with the Australians so they worked us around, they sent the Poms up on

39:00 the Injun River on the left and we were to go up the middle to a place called Pak Chong behind the 6th Division, ROK [Republic of Korea] division, and we were supposed to meet the Turks there and have two or three days off and have a celebration of Anzac Day and we got there I think on the morning of the 23rd of April and they had a beautiful green place picked out with a few trees and we

39:30 took all our gear off, we were lying about with just our bloody pants on and having coffee and tea and eating our heads off and planning what we were going to do for the next two or three days and about one o'clock the CO called all the company commanders up and said, "Celebration's all off. Action stations." and we took off and we took up a position just north of Kapyong village and

40:00 the 6th ROK Division was 18,000 strong and we had dealings with them before, they run away every time. And we attacked the hill and they're charging uphill killing people and they're screaming, "Don't shoot me, I'm 6th ROK Division!" send them down the back. So we knew what to expect we thought when we got, when we were called up to go into line we knew bloody well that they wouldn't last long. So we got up there about five o'clock I suppose, dug in and settled down by

40:30 about eight and the rocks, South Koreans started running through us and you couldn't shoot them all or you couldn't shoot any of them because they're on your side but you see the Chinese had mixed in with them and when the South Koreans stopped running and stopped yelling out they'd fire a few shots or kill a couple and then start again and this went on for a couple of hours. With 18,000 of them to get through. And they caused

41:00 chaos for a while and the Chows mingled with them and then they followed them in and they hit A Company about three o'clock in the morning I think it was and they with weight of numbers they just walked straight over them. Killed about ten I think. And then it was on, we had to call the artillery, there was a lot of hand to hand fighting and they called the artillery on and ourselves and the Chinese attack and then when they get their nose snubbed they just swing left to right by bugles

41:30 and keep putting out feelers to see all the weak spots on your perimeter so they swung off A Company down to B Company on the right hand side and they had tanks there and the tanks were firing and when they fired at night the big guns it'd fire and it was just like firing at a wheat field, you'd see it open up where the shell had gone through and killed all these Chows and quick as a flash before the flash was finished you'd see them join up again. There was about,

42:00 they reckon about 85,000 of them and there was 500 of us in one place, and 500...

Tape 7

00:32 **Just before you were talking about the numbers and of you could just pick it up - you were talking about the Canadians and how many of them there were?**

Yeah well there was about 500 of us and back to the left and about half a kilometre away we were on a reasonably sized hill but they were sort of a back up to us, they were on a higher hill and back left of us and

01:00 there was about 500 of them so after they, when they attacked A Company it was about three o'clock in the morning and they overran one platoon and then they got their nose stubbed a bit because we called the artillery on it and then they swung around and tried B Company and B Company had tanks, the 72nd Tank Battalion with them and the tanks were good. They would stay, they kept on saying, "Are you going to stop here?" and we'd say, "Yes." and they'd say, "We'll stay while..." and of course they got thirty cal, fifty cal and a great big gun

01:30 so it's very handy. So they stayed with B Company and then after B Company pulled them into gear a bit they went round onto the higher the hill because they knew that if we withdrew we'd go in the high hills and Delta Company was round there and they fought Delta Company which is that photo there, all day right up till six o'clock at night.

02:00 **How much hand to hand combat was going on during this time?**

Off and on quite a lot because you know when they get close and the other thing is see, we had no supply. We were cut off for about twelve hours I suppose on our own. No-one could get near us and the re-supply by air, the area was too small, and the planes got shot at so at one stage I suppose we were down to about five bullets a man, so you had to if you could kill a bloke some other way besides

02:30 shooting him well you did. And in one case a platoon of B Company found 54 Chinese in one pit and they kept on firing at the pit so they killed the whole lot of them in the pit and that's the sort, they didn't you know, Chows thought nothing of it at all. And it went on the night of the 23rd and all day of the 24th and about six o'clock I think it was they decided that

03:00 we'd, or in the afternoon they decided to do a reconnaissance in case we had to pull out.

Who was doing the reconnaissance?

We did from there. After the tanks broke through to us early in the afternoon of the 24th so we weren't cut off any more you see, so then they decided that if things got too bad they could, we'd pull out so they sent a platoon back from A Company and they done a reconnaissance on a route back along the

03:30 ridge line and down across the river to back and the Middlesex were about two mile back behind us I suppose. Anyway, come six o'clock on the night of the 24th I think it was, they decided that we would fight a rearguard and get out so we boxed on till about seven o'clock I suppose, and then we pulled out a company at a time, platoon at a time and eventually broke contact and we walked back to

04:00 where the Argyle and Southern Highlanders were, where the Middlesex were and the Chinese stopped there and swung straight across the road to take the high hill where the Canadians were. So they belted into, we got back about half past two in the morning I think Anzac Day morning.

Was that really unexpected?

What's that?

The fact that they swung around and...?

No, no everybody was expecting it. The Canadians could see it from where, they could see all the action from where they were.

04:30 And see the other thing that held us up, in between all the refugees of women and kids, there was the 6th ROK Division which we knew and there were Chinese so you know you had to either leave them or kill them all so we let as many of the 6th ROK Division and the refugees go through and then sailed into the Chinese and they reckon that between us, the Canadians fought all that night, the night of the 24th

05:00 in the morning, Anzac morning at about seven o'clock it all stopped - the Chows pulled out and went miles back up the road. And they reckon that in the two battles that the Chinese lost about 10,000 killed. So if there's 10,000 killed there'd be 20,000 wounded but we captured a Chinese officer later and he said it was terrible. He wouldn't say anything else. But we captured, they treat their soldiers bad because B Company captured 25

05:30 Chinese and they sent them up to us because we were in reserve at the time and we had nowhere to put them so we put one Chinese in each pit with the soldiers. And when the Bren gunners were shooting their mates they're laughing like mad. And ask them to fill a magazine, they'd fill a magazine and they were starving. Give them a cigarette and they had two draws and it's gone. And give them a tin of meat; you know the little tins of meat,

- 06:00 open the tin, they don't need a spoon, with their tongue in three licks they've got it licked as clean as a whistle and they thought we were great giving them cigarettes and tucker. And they'd do anything for us, they carried all our gear out and when the air force come in and strafed and bombed them they just laughed. You know they didn't think anything of it at all getting killed. As a matter of a fact we were talking to a Chinese official later and he said in Korea they lost about 2 million in two years.
- 06:30 And he said, "That's nothing." he said, "That's not even up to the wastage of China for a year." so it's casual as you like. But then they, the whole thing stopped and they'd had their hell of a hiding, what they intended to so with all that 85,000, they were going to surge down a big, it's a big valley down from where we were at Kapyong down to Seoul and cut them
- 07:00 all the troops off and that would have been the finish of the war then. They'd have killed everybody. But they didn't get through so it... actually the Battle of Kapyong saved Korea totally because they disappeared for about three weeks, a month, didn't see them. And that gave the army commander time to reorganise again and about a week afterwards we went up onto the Injun River and
- 07:30 they formed a line right across Korea then and we used to patrol in a no man's land to find them and keep stirring them up all the time but they were digging in in different places. And they decided then, there was one part in the middle of, in the real hilly part of Korea that the Chinese had that we wanted so in July I think it was '51
- 08:00 they formed the Commonwealth Division, July or August and that took up, because there was a lot of trouble, people were grizzling because they were under command of Americans and all different people you see so they decided to get all the Commonwealth, the Canadians, the Poms, Australian, New Zealanders and all that into a Commonwealth Division under a Commonwealth commander, the first commander was an Australian, the second, they rotated the command and it worked well.
- 08:30 And our company, the company I was company sergeant major of, on Lightning Ridge, that's where we were, we went up Injun River and 10 Platoon was on Lightning Ridge when the first time we'd ever had a bit of barbed wire and we had a lightning storm and as Don told you probably it stirred them up a bit.

It killed one guy?

Yeah killed one guy. And it makes them froth at the mouth, but we were there for I don't know, about two months and they decided then that they'd do all the reconnaissance

- 09:00 for this battle to, it ended up called Maryang San. Jack Gerke probably told you all about it when you, Major Gerke, and ...

But we want you to tell us about it.

Well I wasn't there but anyway we did all the lead up. They planned this to go in, in October I think it was, so we started patrolling and we patrolled all the area and they gave it a different name, Operation Commando

- 09:30 that was and it was a build up and they used all that information to the attack on Maryang San. And we did all the build up of it and of course you're only allowed to do twelve months in Korea, and that was your contract and no-one's supposed to spend two winters there so my time was up but the company commander told the CO I didn't want to come home. So I was there
- 10:00 for an extra two or three weeks I think.

Is that right - that you didn't want to come home?

No bloody fair it wasn't. And of course I wanted to come back to Japan anyway. Anyway, the adjutant was originally my platoon commander so I was out on patrol and he called me up and he said, "Are you bloody mad?" and I said, "What's wrong?" and he said, "What's this you don't want to go home?" I said, "Who told you that rubbish?" and he said, "The company commander told me." and the company commander had already got the sack anyway because he was no good.

- 10:30 So he said, "Do you want to go home?" and I said, "I sure do." and he said, "Well come home straightaway." so I called up the company commander and said, "Patrol returning to base. Going home." So I just turned the radio off so he couldn't hear me and went back to the company and packed my gear and went down to Seoul and came back to Japan and they gave us three weeks leave there.

- 11:00 **With Kapyong did you know how important that particular conflict was at that time?**

No. We didn't know until after. We knew that it was important because they were so worried about it. You know they sent the 6th ROK Division into a small area which is 18,000 soldiers, which they're not much bloody good anyway, but they knew, all the powers to be knew about it.

- 11:30 And I think the CO knew but we didn't. The average NCO or officer, they knew about it but didn't know how important it was until after, when we went up on the Injun River. Of course word got out to say because the, a couple of days before Kapyong the Chinese attacked the Gloucesters on the Injun River and cut them to pieces. And I think 85 got out of 500, they took a lot of prisoners of war, they took the CO

- 12:00 prisoner of war, Colonel Khan[?], and they just overran them, just weight of numbers. So we understood what we were up against when we moved up into the line at Kapyong but we didn't realise it was so important and because they couldn't get around through the Gloucesters and they were going to go over the hill and back into the valley and when they couldn't do that they decided to come over the hill to where we were so they come off second best.
- 12:30 And it really saved Korea. But, and the Canadians, we used to call them the Canucks, 'over-sexed, over-paid and over-fed', but they lost a lot of blokes too because they're very gung-ho sort of blokes, you know, they're mad. Well they don't train very hard but they think they're very good. But and that's when it first started, we went to the Injun and we dug in
- 13:00 in defensive positions and dug crawl trenches and everything and then after that, after I left and they attacked Maryang San, they dug trenches right across Korea, the whole of Korea. And they, for the Australian battalions anyway, they had, each section a digger to fire at them and then a digger crawl trench which is armpit deep so you can walk around at any time of the night or day.
- 13:30 Then off that rooms about as big as this say, 12 by 12, dug down about ten feet in the ground and about four foot of cover on the top for the soldiers to go and rest in the daytime and unless you got a direct hit you were pretty safe there. Then it became static, you know just patrolling at night and fighting and reconnaissance patrol and it settled down. We lost 127 I think in the first
- 14:00 couple of months, in the whole three years they lost 339 killed. So it settled down quite a lot.

With going into no man's land and giving them a bit of a stir up - what it actually the objective of doing that?

To keep them on their toes and let them know that... see if you don't have contact for say a week, sometimes you get a bit lethargic you know, 'It's alright

- 14:30 - they won't be here tonight.' So you stir them up so they can't plan, so you're sitting back then and you think, 'Oh well, I might attack that hill because there's nothing coming from it.' you see, but if you're continually stirring them up they think, 'Oh these buggers were here last night, they were here the night before, they're going to be here tomorrow night.' and the artillery comes up and everything and you just pinpoint different things for the artillery to fire on you see. And sometimes you send out groups.
- 15:00 We went out one night and they had a, the Chinese had the whole hill honeycombed; they must have been about two hundred feet down in the hill, in this mountain.

Two hundred feet down?

Yeah, and they had tunnelled right through the mountains no trouble at all. And we went out with satchels about six or eight sticks of jelly [gelignite] wrapped up, you've seen them on the telly [television] and found

- 15:30 the holes and dropped them down and one we dropped down we never heard it explode. And the one that did explode it sounded like minutes and it just went 'boooooom!' so it must have been a couple of hundred feet down I reckon. But they loved getting in underground. And after the war, I went back in '84 and they took us up and showed us their trenches - they'd dug this trench three kilometres long I think it was, and it
- 16:00 was about six foot high and about six feet wide. Jeeps and artillery could drive through it. And they, it was to come out, when they formed the DMZ, that's the De-Militarised Zone which is about a kilometre or two kilometres wide, and all the south defences are here and all the north defences are two kilometres away and they dug under the whole thing and were going to come out in the south side you see and they were going to pour
- 16:30 out there by the thousands and take South Korea but the Americans had got a sounding system and they picked it up and they bored a hole straight down into the thing and then they blew a hole big enough and the South Koreans, they're mad on fighting the North, they were down the hole like bloody rabbits and, checking it all out so then they decided that they'd close it up and
- 17:00 it's on show. They've got a tunnel dug down to it; it's about quarter of a mile I suppose. You walk down this tunnel into the tunnel. But they did all this forced labour you see, they lost hundreds of thousands digging it but they didn't care, they just chucked them out by the side and got some more to dig it. But that's the way they were going. But I came home in October and I got back to Japan I think, and see they used to come from Australia, go to Japan to do
- 17:30 their field training and then they had to do a week exercise before they went over as a platoon or a company, so another fellow and I named Bradley of St Albans, he's dead now poor bugger, but when we got back they said to us, "You're on three weeks leave but we'll take you off leave and you take these platoons out for a week in the bush and then you can have an extra week's leave." so we said yes, so we run these blokes around the bush for a week and send them
- 18:00 off to Korea and then they gave us a month's leave in Japan.

What sort of drill did you stick these blokes through?

Oh yeah you tear into them. They were a bit unfit but otherwise they weren't too bad. And when you tell them what to expect they buck up and try like buggery but they wanted to go so they were alright.

When the Chinese entered the war did that surprise you at all?

- 18:30 Yeah because see the whole thing was political. They couldn't bomb the Yalu River bridge, if they had have done they couldn't have got across because the air force would have seen them coming across by boats or anything like that and they couldn't have got the numbers across and see MacArthur was a magnificent commander but the hierarchy never liked him. You know, all the big-wigs and the prime ministers and the
- 19:00 boss in America couldn't stand him because he was very good with fighting soldiers, he had no time for anybody that was a bludger [lazy] or anybody in hospital for a minor wound or anything like that but for front line soldiers he was marvellous and he did everything. And of course he had the Marines and the Airborne and the British brigade and he thought he was home and hosed and he would have been too if they hadn't have, they held him up for 48 hours to get permission to cross
- 19:30 the 38th Parallel. If they'd have given him permission to cross the parallel straight away we'd have been in the Yalu two days before that and we'd have caught them. And the bridge had been blown so no way they could have got across the river and of course then they sacked him because he kept on haggling. He wanted to put atomic[?] strip across the Yalu River to stop anybody going across or coming across and the wouldn't let him.

Atomic strip?

Yeah.

- 20:00 I don't know how they do it but that's what they talked about. So they sacked him and sent him home but he was the best general they had in Korea as far as the soldiers were concerned and he'd walk about the front no sweat at all. As he did in World War II. So,

When you were saying you were bunny hopping each other...

Leap frogging,

- 20:30 **Yeah leap frogging. I knew it was an animal and I knew it was bouncing. And you said that the Americans were basically taking off and you were doing that - do you ever feel that you were supporting the Americans much more than the Americans were supporting you?**

Yeah well we had a lot of time for the Marines and the Airborne because they were good. They'd fall over backwards to do anything for us. But I mean the normal infantry are

- 21:00 sort of the dregs of, like the dole bludgers really, that's putting it rough. But they were just conscripts and they wanted to go to Korea and survive and they didn't care really too much about anything at all. So they'd keep going and of course some of the officers weren't that keen about, because they'd got belted a fair bit you see when they first went over there. And I mean what we do, say that you're A Company and I'm B Company and he's Charlie Company, he's up there and
- 21:30 you'd say to him, "Well you take position A, and you'll go through and take position B and I'll come through and I'll take position C." and you know approximately the time it's going to take you say, if you do it right, an hour and a half to do your job so if I come up through him and leap frog past through him and behind you and then when you're in position and it's secure you just whistle up on the radio and I charge through you and he comes up then again so it goes on the old wheel and leap frogging we
- 22:00 call it. But you've always got two feet on the ground and one moving so really you can't get done whereas the Americans will move the whole lot in one hit you know so if they get hit they all run away. But we don't work like that at all. And sometimes you, which happened a few times in Korea where things will be pretty hot you know and the CO will tell you you've got to stay there for a couple of hours. That's when it gets
- 22:30 tough. The Americans don't take any notice of you; they just switch off their radio and run. But that's because they don't train their junior NCOs enough, I don't think anyway. But we were, I think the Australians, well the battalion I was in, because they were so fit and well trained. You hear a lot of talk about how the K-Force did this and the K-Force did that,
- 23:00 the K-Force was a god thing but the thing was that when they enlisted them as normal, they wrote in the paper and said, 'All people enlisting must have overseas service'. Now what they should have done, they wanted infantry soldiers, they didn't want anybody else, they should have said, 'All enlistees must afford an infantry battalion,' because there's a hell of a lot of difference between the air force or a driver to fight in the war. And of course when they got to, some of them had been in Japan
- 23:30 before and as soon as they got to Japan they got into their old units in Japan and stayed there and quite a lot of them didn't want to go, regardless of what they say, quite a lot of them didn't want to go in the battalion. And a lot of them had to go and some were good and some weren't. And it was unfair to the

soldiers, there was a sergeant in the air force in charge of transport and they sent him out with one of the rifle companies. And he'd not only be terrified more than anybody else, he didn't know what he

24:00 was doing. And that was wrong. The ex-infantry blokes or anything that had anything to do with that, that had been in combat, they were good but I had a chap come from K-Force. He was, had a hell of a record about being in the commandos and he was in this and in that and he was as useless as buggery. I ended up chucking him out, he was bloody useless. He was terrified of everything, he was going to break everybody's neck like a carrot and when he got over there he

24:30 was worse than a baby. So they're no bloody good to you at all. Get rid of them quick and off...

Was there much of that going on?

No. Well we had five blokes shoot themselves in the foot but look; the cold was to blame with a lot of it. I was standing alongside one bloke one morning and we'd been out on patrol I think and we'd come back at about four o'clock in the morning and as soon as it got daylight we lit a fire with petrol, we had plenty of petrol. We were standing around there and he had a semi-stiff finger,

25:00 forefinger, and it's terrible to go around at night and you see blokes sitting in the foxhole 30 and 35 years of age, I was younger than that but they're crying because they're cold. And the tears are just streaming down their thing; you can't do anything for them. The young blokes weren't that bad, they felt the cold but they put up with it and anyway he said to me, standing around the fire and he said, it was I suppose about 20 degrees below and he said, "I've had a gutful of this. I can't stand it anymore." he said,

25:30 "I think I'll blow my finger off." and I thought he was joking so he just put his finger over the top of his rifle and pulled the trigger and blew it off. Pwhoh! And they sent him out, sent him back to Japan and he got out of the winter but they gave him 28 days jail off a self-inflicted wound you see. He had to pay for it, cost him a couple of hundred bucks I suppose. But then you get the odd one that's funny, there was one in Delta Company, he was smart, he took his boot off and

26:00 shot a hole through the boot and then put his foot back in the boot but the hole didn't correspond with, he reckoned he aimed to shoot between his big toe and his next toe and to take all the skin off but not to sort of break any bones but when they put the boot on it didn't add up with the wound he had in his foot so they charged him as well. But I had, there was another bloke, he was in our company and he was from Western Australia too

26:30 and of course, to keep yourself warm we carried straw and all sorts of things to sleep in because we didn't have much gear to sleep in and if you got a chance, if there was, say when they told you to dig in, if you had a bit of time before dark and you saw a house you'd go and knock it down and cart some of the wood up on the hill and I sent this bloke down to get some wood and he wasn't too bad but he wasn't that good, anyway he shot himself through the foot while he was down there and I didn't

27:00 see him anymore, the stretcher bearers went down and picked him up and brought him back and about a fortnight later Mum sends me a cutting from the West Australian [newspaper] and here's this young bloke standing in the door of the aeroplane, civvy aeroplane, he'd come back to Perth, 'Hero from Korea got shot in the foot' and he wrote this story about how I did this and, me, with him and so I wrote a letter to this West Australian paper and I said to them, "Listen,

27:30 I'd suggest you check up before you write any bullshit from anybody that's returned from Korea." and I gave them the story then. So oh yeah they thanked us very much but that put the diggers off straightaway.

Put them off?

Yeah, bloody mongrel. But you know that's just some of the things that come up.

How would some of the diggers feel about other people who would do things like shoot

28:00 **themselves in the foot?**

It depends. With this bloke that shot himself in the finger everybody knew that he had just about had it with the cold and they said, "Oh well, he'll get fined and go to jail. He'll come back again. He has to come back to do his time." To tell you how cold it is, the first time I ever seen it, we were moving one night, one morning, the trucks picked us up about midnight and we had to move up into a position by three o'clock and we moved up to the bottom of the hill and

28:30 there was about 40 of us, about 25 or 30 of us on the truck so we were all cramped up and you can't move around. Everybody got off but this one bloke and I said, "Get off the truck." Nothing. And he was frozen. So we lifted him off. Only thing moving was his eyeballs and all it is is if you leave them they'll die, but if you put them near a fire they're dead in 30 seconds. The blood is just circulating enough to keep them alive and I said to the medic,

29:00 luckily the medic knew what to do, I said, "What the hells wrong with this bloke?" and he said, "Throw him on the ground." so we threw him on the ground and you get four blokes and you put your foot on their stomach and chest and each one gets hold of one limb and pump like hell and it would creak for a while and suddenly it gets the blood circulating and ten minutes he's up walking about. It's the first

time I'd seen it but it frightened me a little bit. I said to the diggers, "You've got to keep on wriggling your toes and moving yourself around and so forth." But I mean 36 below zero, it's

29:30 pretty cool.

Was there much of that frozen business going on?

Not that I know of. There was a guy, you know people complained about the cold all the time and the thing is that people don't realise that you go out to do a patrol and you're wading through three foot of snow and there's nowhere to dry yourself and when your pants get wet, and you've got wind and waterproof pants over the top of that and when you stop at night all that sweat

30:00 and water goes to ice so you've got to pull your pants out of your boots and shake it and shake all the ice out and you might get half a bucket of ice out of each leg because you sweat you see. And the latter part of, just before I left, you were talking about those clothes, they did give us some clothes, they gave us what we called a shopping bag, it was a mesh singlet about as thick as a, not quite as thick as a pencil you know

30:30 the mesh shopping bags that you used to have, they were about an inch square I think they were, well you pulled it over your body and it came down about down to there, the reason being there's three parts of your body that circulate warmth, they're your crotch and your two armpits so that keeps your clothes off your body so the warm air can circulate and then the Poms gave us the, oh then we used to wear seven garments

31:00 I think. We used to have an undershirt and an under-jumper and all sorts of things and end up with a windproof jacket on and the gloves they gave you, they were, see gloves they give you, any gloves in the cold climate is all in one, all your hands together. But on the right hand it had one finger so you put all your fingers together to keep them warm and when you're in action you pull this finger back and put it up and you can pull the trigger and the Poms had what they called CWWs.

31:30 Cold Weather Wet Boots. And they were marvellous, they had a sole on them about that thick, looked like half a truck tire and inside it had little, a layer of nylon but it had all bits of nylon sticking up and then they gave you a nylon innersole which is like an innersole in your boot here only it was mesh and you put two pairs of socks on, one

32:00 thin pair and one thick pair and you put your boot on and when you're standing still you can wiggle your toes and it moves this innersole back and forth on the little bits of nylon, beautiful and warm. If you can stand there it's lovely. But it's amazing when you get it.

Managed to get your hands on a pair of them then?

Oh yeah the Poms give us a pair of them I think in about March. But it snowed nearly every day from the 4th of December until about the 13th of April.

32:30 And the thing is there it was say 20 degrees below zero yesterday, today was a hundred degrees and tomorrow was about 120. And a lot of people got caught, I got caught in the same way, you're climbing hills with all this bloody clothing on and you get hot and I hate being hot and we were about a week after the summer came on as they called it, or fall or whatever the Yanks call it and we were battling up this hill and

33:00 we weren't making much progress and I was getting a bit bloody angry and I was hot so I just pulled my out pants up and grabbed a bayonet and cut all the rest off and chucked them away you see. And that night of course it froze. It was 2 degrees below freezing and bloody hell I froze too. But nothing you could do about it, just sit there and shiver and think, 'You silly bugger!' for cutting them off. But a lot of people got caught the same way.

33:30 But anyway that's just the way it goes.

Hard to deal with such cold temperature and such hot temperature?

Well I don't mind being... well I don't feel the cold and see the cold in, I was cold in Korea but it didn't affect me as much as 90 percent of the other people because I didn't feel the cold. And I don't feel the heat out I don't like to be rugged up if you understand what I mean. Like in the tropics well you don't wear underclothes you only just wear a shirt and pants. And that's alright.

34:00 When they're worn out you chuck them away or if you want to go and have a wash you sit in the river. But I mean that's okay but when you've got all this clobber [clothing] on to keep you warm and suddenly it's 100 degrees and you're climbing a hill about 3000 feet high it gets you bloody hot and makes you tired and cranky.

Sounds like a lot of the blokes had more of an enemy with the cold than the actual human enemy.

Well I think really that we were lucky in one way that we were moving all the time

34:30 that it did keep them a bit warm because I noticed that when we were in the defensive positions you'd move up say at six o'clock at night and dig in and from about nine o'clock at night till, and see the days

were so long, it would get dark at half past four and daylight at eight o'clock so it's a bloody long time to sit there from four o'clock until eight o'clock and freeze. You can't get out and walk about, you can't stomp your feet in the pit

35:00 because the noise travels so you've just got to wiggle around and you know make out you're trying to get warm and we only had one blanket for a while. They gave us a sleeping bag in January I think but before that we used to carry, if we were going, there was a lot of haystook and straw and that around in Korea riddled with bloody rats and mice and stuff and we used to pick it up and carry it up and dig, when you dug your hole, chuck it in the bottom and get into it like pigs you know.

35:30 And because of the threat of the artillery you had to dig your trench very narrow. So when you slept you slept bum to bum like that so if you wanted to turn over you had to wake the other bloke up and sat up and turned over. Or if he had to go on sentry or you had to go on sentry so really you didn't get much peace but you had a lot of peace of mind because it, the pit was narrow so it wouldn't, you'd be bloody unlucky if a shell landed in it you know. Your time must have been up

36:00 but we were lucky enough never, ever got a direct hit but that's most terrifying, that is bloody... You're sitting there and you can hear the boom and you know bloody well it's coming your way and where it's going to go and when you don't know. But later on they got into a set pattern where they, as I said I think they threw a thousand shells on that hill in one hour. They belted that and everybody knew where they were coming from and where they were going but otherwise you can't do much about it.

36:30 **What were supplies like as far as getting food to you?**

We had what they call C rations, it's three meals for one day in a box. Which is the best thing they ever did because you can do what you like. There are three tins of meat and two tins of fruit and biscuits and chocolate and gum to chew, everything's there but it was American which was, the meat was frankfurter chunks and lima

37:00 beans and crap like that that didn't suit us that much. The only good thing we used to get was a lot of bacon and eggs and stuff like that. And I hate lima beans but you could swap them like nobody's business and of course you get into a pattern and I always reckon if I ever got shot, we used to get rations at night you see, any time during the night and I used to say to the diggers, I used to get up in the morning and I'd eat everything

37:30 bar one tin of meat and one packet of biscuits and a tin of fruit and the diggers would say, "Why are you eating that?" and I used to say, "At least when I get shot I'll die full. And no bugger will get it." And so they all started doing the same thing. So you don't have to carry a lot if it's inside you, you only have to carry the three tins, you can carry them in your pocket you know. So you get up all these tricks, but water, well we had one water bottle and in the wintertime we drank snow.

How were they supplying the water to you in the summer?

38:00 Water trucks but see in those days there was water, you were restricted on water. You never drank water like they do now. We had one water, bottle of water, which was probably a litre and a half I think and that was the day, 24 hours rations. Didn't matter whether you were climbing a hill or lying on your back side and you get used to it. With you put the old stone under your tongue and you don't worry about water you know, we used to, always instil in the diggers it's better to

38:30 wake thirsty and get a chance to boil a billy and you always do. If you get a chance to stop for half an hour and tell them straightaway, "You're there for half an hour, get a cup of coffee into yourselves." And if you get a cup of tea in the morning and one at lunchtime and one at night and then they normally fill up with water at night. If you've got any left you drink all the coffee and all the water. You know it's not too bad and of course in the wintertime you don't drink that much

39:00 well we never used to worry about it because the water would freeze up in the bottle, we used to just get a handful of snow and just chuck it in the Dixie, they give you little tins of canned heat which you light and they burn and you just put your Dixie on that and it will boil the kettle and cook your food and that was alright. Sometimes when we were on the rat race, when we were running up three or four hundred miles, we were three days I think and

39:30 we were so far in front of the resupply they couldn't get to us. And we come across, we were in North Korea too, some beautiful red apples, they were about this big. And you could polish them and nearly see through them so of course we were eating these like mad for two days and the third day we got a message saying 'Don't eat the apples because we think the Chinese have poisoned them'. But no-one died so you know.... And we'd grab a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK [chicken] here and there

40:00 and roast it and then we got the supply but no-one worried too much about the, no-one grizzled. They understood the whole situation, you know what was going on so and the only thing with it was it didn't have the right calories in it then and usually everybody got gingivitis, you know the gums go back off your teeth.

Why was that?

Because it's not the right calories and so forth in the rations, they were made for Americans

40:30 not for us. I mean the diggers would have given a million bucks for a tin of bully beef because it's got

good staying power. And I mean all the biscuits we got you didn't, during the war you got dog biscuits but all the biscuits we got in these rations were sweet biscuits that you buy in the shop. Well they're no bloody good at all; they're nice to eat but the only thing that was really good for staying power was

41:00 they used to get a slab of candy, about as thick as your finger and they used to put all sorts of vitamins in that and that was good and you could chew on that for half an hour.

You'd want good teeth.

Oh no it was soft like something about like a jelly bean. So you could bite it and eat it but it would take you a fair while to chew it and get rid of it but it had a lot of vitamins in,

41:30 they were very good and we got miles of cigarettes. Nearly every digger would have three or four cartons in his pack and they used to give you every so many rations and it used to work out about once a fortnight, once a month you'd get another pack, I can't think what they called it now. But it was full of bars of Hershey's bar chocolate

42:00 and that's the best chocolate in America

Tape 8

00:35 **What areas of fighting in Korea have you not gone over with us?**

Well that finished for me. I don't like talking about it if I wasn't there. So I came home and I knew all about Maryang San and know all about what happened afterwards but someone else will do that. I then came back to Japan.

01:00 **How did you get back to Japan?**

It was a funny thing. Took us back to Kempo airstrip and of course when we landed there by the time we got back there say six to twelve months later, it was like Sydney airport because the Yanks build things so bloody quick. They got about 600 people, they call them SeaBees [engineers] and they're all specialists in their job; plumbers, builders, carpenters whatever like and they pay them an enormous amount

01:30 of money - they're civvies but they run like an army organisation and if they want an airstrip built they fly them in with all their equipment and they start that night and they won't stop till it's finished. When they stop they fly them to Hawaii or somewhere for a week or a fortnight and they drink like buggery and smoke like hell. But they just love life. They just love work and they get a hell of a lot of money and by hell they do a good job. And that's how America gets everything built so quick. And

02:00 they whipped them over there and they built an airstrip and built the bloody control tower and everything in a matter of weeks. Had leave centres and officers' messes, and sergeants' messes and all this sort of garbage all over the place so they do it very well.

So you didn't recognise the place?

No, no when we come through. We didn't want to really because we were coming home. But anyway we were supposed to come home but we got up and we stopped at Kempo overnight, got drunk and...

02:30 **Where'd you get drunk?**

Oh we went in the sergeants' mess there, Americans, and just bowled in, up to the bar and started drinking and they didn't care. And anyway...

Did they ask you much about Korea?

They were in Korea. The air force, 77th Squadron was very good to us, they were marvellous. They saved us time and time again. They were Australians. And of course the rest of the American Air Force reckon they were, 77 Squadron was mad you know.

03:00 Because they used to fly, like we were at Kempo airstrip when we were going up and the Americans used to take off one fighter at a time and 77 Squadron said 'We'll take off two or three' -boopphhh! And then they'd fly and they'd say, "You can only take rockets, you can't take rockets and bombs." and 77 Squadron would wheel up and say, "Load her up!" and they'd come up there with bombs and rockets and bloody all the ammunition in the world. So they said, "Oh these buggers are mad. Just give them what they want." So when we went in they thought we were silly but

03:30 we just got drunk and next morning the squadron called us up and he said, "You can't fly out till three o'clock this afternoon." and there was an Australian pilot there and he heard what he said and he come over and he said, "Oh, are you blokes going back to Japan?" and we said, "Yeah, we've finished." and he said "Oh, I'm flying out at eight o'clock." so we said, "You got any room?" and he said, "Yeah, yeah, plenty of room." So the six of us went with him in an old Goony Bird,

- 04:00 an old DC3 and half way to Japan - it's only about an hour and a half - half way to Japan we struck a thunderstorm and the water poured in through the roof and everywhere and he kept saying, "She's alright!" and it was rough and we were sick - you've never seen anything like it. There were no seats, sitting on the floor and we were rocking round up the ceiling and all over the place and he said, "We'll get to Iwakuni. Might take us a bit longer." and it did. It took us about two and a half hours. By hell when we got to Iwakuni we were bloody glad. We get off
- 04:30 and kiss the ground. I think the thing we were thinking, 'Christ. We've spent twelve months in Korea which was bad enough but this, if we're going to get chucked out in the sky that's the last resort.' But we got there alright and he laughed and he took us down the mess and we had a few beers and then we caught a train back to Hiro where the RHU was, the training depot. And then whilst I was on leave, oh before I went on leave when you put these
- 05:00 two platoons through their hoops to go back to Korea, to go to Korea, the war was just starting in Malaya and so they were calling for volunteers of warrant officers to go over as advisors, to learn all about the jungle warfare with the Poms. So I put me name down and they said, "Yes, you can go." so I sent all my gear over and I went on leave and of course whilst I was on leave Dad took sick and
- 05:30 he was pretty ill and so Mum wrote to me and I said I didn't know, I was going to Malaya for 12 months and then I was coming home. So she got jack of that [didn't like it] so she rang the minister of the army and he sent me straight home. So I came home and in Western Australia, there was bugger all in Western Australia then and I had 150 days leave I think and they sent me then training the recruits that were going to Korea.
- 06:00 Went up to Guilford and then up to Northam again.

Before that, did you spend very much time with your family?

Well when they give you a ministerial post you've got to stay in the state until they, till he either dies or he gets better. So you just can't go anywhere. So I was posted, I was living home and when I

- 06:30 was working at Guilford and then when I was at Northam I used to come home every weekend or every second weekend so we had a fair bit of time. And then I was there '53, '53 I think I was and the Korean War wound down in '53 and I put in to go back to the battalion but they wouldn't let me go because Dad was still alive so they sent me to Swanbourne, to National Service. And
- 07:00 I was a platoon commander so they gave me an officer's pay, other was only a shilling a day, ten bob a week, but still you know. And I was four years down at Swanbourne as a platoon commander in National Service. Then I was a company sergeant major for a year and then I got blarney with the CO and I told him where to go and he said, "What do you want to do?" and I said, "I want to get out of here." so I went to CMF [Citizens Military Service], a reserve.

What did you think of national service?

- 07:30 Good. It was great. 17 National Service was probably the best in Australia because, well I can only speak for the infantry company, we used to take 300 at a time four times a year. And we were lucky that all the instructors after the first 12 months were blokes that had been in action in Korea. You know they were all dedicated NCOs. Before that they recruited people from World War II who just
- 08:00 got in the army again to make a few bob and they didn't give a bugger about National Service, they would try to be too nice to people and didn't train them properly and when we got all the whole caboodle back from Korea, from different battalions, it was very good.

So you upped the ante a bit do you reckon?

Oh yeah we used to win everything. I was there for eleven intakes I think

- 08:30 and they used to have a drill competition every intake and I won it ten times out of eleven. And with national service, well all soldiers are the same, you can work them to death but if you get them to win something they used to do three months down at Swanbourne and about a month after, in fact the end of the first month they'd have a drill competition or a shooting competition, you know something to up the ante a bit and if you're lucky enough to win that first drill competition you're right.
- 09:00 Everybody is happy, we've won something, we're a good platoon, we're the best you know and you just bore it into them and we never looked back you know. And as a matter of fact blokes ring up, a bloke rang up the other day - he was up the bush but he'd down here now at bloody Newington or something, up there. And he went up and came down to see me last Wednesday and I hadn't seen him since 1956 and he was a nasho in my platoon.
- 09:30 And we had a few drinks and told lies and so forth but I see hundreds of them now.

So you still have that respect?

Oh yeah. He kept on calling me 'Sir', and I said 'I'm a civvy now', but no worries, yeah. But all the National Service, even later on in 2nd Battalion when they brought the two year National Service in. The battalion I took to Vietnam the second time was, we had 450 nashos and they

10:00 were marvellous after a month. But I had very few of the blokes down at Swanbourne were any trouble at all.

What trouble did you have?

Mainly that, see they used to get leave on, there was no leave Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, they used to go on leave Wednesday night, that's right but Monday night was training night, Tuesday night was supposed to be their night for maintenance and everything

10:30 but of some of them would, there was no drinking. It was a soft canteen. And of course they'd get a bit dry and they'd duck off into Perth and some would get caught, some didn't. If they got caught well they were put up on a punishment, if they didn't.... I said to them, "Look. Don't blame me. If you go and get caught don't whinge to me because I'll double the punishment because you're a bloody fool. If you go out expect to get caught and take all precautions." and so they used to. See the golf club was up on top of the

11:00 hill and the diggers woke up pretty quick that we were down only about 200 yards from the golf course and they woke up pretty quick that they could go to the golf course and get the odd bottle if they were there quick before eight o'clock at night and the golf course, the fence divided the camp from the golf course.

That's a private golf course?

Yeah, yeah but they used to go up there and they used to get the odd bottle. Everybody knew who they were but it's just the luck of the draw.

11:30 And with the Kalgoorlie, they used to have a Kalgoorlie platoon, 54 of them, they used to bring down every intake and so as they got night leave but most of the time they did duties. But once a month they got three days off. They knocked off at three o'clock on Thursday afternoon and they'd, no Friday afternoon and they had Saturday, Sunday and Monday so what they used to do was

12:00 hire a bus or two buses to take them up and they'd leave Swanbourne at about three o'clock in the afternoon on the Friday and they'd ring up and they'd arrange for so many shifts in the mine. You know six of them probably would have to do a shift or something to pay for the bus so they'd ring up and book say twenty blokes to do a shift in the mine and they'd get up there say midnight or something like that and they'd start

12:30 and do a shift and that would pay for all their bus and the weekend expenses you see, didn't come out of their pocket. And they had it pretty well organised and they were allowed to come back at two o'clock on Tuesday morning and of course you're not supposed to be drinking and they had a little second lieutenant and he, if you had the Kalgoorlie platoon you had to meet them when they come back at two o'clock and he went down and met them and he charged about 30 of them for drinking. Caused a hell of a concern.

13:00 And unfortunately that's when I got them and I said to them, "Look, I'll go down and meet the bus and I'll give you 15 minutes to get to bed. No noise or anything or I'll lock you up." and they'd stagger off and get into bed and they'd go around and do a bed inspection and they'd be in bed, across the bed, in the back of the bed but they never said a word and I used to get them up at five o'clock next morning and run them about three mile. Say to them, "Now, think next time you go. We're going to go for a run at five o'clock tomorrow morning so

13:30 have a booze but don't get too stung." and they were good. Worked like hell. Marvellous to work with and I found them very good. But...

Because it wasn't voluntary?

No, no, no. You're number was up and of course they were only seventeen and a half, or seventeen, and it's funny with the parents because they worry like hell and I had one bloke in my platoon and everything he wore was

14:00 dry and he wore suede shoes so he wouldn't have to polish them so we burnt them because they were no good and taught him to polish boots and everything and of course after a while, in about a month I said to him, "Any of you buggers get up in the morning and get your mother a cup of coffee or give them breakfast in bed?" "No." and I said, "Well, you want to start." Anyway this little bloke, his mother said afterwards he went home one Saturday night and he got up Sunday morning and cooked them bacon and eggs and

14:30 took it in to bed. And I saw his mother afterwards and she that, "We were so stunned that we couldn't eat it because he'd never done anything in his life before." She said, "He'd never even tidied anything in his room." but she said he used to come home, make his bed, polish his shoes and he didn't want to wear these suede shoes and all that and yeah it was quite funny listening to it. And my sister was a floor walker at Easy Walkins [?] and this young bloke worked for her and he was in my platoon and I used to rip into him a bit. They didn't get leave for two

15:00 weeks, anyway till they learned to tidy themselves up and dress themselves and so on and so forth. They got leave Saturday morning and he went them, big noting himself in the uniform and having morning tea and my sister said, "What platoon are you in down there?" and he said, "I'm in 1 Platoon." and she

said, "Oh yeah? What's it like?" he said, "Oh it's pretty good but the bloke in charge is a bit of a bastard." and she said, "Oh yeah," she said, "That's my brother." He had the guts to come back and tell me on Monday morning he said,

- 15:30 "Oh Jesus Sir, I put my foot in it." he said, "I didn't realise that your sister was my boss at Easy Walkins." I said, "Don't worry about it." but he turned out a good digger.

Were you a bastard?

Oh I used to rip into him but well if you're hard, fair and helpful and never sympathise with them. I mean if a bloke got a blister it's your own fault, you, you've got to look after yourself now. Doesn't take them long - about a month - and they're marvellous.

- 16:00 And you know I always talk to people and tell jokes and pull them into gear and things like that but yeah, I used to swear a bit once when I was instructor and I had to take Kalgoorlie platoon once and the CO we had was a bit of a poof and he didn't like swearing. If you swore you had a very poor grip of the King's English and all this crap you know. So he came down once and I was lashing into this mob for some

- 16:30 unknown reason and he came over and he said to me, "Good morning sergeant major." I said, "Good morning Sir, how are you?" and he said, "I think you've got a very poor grip of the King's English." and I said - I didn't care - I said, "Well send me back to the regular battalion Sir." and then he said, "Can I speak to the soldiers?" and I said, "Yeah, they're there." and so he's raving on you see and apologising for me swearing and this big Yugoslavian, he was about six foot six and a good digger you know

- 17:00 but he spoke with a foreign tongue and the CO was going on and all of a sudden this big bloke got sick of it and he smashed to attention and he said, "Sir! Can I say something?" and he said, "Yeah, what's the trouble?" and the man he said, "The sergeant major might swear but," he said, "He sure as buggery knows what he wants us to do." The CO took off. But the diggers didn't mind a bit of swearing, as long as it is not direct, you know. I don't believe in this crap like the Yanks do, come up close.

- 17:30 I whacked a bloke once for that. You know the Yanks go right up in front of you 'Rah rah rah!' and I said to him, "I'm an Australian, less of that bullshit."

You whacked a guy?

Yeah bloody straight in the shoulders. I said, "I'm a human being, if you want to talk to me talk to me normal or just bugger off. I don't want to hear you."

Was that in your training?

No that's when I was a sergeant major. Once in Vietnam this colonel, they're mad on calling you by your surname and he kept going

- 18:00 he was a colonel and he yelled out, "Bandy!" and I didn't take any notice, I kept walking. And he said to one of the diggers, "I want to see that Australian." so I went, I heard him so I went back and I said to him, "Do you want to see me Sir?" and he said, "Yes I do." and I said, "Right, lets get it straight now. I'm a warrant officer so you can call me 'Sir', or warrant officer and my name's Bandy but that's second so you call me by rank. If you call me by my surname," I said, "No-one, none of the Australians will answer you because it's bloody arrogant and ignorant."

- 18:30 "Ooh!" he says, "Oh. Oh." But after that he was alright, thankfully. But that's what they do and they let you get away with.

You see those drill sergeants in the American movies and they just swear and like you say up close to a privates face?

Yeah no good at all. No good at all and if I caught anybody, I see a thing here once about a couple of years ago a bloke done it and I said to the bloke in the battalion I said, "If anybody..." - when I was RSM - I said, "If anybody, officer or anybody

- 19:00 goes up close to you like that and starts yapping," I said, "Hang one on him and I'll stand by you." And there was no trouble at all because its just because he's a private soldier doesn't mean to say he's rubbish and I mean after all these are the blokes that are going to do the fighting for you so you've got to look after him. So we got on pretty well.

You went on to the CMF?

Yeah I went to the CMF for two years and they put me mainly

- 19:30 training officers and first training recruits which was alright and then see they've got depots all over the place; Kalgoorlie, Kanya - they used to then - Geraldton, and Katanning, Narrogin, Collie, Bunbury and the country NCOs didn't get a chance to do any courses so they made what they called a training team. Another chap, Tompkins, a good mate of mine

- 20:00 him and I took it on and we used to go up to Kalgoorlie and we used to train them for two weekends, start Friday night till 11 o'clock, work Saturday, Sunday and then every night from six o'clock till eleven

o'clock train them and qualify them for different things and made good NCOs out of them and we did that for about two years.

What kind of qualifications would they get?

A bloke's got to have confidence to get up in front of people, a corporal, he'd got

20:30 to have confidence to get up in front of people and talk to them, tell them what to do, make them do it and make sure they do it right and check all the faults with it. If he can't do that he'd no good. It's no good getting out and saying, "Oh well, well, you know I don't know much about this..." so you get that all out and you've got to teach them about the lesson first and then teach them how to teach it and that's what's wrong with schools - teachers. I go round schools lecturing and teachers are terrible. They've got no idea of teaching. I told one bloke.

21:00 **What did you tell him?**

I said to him, "You're bloody useless!" and he said, "Why?" and I said, "You can't teach. You're talking to yourself." You know they sit down, we were always taught never to sit down, you stand up all the time so you can see everybody. And as a matter of fact I was over at Belmont here a couple of years ago and this chap asked me to come over and talk about Korea and something and there was supposed to be 40 students and when I got over there he said, "There's two lots of 40." and

21:30 I said, "That's alright, I don't mind." and the first lot were pretty good. And the second lot were all ninety per cent Asians, mainly girls and boy and they had this young bloke with them, Australian, dressed up to the nines with an open necked white shirt but he was the larrikin of the lot and he was the mouthpiece, they had to ask him everything you see. So anyway I sat down and I started talking and he was sitting about where that light is and I started talking and then he started talking to them

22:00 so I stopped and of course as soon as I stopped he looked around and I got eye contact with him and I kept staring at him you see and I said to him, "There's a couple of things you want to know young fellow - there's only one bloody fool can talk at once." and I said, "The other thing you want to remember - I was told when I was a kid - in here you've got a brain and here you've got a mouth. If you put this into gear first, common sense will come out here." and I said, "Bullshit's coming out of yours." and the teacher was under the seat terrified.

22:30 And the kid sat up then, anyway he never said a word all through the lecture, he asked questions at the finish of it and that was it, he thanked me very much and away I went. Two years later, I was in Belmont shopping centre and I hear this, "Mr Bandy! Mr Bandy!" and I looked round and it was him see. And I thought, "Hello, here's trouble." so he come up and he said, put his hand out, "I'd like to thank you very much." he said, "You know that altercation we had at school?" and I said, "Yeah." and he said, "Well, the

23:00 last two years were the only two years that I ever passed all my exams." and he said, "I did as you told me to put my brain into gear before I open my mouth." and he said, "It was bloody marvellous." and I said, "Oh, that's alright. Okay." And away he went. He was happy as a lark but the old teacher - he was terrified - he thought, because I would have thrown him out if he hadn't had shut up.

Wish you had visited a few of my classes when I was going to school.

But you know but you talk to the kids afterwards and they say

23:30 that there's not enough discipline, that you get an odd lout and he buggers up the whole class so you can't learn. So that's the policy I, the biggest trouble I had was with a platoon of university students once. And they were in their last year and they knew everything but their prayers and their whistles and of course they were carrying on a bit so I didn't take too much notice of them the first week

24:00 and come Friday night I said to them, "Alright well, seeing as you're so smart, you might be educated but you're pretty bloody useless otherwise so we'll bring you up to scratch with the rest of the soldiers by keeping you Saturday and Sunday." So we did, we trained them for eight hours on Saturday and eight hours on Sunday and Monday they were different altogether and shut up and did as they were told and were very good. Because they had the brains but they'd just been left to do what they liked.

24:30 And you help them, we were in, like we had to fold all the blankets up - you had to fold a blanket up and then put a sheet and fold it up and then put a blanket round it and it had to look all nice and straight and everything and the company commander hated university blokes and he used to go around and pull them all apart and throw them about so they said to me, "This is terrible. What's wrong with the company commander?" and I said, "Listen, I'll tell you what we'll do, you go home and get two pieces of board, so - (I measured it) - and so wide and bring it in and we'll do them

25:00 all up and nail them up so he won't know." It was summertime you see so I said, "Bring a blanket in this evening." so they come in one Sunday and folded them up, all 54 of them and wrapped the blanket around and put the board in and nailed the blanket so it didn't move and every night when they slept they put it up on top of the wardrobe and in the morning they sat it up and after about a month he said, "It's amazing you know, how tidy these university blokes have gotten." He never woke up till years after I told him

25:30 they they'd nailed them up with board. And yeah they were sleeping with a blanket and they thought it

was a hell of a joke but yeah they were good to get on with I thought, and it keeps you young – they were doing things that I was trying to do when I was a young digger. So that's the way it goes. But I spent, I went to CMF from there and then I went on to the two years and then Dad died and I applied

26:00 to go back to the battalion but they wouldn't send me back to the battalion they sent me to Canungra as an instructor there and I went there in 1960 I think and I spent three years there running round the bush.

Was that of much interest to you?

Oh very good, very good. You've got to be very fit, you do about 25 miles a day over hills and you start about, we used to start about three o'clock in the morning till about ten o'clock at night.

26:30 And for two weeks and then you get a week off and I knew all the work and I knew most of the blokes going through there, we were dealing with officers mainly and it was very good. And I was there three years and then '63 I think it was, '62 they called for volunteers for AATTV [the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam] interested in the Training Team so I volunteered

27:00 for that. I got detail first and then they changed it and I volunteered and '63 I went to Vietnam with the Training Team for a year, '63 to '64 and was all over Vietnam and I came home from there.

Can you tell us about the Training Team in Vietnam?

Well you have a bunch of kids in the village and you enlist them and you train them and

27:30 they were terrible. The company that I took over they're all young but to me they looked like about ten year old kids and some kid, some of them had, they took a size five boot they had a size seven and you'd hear them plop, plop around the place and the uniforms didn't fit them and they never, ever paid them. Some of the blokes I had hadn't been paid for five months and

28:00 admittedly they're young but they need to go out. So I kicked up a hell of a stink and for about a week rushing around abusing everybody and getting things and eventually got them all fitted out with gear they wanted.

What channels did you have to go through?

I just went straight to the top. If I wanted clothes I went straight to the Q-store which is illegal but just rush in and make a hell of a noise and they're bloody glad to get rid of you. And everybody did the same in the finish and of course that

28:30 got us in big with the diggers because we looked after them and they don't care about them, they just enlist them, then they train them and things like, they'll camp here and they'll have a training area in the Esplanade in Perth but they forget that they've got to march in the morning and march home at night and you know the poor little buggers were starting about four o'clock in the morning and finish about nine at night and they weren't taking any interest in the training at all. So we stopped all that rubbish and it took a long time because

29:00 over there it's like all Oriental countries, when you're a boss or an official all the rest are crap, you know they don't care about them, but the officers used to come in out of the bush and we were in a place called Phu Bai[?] which is about six hundred mile up, nearly in North Vietnam and they'd fly back to the airport and they'd leave the diggers there and they'd jump in jeeps and go into town and get on the booze and chase

29:30 sheilas [women] for a day and a night and come back and they'd expect the soldiers to be ready to go and fight. So we used to dob them in [inform on them], ring up and say, "Listen, all the officers are gone." so there'd be hell to pay and they didn't like us for a little while. And we didn't speak much of the lingo and it was pretty hard and of course the interpreters they used they tell lies like bloody steam. You tell them something that he's done wrong and if he's seen you they'll tell them something different altogether.

30:00 And we had one chap that was a qualified interpreter so he didn't say anything for a month and then at the end of the month we got all the instructors in the big hall and he got up and blabbed off in Vietnamese and well you should have seen them, boy they were going red, white and yellow because he pointed out blokes, you're a liar, you tell lies and it stopped it all and they started listening to us but we'd train the battalion and then go out in the bush with them.

30:30 **What kind of training did you give them?**

Same as you'd train them, give them in Australia you know weapons, tactics, navigation, mainly there was a lot of navigation in Vietnam because it's difficult and how to look after themselves and so forth and so on and but we used to go out and we had nothing like, later on they gave them radios and everything to get in contact with fighters and that, we just went out as a normal instructor you know and

31:00 in a battalion there's an American captain, an American lieutenant and normally a sergeant and an Australian and you get so bloody sick of Americans talking after it. You know you spend two or three months and don't see an Australian, it bores you to tears because Australia had nothing, when we came

into places like Da Nang or any place like that for a couple of days rest we had to sleep in the captains' room because there was no accommodation for us. We were just attached to the Americans.

31:30 Is this still during the training scheme?

No, changed after about the first 18 months. The end of '64 it was starting to get good. They gave us radios and they put Australians in charge and all sorts of things. See they were so worried, General Pollard's son was with us, he was a captain and I knew him very well and we were talking one night and I said to him, "Why don't you see the boss and see if he could put him in charge as a captain and send WO1s and WO2s

32:00 Australian with the battalion?" and we put it in to General Timmy Hughes, a nice fellow, and he said to Captain Pollard, he said straight out, "You think I'm a bloody fool?" and Pollard said, "Why?" and he said, "You blokes are qualified jungle fighters," he said, "You'll make all the Americans look bloody stupid. But," he said, "While we keep with you we're learning something." So it wasn't till the Training Team had been there three years before they started to out them in charge

32:30 because they were getting better results. But they put a lot of Australians with Special Forces where you run your own company, you know, go and recruit a hundred blokes and train them and feed them and pay them and take them out in the bush.

What kinds of things would you do when you'd take them out in the bush?

Same as you know, do a reconnaissance on villages and if there's Viet Cong there attack the village but mainly, as much as you can train them as soon as

33:00 the shooting starts bad they start to run away, you've got a hell of a job to stop them from running away.

So they were actual situations that you were training in?

Yeah.

Live action.

Well you train them back at camp and then you take them out to certain areas and do the same thing but in actual action. But after three years the Australians were in charge of them which was good, you train them and you get an interpreter and you train them and I had an interpreter and they give you each one an interpreter and

33:30 the fellow I had was, his mother was a Laotian and his father was Vietnamese and he didn't like Vietnamese too much and he was an ex-uni student, spoke English very well and very, very keen so for the first three weeks every night I used to take him up to my room and teach him tactics and I said to him, "Now, when we go out in the bush," I said, "I expect you to tell me everything that's going on." "Oh yes, I'll do that." and I said, "I'll tell you now,

34:00 get this straight, if I get shot when I'm out there and I'm still alive I'll shoot you dead because you know what's going on, if you don't tell me that's where you'll end up." and he was bloody marvellous. He'd say to me, "Don't trust that bloke he's no good, keep him in front." or you'd hear a couple of shots ring out and say, "What's going on?" and he'd say, "I just shot the" - (they'd call it send it off) - he said, "I just sent him off, he's no good." But he protected me very well but we went out once with them, a battalion while we were doing the tactics, someone shot the American

34:30 captain twelve times in the back so twenty-five percent of the Vietnamese were VC [Viet Cong]. I got sent back to Duc Mi to the ranger centre to run an officers' course. And that used to last a month. When you run a course the students do all the work, I was the only one that wasn't a student so I say to you, "Right, you're the platoon commander today so you stay with me. You sleep in the same hootchie as me in the night and everything."

35:00 and you rotate the whole lot and after a month we used to go back to the camp on the Friday and Saturday morning have a parade and give them their certificates and that was alright, they were all doing very well and go over Saturday morning to the parade and in the training office we had a pigeonhole where all the things were and there was a letter there for me and I opened this letter and it was from one of the officers that had

35:30 been on the course - he was a VC officer. He'd infiltrated in and got in the course because they all look the same, you can't tell them apart, well I didn't know and if they couldn't tell, I couldn't tell and he wrote me a letter and said, "Dear Mr Bandy, the course had been very good." he said, "I've learnt this and I've learnt that but," he said, "I'm afraid I can't pick up the certificate because I'm a VC officer. Thank you very much, signed...." And the man was sleeping in the same hootchie as him so it's just one of those things.

What were your thoughts when you read that letter?

36:00 Well what can you do about it? Nothing.

Were you peed off?

Well we knew that each battalion, out of say 600 in a battalion twenty per cent of them so 100 would be

VC sympathisers so they'd plod along and make a noise so the VC would hear or things like that you know just to, casual things you couldn't pin anything on. But yeah, you've just got to put up with it.

36:30 **This was the first time you'd been to Vietnam right?**

Yeah.

Were you learning something about the Vietnam jungle yourself?

Oh no, the jungle was no problem. We fought in New Guinea you see and Malaya so we knew all about the jungle but the thing was that you've got to try to teach them to move quietly and not carry a lot of gear and all this sort of thing and the thing was that with the Australians they didn't prepare us for anything. We flew to Saigon, we did a week's lectures from different Americans that knew bugger all anyway as far as we were concerned

37:00 and but they don't tell you anything about the culture and what to expect. I mean the Buddhists, and ninety per cent of them were Buddhist in Vietnam, so they carry everything live and kill it, they don't sort of kill it here and send them out as base so...

So you were just saying that when you arrived in Vietnam you had to go through training with these Yanks that didn't know anything and the Australians didn't tell you anything?

37:30 There was no Australians there, we had one Australian there but he was too busy organising things for the hierarchy and it was organised, there were 30 of us and we were sent away to the country in groups of two or three or one and there was one training centre called Phu Bai which was right up north and they sent most of the Australians up there because it was closer to the front you see and there was eight

38:00 of us there I think and they sent someone down, about six or seven down to Phu Bai which was the ranger training centre, that was well down south and other places you know around the country. But we arrived there and we had four days briefing with the Americans and then they said 'Right, well you're going to Phu Bai now'. I had no idea where Phu Bai was and neither did the captain that was with me and they said, "Alright, here's your orders." and they give you

38:30 one piece of paper like that and it's got your name on it and you can produce that and you can ride anywhere in an American aeroplane. You can go to America if you want to if there's a seat on the plane. So you go to the airport and Tan Son Nhut Airport's probably as big as Sydney and they say, "Go out there, go to such and such a check in and the sergeant will tell you when to go. You might go today, you might go tomorrow, you might go in three days, whatever

39:00 planes going north you get on it." So you get out there and the only thing that's there is water. There's nothing to eat or anything like that. We got there about two o'clock in the afternoon, went and saw the sergeant, he said, "You'll probably go tomorrow but hang around." so we hang around that night, you sleep on the floor. Got up the next day and we went and found a Vietnamese place where you could get something, eggs and stuff, and the next afternoon about

39:30 three o'clock I think he called us up and said, "I can take you to Da Nang. We knew where it was roughly but we didn't know where Phu Bai was from there or how we were going to get there. So we flew up to Da Nang, we got there about five o'clock I think, half past five, something like that and I was getting off and the pilot said to me, "How are you going to get to Phu Bai?" and I said, "I don't know. I don't know where it is." and he said, "It's right over the top of that big range of mountains." I said, "Oh. Okay." I said, "How do you get there?"

40:00 and he said, "Well go and..." - there was just a bush strip, there was no bitumen or anything. There was a hut about as big as this made out of bush, he said, "Go and wait in that hut and a plane will probably pick you up tomorrow or the next day or something like that." you see. In a strange country so we wandered over to this bloody hut and luckily we'd just sat down thinking, "Well, what the hell have we got ourselves into here?" sort of business and a Tiger Moth lands. Some

40:30 bloke skylarking round and he said, "Where are you going?" and we said, "We're going to Phu Bai." "Hop in," he said, "I'll drop you off there." So brmmmmmmmm! Away we go, get to the airport and ring up and they come out and picked us up. They knew we were coming but when they didn't know and we arrived and they gave us a briefing and had a look around for two days and they said, "Well there's your battalion. Go to it." and that's it and of course the hygiene's terrible and the food is terrible and

41:00 the flies, there's flies and rats, there's millions of them. The rats are as big as rabbits and they catch them and eat them, the rats. But they cooked rice in big bowls, you know over a fire, and they put a soldier up there to stir it and he's got a shovel, there's normally three hoppers of rice, and of course it's too hot for the flies. When he puts the shovel down it's absolutely black covered with flies and he picks it up, just knocks it like that and stirs the

41:30 thing and he's in his underpants. And oh, terrible. The interpreter said to me, "If you ever go near the kitchen you'll never eat the tucker." But I mean you can't do anything else. When we were in camp it was alright because you eat at, well they call it the BOQ [bachelor officers' quarters], the Americans say, you've got a bed and a room and all that and they've got a bar you can have a drink and all that but when you go out in the bush, see we had no re-supply so we couldn't get, the only thing we could do was

buy a packet of biscuits or buy

42:00 a tin of meat or something like that off the Americans

Tape 9

00:34 **You were just talking about resupply?**

With the Americans? Well when you go out in the battalion and what we do if we get resupply, you go to a certain area and you clear it all, you start with a centre point and you clear it for say 200 yards all around and they you call in the aeroplanes and you put helium gas in a little balloon and you let it go up through the,

01:00 send itself up through the canopy so when the planes coming over you call them up and say, "Can you see the balloon?" and he says yes, "Well, that's where we want it dropped." and that's where they drop it and they call them storepedos, they're long things, about six foot long and about that round and they're like a torpedo and the parachute keeps it straight so it'll go straight in through the canopy but we drop them like that and it's alright, but they don't, they drop everything live. The first time I went out with a battalion we did everything right,

01:30 cleared everything nice and quietly and the plane come over and the first thing it dropped out was twenty WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, in a crate, live, and as soon as a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK hits the fresh air they really started squawking. Next thing they dropped was a couple of pigs and you could hear them miles away you know. And then they go and collect them all and they carry them and then of course the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s were going 'cook, cook, cook' all the time and I used to get really bloody annoyed over this and then

02:00 they go to a village and they stop and they kill them all, and they're terribly cruel the Buddhists because they can't cut a head of a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK , they rub it off. So they get a knife and they keep rubbing it like that till it cuts through instead of chopping it off and the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK kicks up bloody hell and they pluck them and then they cut them up into little bits, everything. Stomach and all, feet, eyes, head, everything and they cook it. And of course there's no refrigeration so ninety per cent of it's fly blown and there's a bloke there with a shovel

02:30 and he's shovelling off all the maggots and the bits and pieces and they give you a little soldier to look after you and he goes and gets your food and everything and the first time he brought back some chicken and they're mad on cabbage and rice - that's about all they eat. And in the Dixie was the eye of a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK and a couple of feet, you know, the toenails. So I said to him, "They're no good, don't bring them anymore." So you'd see him afterwards, he'd go and get them and he's going round and he

03:00 was throwing all these things out that are no good. But their hygiene is terrible and they've got dysentery nearly all the time and of course we used to have to put up with that. We used to lose about a stone and a half in weight a month I suppose. Because we weren't getting any good tucker and you're sweating like mad carrying gear so that was, and not having any communications with us to contact our people, had to put up with the Yanks.

03:30 They're pretty pathetic sometimes. Some of them are very good but some of them are pretty pathetic.

When you say they're pathetic can you give me an example?

Well some of the officers just don't care, they're posted to these battalions, they've got to do six months with them say and they just go along with what the company commander says and when he stops they just put their hammock up and go to sleep and you know, pretty uninterested in it as far as the soldiers are concerned,

04:00 because their job is to advise the battalion commander you see. But for the warrant officers with the companies it's pretty negative and some of the Vietnamese company commanders were university students and they weren't too keen on getting into combat too much at the start anyway. So it was pretty frustrating and then every six months they rotate you around and then I went down to the training centre for the last

04:30 three months that I was there. I was supposed to go, there was a posting to, we used to do a week at a time unofficially with the American Special Forces, it was very good. And then they asked for a couple of people to be attached to them and they had one post out on the Laotian border and...

Were you just doing this out of interest?

05:00 What?

Getting posted with the American....?

Oh yeah, it was something to do, learn something and it was much safer with the Special Forces because they were all Americans. There'd be about 12 Americans there so it was pretty good. And

anyway, they then got used to recruit say if there was 12 Americans they'd probably recruit 300 Vietnamese and train them

05:30 and dig in there and make a camp and keep that area clear and anyway we came back to... Grumpy Conway was the other bloke's name, and we were both back at Phu Bai and they said, "Right, one of you had got to go to Duc My and the other one has got to go the Special Forces' so we both wanted to go to Special Forces so we tossed and I lost and I went to Duc My and a week later he got killed. But just the luck of the draw and

06:00 I was at Duc My for about three months and I came home from there and I came back to Canungra and the family wanted to come back to Perth because we'd been over there for four years.

You've just mentioned your family - we didn't actually cover when you got married...

I got married in '53. When I was at Swanbourne. If Dad hadn't been sick and I'd have come home I wouldn't have got married because I wasn't that....

06:30 I just wanted to wander around and go from place to place but anyway that was alright and they were at Canungra with me and so they wouldn't tell me, they were going to send a battalion to Vietnam and I was a WO1 and the CO of the battalion was going was my old platoon commander and he said if I was available that he'd like me as the RSM, but they weren't being formed for three or four months you see.

07:00 So when I went to see the boss in Canungra and he said, "Oh, you'll have to stay in Queensland." and I said, "I don't want to stay in Queensland, my family wants to go back to Perth." "You can't go back." I said, "Why can't I go back?" and he wouldn't tell me. So I said, "Well, I'm going to see the director." you can go over their head you see, so I went down to Brisbane and I saw the Director of Infantry and he said, "Look, I'll be frank with you." he said, "You'll have to revert to a WO2 to go back to Perth." and I said, "Right, give me the piece of paper and I'll sign it."

07:30 So I did. And they still didn't tell me that I was supposed to go to 6th Battalion as RSM otherwise I'd have stayed there because I was happy to go to the battalion. Anyway we came home and we were home a year and a bit I think and I got home and I had leave and I fronted up for work as a WO2 and I saw the second in command of the brigade, the brigade major and he said, "You're incorrectly dressed."

08:00 and I said, "No I'm not." so he went in and got on the phone to the director and he came out and he said, "Go home and get that crap off and put your... you're back up to WO1 and you're going down to 1 Battalion." So I went down to one of the battalions, they formed a battalion here and I was with it for about 18 months and they rang me up and said, "You're getting posted to the Infantry Centre in Ingleburn." then. The Infantry Centre trains all the

08:30 officers and all the senior NCOs for the whole army you see. So I said, "Right that will do me." I was going there as an instructor and I went there as the senior drill instructor which was good and I was there 18 months and one of the COs wanted me to go to 5 Battalion and I couldn't go because the brigadier wouldn't let me go but you had to do two years before they let you go. Anyway, my two years was up and 7 Battalion came

09:00 back from Vietnam and they were minus an RSM and the CO was my old platoon commander in 1946 in Japan, so he came over to interview some people and I put my name down to be interviewed and I saw him walking along the path before he went in the interview room said, "G'day Sir, how are you?" and he said, "Good. I haven't seen you for years, what are you doing?" and I said to him, "What are you doing over...?" - I knew what he was there for and I said - "What are you doing over here Sir?" and he said, "I've come over here to interview some blokes for RSM." and I said,

09:30 "Well I'm one of those blokes." and he said, "Oh, don't worry," he said, "You've got the job." So anyway we went up and there was four of us I think and we all went for interview and a week later I was in 7 Battalion and 18 months later I'm back in Vietnam. So the CO was good enough, he said to me - we got warned to go to Vietnam - and he called me and he said to me, "Now the battalion's going back to Vietnam..." there was a new CO there then, Gray was his name,

10:00 "But," he said, "You don't really have to go if you don't want to." Well, you know, you've been training 900 soldiers for a year and then you're kicking out, you know they go to Vietnam and you stop home and I said, "I couldn't stand that, it'd be on my conscience for life." you know. So he said, "Alright." so I went back and...

What did your family think about that?

Weren't too happy because the thing was you see the year beforehand I spent 36 days home out of the year and then you're a

10:30 year away in Vietnam so I was basically away for two years because see you've got companies training in New South Wales, in Victoria, up in Queensland so you've got to go back and forwards all the time. And then I came home from there in '71 and my wife and the kids were in the village and the CO that came and got me in '70 was promoted and he was the commander of the

11:00 Infantry Centre and when I came back from Vietnam I had five weeks leave I think. I'd only been on leave a week and that was then March I think and we'd planned to come back to Perth that end of the

year you see....So he said to me, "What are you doing?" and I said, "I'm on leave." and he said, "I've got a job for you." and I said, "Not for another six weeks, I want to stop home." and he said

11:30 to my wife, he said, "Are you going back to Perth in December?" and she said, "Yes we are." and he said, "If he goes back to work on Monday I'll give him two weeks extra stand down." and she said, "He'll go to work." so Monday morning I fronted up at work and him and the RSM had had a barney [fight] and he sacked him and anyway we did come home, he gave us the extra two weeks and we had seven weeks I think, and we drove home and sent all the family and everything and went home and

12:00 in 1972 he walked in one morning in May I think it was, and he said, threw a piece of paper on the table, a piece of A4 pad and he said, "Write a page on why you should go to America or England." so I sat down and first of all I found out what it was about and then I rang up different people I knew because of the kids you see and they said, "Go to England. Don't go to America because if you go to America all the schooling is computerised." It's all on computers so

12:30 you know if you've got kids that are halfway through school or have got a couple of years to go it'll cost you a fortune to send them back there to go to school, so I wrote a full page on why I should go to England and a week later I got the job. I went to Canberra for interview and I was lucky, the officer that was interviewing us was in Korea with me so you know.

Well, you've also got a hell of a lot of experience

13:00 **by that point. If I can just take you back at this stage to Vietnam - what sort of skirmishes happened while you were over there both the first time and the second time?**

First time, practically the same as what, not on as large a scale as Korea and World War II, it was mainly what they call battalions but they were only about 400 strong and they had no idea about

13:30 co-ordination different units. You know they had units all over the place and they set up artillery bases in a certain area and then certain battalions work within the range of that battalion base which was a pain in the butt.

Why was that?

Because you know if you strike something and you get stuck into it you're supposed to trace them and either kill them or get rid of them altogether, well, they knew perfectly well that we wouldn't go outside the artillery range

14:00 so they would just take off and when we got to where the artillery was no good we'd leave them and go somewhere else and they'd go back to where they'd come from and that's the sort of thing that went on. It was difficult because we couldn't tell one from the other and the Communists used terrible tactics and they had, it was all fear tactics, we were in a village once protecting the village for about two weeks and it was a marvellous little place, everybody was happy and everything,

14:30 and nearly every village has got a Catholic church and all this sort of garbage...

How big is the village?

Probably about anything from 10 to 50 houses as they call them. But we left to do an exercise for 48 hours and when we come back the Communists had come in and they'd got the priest and nailed him up alive

15:00 on the wall, and anybody that objected to it they shot them and left them. Just shot them through the head or through the leg and everything and left them in the street. That's to show their superiority you see. And of course it upset us like hell when we came back. Nothing you can do about it.

What did you do?

Nothing, just took him down and got him fixed up and buried all the dead and cleaned everything up and stopped there for the week and everything was fine. They never come back. But you see they've got people in the village that are informing them, like the mother

15:30 of two sons was in one village and she was as nice as pie to us but she was telling them everything that was going on.

Do you think that most of that was out of fear?

Of course yeah, well, they'd kill them. No sweat at all and I mean terrible things, like they'd cut their ear off or cut their tongue out or gouge an eye out. Anything like that, anything terrible and we could understand why they were so terrified, poor buggers. And if the Americans,

16:00 the Americans used to have medical teams that used to go around and the American Special Forces medics - they're trained to fix up the maternity side of it you know and they'd go to villages and organise women having kids and looking after them and go every week and give the kids injections and then probably the VC would come in and use them as target practice - chuck them up in the air and shoot them, or bayonet them

16:30 so you know that brought you on a bit you know, and we could understand the fear that they were going through because we couldn't stay there all the time and that was the biggest problem. See when the Poms took over Malaya they started on one end of Malaya and went right through and took a little bit at a time and secured it and anybody that didn't do as they were told they shot them and everybody that done as they were told got fed and they worked and they protected them in the rice fields and everything and the Americans said, "That's too slow. We want to do it quick."

17:00 Well they didn't do it at all and we knew they wouldn't do it. And the other thing that was, like in Korea, there were certain things that the Americans couldn't do. They couldn't bomb the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Now we knew the Ho Chi Minh Trail come down inside Laos on the border and that's where they got all their supplies. They brought them down South Korea and come in just above, just on the border and you couldn't touch them till they got to South Korea. Now if they'd allowed them to,

17:30 the air force to bomb those we wouldn't have had any trouble. And...

But there was a lot of ordnance dropped on Laos around the Ho Chi Minh Trail area.

Not a lot. No. Not a lot. Not in the Ho Chi Minh Trail. They weren't allowed and they dropped a lot of bombs with the B29s from, in up North Korea but that was too late. The Americans saw all the sites, their pilots used to come back and tell us, "Oh they're building big ack ack sites,

18:00 put ack ack guns here and here and here." but they couldn't touch them. Said, "No, you're not allowed to touch them." and later on they shot the blokes down. And rocket sites and all that and they reported them all but they wouldn't let them do, they wouldn't let the navy go into North Vietnam harbours and the navy was sitting there watching all the supplies go in to North Vietnam and they'd take

18:30 it down the Ho Chi Minh Trail into South Vietnam. It was stupid, it was all political. And in the finish when we were there in '72, '72 you just about had to ask a bloke whether he was VC before you shot him. And to give you an idea of how quick the Communists and the good doers have of communications, we shot a girl about 18

19:00 she was, she was dressed, she was a VC officer and we shot her about four o'clock in the afternoon I suppose.

How can you tell?

What?

That she was a VC officer?

Oh well we shot her, she was in charge of a group of people and we shot her and we got the chief of police and the mayor of the village straightaway, sent a helicopter in because you know it's very political and we knew it was so we flew them out straight away

19:30 and the chief of police identified her straightaway. He knew who she was. And we handed her over to them. Now that happened about four o'clock in the afternoon. In the daily paper in Sydney the next morning there was a big story - '7 Battalion Shoots a Civilian Girl- 18 Years of Age - The platoon raped her while she was hot before she died and they did this and they did that'. And by nine o'clock we had a ministerial

20:00 from Canberra. Now someone's got a finger in the pie somewhere to get everything that quick. And that's the sort of thing that we were up against in the latter part of Vietnam.

How did that information leak?

They've got, all these people that were burning flags and stomping around the country they were a lot of people with a lot of money and they had connections. And that's what used to

20:30 really piss the soldiers off. You know they tried to do their job and they were doing it properly but that's.... Luckily for us, we had the chief of police and the mayor and we handed them, we got statements from them and it all fizzled out. But if it hadn't of done the old man [the commander] would have got the sack. The brigadier would have got the sack and the CO would have got the sack and that's what they did.

Did they have to print a retraction?

No. No they just didn't worry about it at all. They just go on,

21:00 that's just bad luck. And another case we had we were, when we went to Vietnam with the battalion we were relying on the American planes to bring us home on leave, R and R [Rest & Recreation], five days so when we got there in January '70 we had to put in a list of where people wanted to go on leave in Australia and then the Americans sent back and said, "We can take 50 this day and 60 the next day." and so forth and so on.

21:30 And two mates put in, one come from South Australia and one come from Sydney and the chap from South Australia he put in to come on leave in December 1970 and the fellow from Sydney put in to come in July of '71, no '70 and as it turned out the soldiers that

- 22:00 in Sydney his girlfriend wrote to him and, no, the one in South Australia, wrote to him and said that she was pregnant and she wanted to see him so the only way he could get home was to swap with someone so he swapped with his mate in July right. So the digger flew home in July and went down to Adelaide and got married and everything was rosy but of course the father
- 22:30 of the son that was in, the digger that was to come in to Sydney in July he was a bit of one of these wowsers [prudes], so he wrote to the Minister of the Army and said that he went all the way to Sydney airport to meet his son coming home from Vietnam on leave in July and he never turned up. Some other digger went to South Australia in his place and all that and we got a hell of a rap over the knuckles so we got the two of them to write a letter to the Minister and they
- 23:00 wrote a letter and told them why they did it and how they did it and they done it all officially and it was nothing to do, it was no fault of the battalion's, the battalion helped them do it and he said, "I can show you a letter where I wrote to my father and told him what had happened." but they just ignored those things and they just make a big noise and get everybody into trouble and it's terrible, terrible effect on the soldiers overseas. One soldier wrote home and he said, they were going on so much he said, "I'm not coming home I'm
- 23:30 going over to Malaya for me five days R and R. I'll come home at the end of the year." so they wake up pretty quick with all the bloody nonsense. But you know the powers to be are a pain in the butt. And if you ever see a, there's a DVD out of John Wayne's listed, and he's the spruiker, 'The Will to Win' - you want to have a look at it. It's all true, I watched it
- 24:00 and I was there both times that he was talking about and the way that the powers to be crippled their countries it's shocking.

If we could go back to the second time you went to Vietnam - perhaps you could step me through that time from the time you arrived?

Well, I was lucky because as I said

- 24:30 before the battalion, they always believed that officers come and go and senior NCOs and that, they stay forever. So I knew the CO pretty well and he was a very hard CO, very thorough, he was at Canungra as the senior instructor when I was there for a while. And so when he came he said to me, "Right," he said, "You and I will run the battalion and everybody else will do as they're told." So that gave me a hell of a lot of power, more than I should have had. So actually all the lieutenants
- 25:00 right down the to last digger, all 900 of them all belonged to me. I was responsible for discipline, dress, training, and all this sort of crap and because the CO told them it was good and it worked very well. And I was telling you about you've got to give them something to do so I ripped into these blokes for about six weeks and a soldier's good. He doesn't mind being punished if it's instant punishment. So you've got to cook up something and
- 25:30 I used to do this thing before and you say to a digger, "Do you want to be charged or do you want to do such and such?" "I'll do so and so Sir." so you put him on guard or you give him down the kitchen or something like that but for normal misdemeanours around the battalion there's a big parade ground and it's all bitumen and I said to them all, "Right, now any misdemeanours like moving around the battalion slovenly or having buttons undone or anything like that or not saluting
- 26:00 an officer, you report to me at twelve o'clock or five o'clock and you run around the parade ground twice." So that was alright and I knew all the whole 900 of them by name, you've got to because when the general comes around, the RSM and the CO go strolling around the camp with him and they always do it, the generals say to the CO, "Oh, who's that soldier over there?" and of course the CO doesn't know and straightaway you've got to answer, "Oh, that's private so and so, a corporal, sergeant out there." and in some cases they'll call them over
- 26:30 and check up but being at the school you learn them all by heart so I knew them all.

I can't imagine being able to learn 900 names.

You know them all by rank and company. It's pretty easy after a while when you're with them all the time. And I'd see a digger and I'd say, "Private so and so, five or twelve?" and he'd say, "Twelve o'clock Sir." and he'd report up and I'd say, "Right-o, two laps of the parade ground." and he'd run around and come back and he'd say, "Oh it's so and so." and I'd say, "That's bullshit." and just let him go and this went on for

- 27:00 three years and then the diggers said to me one day when he's been discharged he said to me, "Just one thing I want to know before I go Sir, or before I become a civvy - how far is it around the parade ground?" and I'd say, "I don't know, I never ran around it." but you keep them guessing things like that. And they like it. Anyway we did this and they were getting a bit jack of it and the Royal Show was opening in Sydney and they rang up and said, "You'll supply the guard of honour for the Royal Show." which is one hundred and five blokes or something.
- 27:30 So I picked one hundred and five out of the battalion and then it was really good, they were keen to do it. A lot of them were National Service, we had 450 National Service and 450 regulars and a lot of the battalions didn't recognize the National Service but I called them all 7RAR. I said, "I don't care what you were before you come here." Anyway we mounted this guard of honour and they marched right

around the whole arena and the whole mob, I don't know how many thousand people all stood up and gave them a standing ovation.

- 28:00 And from then on they loved it. Because they thought they were good, and they were good. And quite often to catch out the brigadier would ring up and say, "I've got General so and so coming on - what's today Friday - coming on Sunday or Monday, want a guard of honour for him or a battalion parade." so we organised a set sequence and every Friday we had a battalion parade and anybody could come and all the diggers knew what to do.
- 28:30 And they'd say, "Hmm. That's amazing, you train them to go to Vietnam and they're so good on parade." and I say, "Yeah well, you've got to mix things up." and then of course everybody was having their say, the company commanders - there's eight of them - about how they should be trained before they go to Vietnam and I said to a lot of them, I said, "Look, you've got to remember that a good infantry soldier - his whole life revolves around his stomach and what hangs from it." and they said, "Oh yeah. So what?" and I said, "Well you train them hard and you treat
- 29:00 them rough but you've got to give them time off, they're getting paid, to get drunk and to chase women which is a normal thing for a fit soldier." So what we used to do, we used to start work at four o'clock on Monday morning and come home Thursday lunchtime. Thursday afternoon - we used to work them all night and all day, doesn't matter - Thursday afternoon they get showered and do all their washing and get all packed for the next week, Friday they have a battalion parade, have to get all dressed up so you get all
- 29:30 the bush rubbish out of their head, they're back soldiering again, and then have an inspection and then we'd go around the company and the best platoon in the company we'd send them on leave straightaway, say eleven o'clock on Friday morning and of course that suited the wives and the girlfriends because the battalion opposite us used to work the weekends and have them off during the week and of course the girlfriends are working and that's no good. So we said
- 30:00 Friday afternoon till Monday morning four o'clock was off unless they were on duty and we had no trouble at all. They thought it was marvellous. They fulfilled everything they wanted to do. They worked like buggery and then they get drunk and they get money, and I mean girls will chase soldiers because A) they're fit and B) they've got money and C) they're not going to be about long. So they can have a good time. So you know, that's the way it goes,
- 30:30 and a lot of them were married and the married sergeants, we had seven marriages in the battalion and we used to charge them \$112 for a wedding reception and it used to go from six o'clock till four o'clock in the morning and because the sergeants' mess is all set up like a, you've got your own dining room and snooker room and all this sort of thing and we used to
- 31:00 turn the dining room into a dance hall as well and put a board floor in so what we used to do was they used to get married.... I used to brief them both before they were married and say, "This is what you've got to do. You've got to be in the sergeants' mess at six o'clock so organise your wedding back from there - you get married at five o'clock, get your photos at half past five and be here at six." and I had one of the warrant officers dressed up in blues and when everybody was in I'd ring the bell and call him up and
- 31:30 he'd tell them exactly what's going to happen. So if civvies played up you just locked them up so we'd have pre-dinner drinks and everything and then we'd have a tea thing in the dining room and at the end of the tea all the bridal party would sit down and all the rest used to stand up, it was a smorgasbord you see and in the billiard room we had a great big billiard table and we used to have a cover put over it and we had piles of all the beautiful
- 32:00 glassware and that you know. And we'd go in there and because I drink Drambuie we used to toast the bride in Drambuie and that would give the diggers a chance to clear the dining room and we'd get a couple of blokes from the band and we'd dance till four o'clock. And 112 bucks covered till twelve o'clock, but the amazing thing out of the seven weddings, all the fathers and mothers thought that the army didn't have any money and
- 32:30 I'd end up with three or four hundred dollars in my pocket. They'd say, "Oh, we know the army hasn't got money. Here's a cheque to cover the wedding and all this." So at twelve o'clock I'd just announce that the booze was on till four o'clock and everybody loved it and then for the wife, we didn't give them a present from the mess. The mess has a tax-exemption form, I don't know whether it's legal or illegal but we made it legal anyway so you'd
- 33:00 find out what the wife wanted you see, and then about three weeks after they come back from their honeymoon, or a couple of weeks after they come back from their honeymoon I knew a lot of business people in town that we used to deal with and say, 'Look, we just had a wedding and the bride wants such and such.' and he'd say, "Oh yeah, we'll fill in the tax exemption form and I'll give you twenty percent off. It'll cost you probably so and so." so something that would cost about 250 bucks we'd get for 100 bucks. So I used to buy it with the
- 33:30 old man's staff car and send the mess sergeant in. He'd go to the house with the car, pick up the bride, nothing to do with the husband at all, take her into town, see what she wanted, buy it and get it delivered. And the young wives thought it was marvellous you know. They were in a community that

looked after them and all that sort of thing and once a month we used to have a mixed function with the wives and make the husbands get all dressed up in their white and red pants and put on a

- 34:00 dinner-dance and they became a part of the unit and were very good and when we went away there was no problem because they all knew one another and the older ones looked after the younger ones and as RSM you've got to do a lot of things you shouldn't do because that's the way it works. Like a digger will come up, one digger came to me one day and he rushed in and knocked on the door and he said, "Can I...." because the CO said, "If any digger's in trouble see the RSM." and he knocked on
- 34:30 my door and he said, "Can I see you Sir?" and I said, "Yeah what's the trouble?" and he walked in and he said, "I'll be frank Sir. My girlfriend's pregnant." and I said, "Well what the hell do you want me to do about it?" and he said, "I don't know. I want some advice." and I said, "What's your girlfriend think of it?" "She wants to get married." and I said, "Well give us her phone number, there you are - dial her number." So he dialled this girlfriend and he said, "The RSM wants to talk to you." and I said, "Yeah listen, I'm such and such and I've got your boyfriend here. He's told me the story,
- 35:00 you want to get married?" "Sure yeah." I said, "What's your mother think about it?" and she said, "I'll put her on." so I said to her, "What do you think about it mum - is your daughter getting married?" she said, "They can't get married, they've got no money." I said, "Don't worry about it, I'll get the padre to marry them," - the army padre marries them in the church for nothing - and I said, "We'll put on a" - we have regimental funds in the battalion, we had nearly 28,000 I think in the funds and that's for different things, to help diggers and their families - so I said, "Right, we'll put on a breakfast
- 35:30 for twenty people so don't invite any more." So, "That'll be fine." she said so boom! In a week he's married. So mum and dad were extremely happy because you know, and so was she because no-one knew at that stage, only the two of them, and things like that and of course Mum said, "Well, I don't know where they're going to live." so I knew an estate agent in Liverpool and I rang him up and I said, "I want a one bedroom unit in pretty good order." and he said, "I'll see what I can do." and he rang me back
- 36:00 about three days later and said, "I've got a good one." So I paid a month's rent from the regimental funds and said to the digger, "Now, you've paid a month's rent, you get your arse into gear and get it fixed up." and as far as I know they're still married. So you know, you've got to help diggers. And that's what they don't understand now. And as RSM you've got direct contact with the CO, you can do anything you know. And I'd write a leave pass and sign it for him, the CO had to sign leave passes to go out of New South Wales
- 36:30 but I could sign them for him and he knew. And lots of things you've got to do. A young kid, he was seventeen and a half when he came to the battalion, he came from Wagga, Kapooka, and the girlfriend he was living with was in Melbourne and he come to me one day and he looked terrible, it was a Thursday and I said, "What's wrong with you?" and he said, "Oh my girlfriend's sixteen and she's got a little baby and she's going to commit suicide if I don't come home."
- 37:00 and all this crap, so I said to him, "Do you want to go home?" and he said, "Yeah." I said, "Well go home, pack her up and bring her up here and by Monday I'll arrange for you to go into a unit here." So I rang up the estate agent and he said, "Yes I can fix it up." and I knew a soldier who was going down there so I got the CO to sign a leave pass and I said to this corporal, "You can go Thursday instead of Friday, you can have an extra day if you bring this digger back with his wife." He said yeah. So he brought them back
- 37:30 and I saw him last year and they're still married but she would have probably committed suicide before you know. So you've got to be a jack of all trades and a master of none.

Sounds like you really enjoyed that human element side of things?

Well I knew all about it and dealing with diggers all your life and young blokes and you know I did the same thing - got drunk and sort of played up and everything when I was a digger because you got paid and you'd spend all your money

- 38:00 and you'd stop home. There was no worries, no skin off your nose. So then all the diggers used to come to me you know, "What do you think about that?" and the funny thing before we went away the CO said to me, "You'd better talk to these soldiers because they haven't been to South East Asia before and into beer halls and all this sort of thing." so I was talking away and then I said, "Any questions?" and they said, "Do you think we should get engaged before we go?" and I said, "No." and the bloke said, "Why?" and I said, "Well, putting a ring on her finger won't keep
- 38:30 her. If she won't stay as she is she's not going to wait for you with a ring on her finger." and that caused a hell of a kerfuffle [fuss] and mum's rang up and said, "You say this and my daughter..." So they appeared and they wanted a briefing so the CO and I went down and I had to do the speaking and I said to them, "Look, if she won't stay as it is now then she's happy as they are." I said, "He's going to be away so there's no benefit in being engaged." and I said, "It's extra worry on the girl, if the bloke gets killed she'll
- 39:00 mourn him like hell because she's engaged to him but if it's a boyfriend it's a different story." And I said, "When they come back they can get engaged and married and everything's fine." So after about an

hour's talking I convinced them all and very few of them got engaged but all those sort of things that come up and I said to them, "When you go to any of these Asian places you go to beer halls, there's good looking girls there and when you go there you've got good intentions

39:30 and you get three or four jugs of beer into you and they start to get more beautiful every time and all of a sudden boom! Things happen." I said, "Go prepared." and they said, "We went to such and such and we had no intention of going anywhere and we ended up in here and there and everywhere see." but they always had all the gear with them so it was alright. You've got to be honest and sort of understand what they're going to go through

40:00 and we had the same trouble with diggers in Japan you know, but if you talk to them and they use their common sense they don't get into trouble.

What other sorts of advice did you give them about South East Asia?

Not to eat anything that's not... like you don't eat, be careful eating fish and eat eggs, eggs are alright because eggs are alright anywhere,

40:30 don't eat any pork because pork in South East Asia is riddled with Hepatitis so you'd better not. They never grill it properly like they do here to kill all the germs so I said, "Well, don't eat it. If in doubt, leave it alone because it will kill you." The other thing is that we instilled in them, they had a lot of trouble with the military police, the battalion before us so the military police, they're a necessary evil you know what I mean? They're there

41:00 for a purpose to look after soldiers and to punish them and lock them up if they get into trouble. So pardon me, particularly when you're overseas because there's no transport really so you've got to walk everywhere so the battalion had a hell of a trouble so I said to the CO we'll go down and see the provos [provosts], and we used to do it in Japan, get the provos, they've got to go around at say half past eleven when there's curfew so if you get the major

41:30 to send five or six jeeps around with the provos, with only two provos in it so if they see diggers there that are drunk, throw them in the wagon and take them, we had a depot they used to go to and so we went down and we said to them - I knew the major that was in charge of the police - and I said to him you know, he said to me, "I hope your battalion's better than the last one. We had a hell of a lot of trouble with them." and I said, "Well, we need your co-operation." and he said, "What do you want?" so we told him and he said, "Oh, we'll give it a go." so he said, "I'll tell my military policemen and you tell your diggers." so I got all

42:00 the diggers together and laid down the law and I said, "Now...

Tape 10

00:00 I was, yeah I went back with the battalion and that's when I arrived and I was telling you about the provos. We did organise the provos, I lectured the diggers and the provo marshal lectured the provos and eventually when they went down, they used to go down for 48 hours and everything's free, we had a big depot there where they had hamburgers 24 hours a day and booze, if they wanted, swimming pool, everything but naturally people want to go out into town and

01:00 get on the booze and we had a curfew at half past eleven so at twenty past eleven, five or six military police jeeps would drive around and naturally the diggers get a bit drunk and they're trying to get home and the provos say to them, 'Want a lift?' and begrudgingly the diggers say yes because they want a lift home and after a couple of times when they found out it worked alright we had very little trouble with charges as far as soldiers were concerned but before

01:30 that they had a hell of a lot of trouble.

Were you at Nui Dat?

Yeah.

And you're talking about leave in Vung Tau?

We used to go on leave in Vung Tau yeah. And that's the other thing that people don't realise about Vietnam. Now they call everybody Vietnam veterans now it doesn't matter what you're doing, if you're overseas but be honest enough to say what you're doing. There was about 100 in Saigon, that's like living in Perth in a hotel. Vung Tau was a leave centre, there was 5000 there

02:00 because all the ordnance and the sigs and all the maintenance for the battalion was there. And the taskforce was at Nui Dat. Now, the people at Vung Tau and Saigon would hear a noise occasionally, you know but they never got actually shot at. Never even went out at night, hardly ever done any picketing at night because they were done by Vietnamese police. At Nui Dat the set-up there is that

02:30 brigade headquarters which is all the nerve centre - clerks and all that sort of crap, the bludgers,

'pogos' they called them, they're in the middle. They're a necessary evil, they've got to be there and no-one worries about that but they'll say, "Yeah I was in Vietnam, I was doing this and I was doing that." and they weren't at all, they're telling lies. The infantry soldiers and the armoured and artillery were probably, engineers, were probably the only ones that did any work and went out and got shot at occasionally and done a lot of hard work for nothing really, but

03:00 Nui Dat, there'd be probably 10,000 there so as long as people admitted what they were doing it's not so bad, but the kids at school often come up with, "How do we know?" and I said, "Well, if someone says, 'I was in Vietnam,' say, 'Which battalion were you with?' and if they weren't with a battalion they'll turn away' because you know, instead of saying straight out, 'I was a clerk in ordnance, I was doing this or doing that, doing something else,' which

03:30 is just, you've got to have it. The average ratio in Vietnam for every infantry soldier in the battalion there were five people to keep him in the line so you know it's down the line that weren't in the fighting. But it's got to be so. If they'd say so, it would be alright but they don't, they big note themselves.

What was your rank at Nui Dat?

RSM. I was the Regimental Sergeant Major 7th Battalion [7RAR]. And you look after about eight or nine

04:00 hundred blokes and once you train them and you go to Vietnam most of Vietnam was done in company groups, but platoon commander for six years before I was an RSM, a lot of the young lieutenants were National Servicemen that went to Skyville [officer training] and they only know as much as you teach them and of course when you got up there and things got a bit tough, they get a bit worried, so my code name

04:30 was 'pastick' [?] so the CO would fly around in his helicopter and the CO had a wireless in his bunk and I had one in mine, I could hear it and he'd just call up and say, "Pastick I want you to be ready in fifteen minutes the chopper will take you to Delta Five or Delta Four." or whatever it was' and I'd get my gear and go out and spend two or three days walking in the bush with him and settle

05:00 him down and help him navigate, and sometimes they have trouble with some digger that, see we had some soldiers that had been to Vietnam once or twice before and they started big noting themselves and they find out and then you find out and then go down and walk along with them and pull them into gear for half a day or something, and when they know you're going to come around, well they don't give them any trouble and I could sack a sergeant like a flash by telling the CO, so they all knew you know, that

05:30 you look after this lieutenant or else you'll get the big A [get the sack] but they worked well and by doing that I kept in contact with all the battalions and if a digger was in trouble he'd always come and see me and some would come, I tell you, we had two fellows, one was an Italian, what the hell was name, Spano I think his surname was, and he said, he always used to say when we were training he said,

06:00 "Oh I don't know about going to Vietnam Sir, I'm frightened." I said, "Well I've been frightened for all the time I've been in the army!" sort of business and laugh and joke it off. Anyway the CO said, "They've got to spend six months in the bush before they can go for another job." and of course coming up six months I'd see him and he'd say, "Got a job for me Sir?" and eventually I got him a job as a batman and he was as pleased as punch with that and I had another Aboriginal boy from Queensland and

06:30 he wanted a job and the CO and I have a batman between us, so we got him a job. He was very good, he was. But to tell you how funny it was later on, we had a few blokes wounded and they used to get up every morning and we were on base and they'd give us a cup of coffee and you know, look after us, and this morning the CO got up and he said to me, "RSM, we've got to send some of these people from VHQ back to the companies, we've had a few wounded."

07:00 and so forth and so on and no-one said a word and the CO said to Spano, "What about you Private Spano?" and he stood to attention and he said, "Sir, have you ever seen a brave dago [Italian]?" So the old man said, "Go to buggery!" But you know once they get well disciplined and understand things you know, they don't overstep the line and it's quite funny.

How long were you at Nui Dat?

Well Nui Dat was the base camp but we spent,

07:30 we used to spend seven weeks at a time in the bush. We'd fly out of Nui Dat, the whole battalion and we'd go to, say an area in Bunbury for argument's sake

Let's just use the accurate name of the area if you like.

Well it was in the Phuoc Tuy Province but it was say twenty mile from Nui Dat so they'd want that area cleared, so we'd fly a company in to clear the area, then we'd fly the whole battalion

08:00 in and they would clear all around the place for say a mile, a couple of mile, then we'd bring in all the heavy equipment, the artillery and the engineers and everything and make it a complete fire support base that we could fight anything with it. And we'd stay there for seven weeks and we'd patrol within a

five mile radius, ten mile radius of that fire support base. And that's the way we cleared our AO [area of operations].

- 08:30 What we used to do and we worked on all the old World War II system, in World War II we used to do a reconnaissance patrol with three people and a fighting patrol with ten or fifteen, depended on the size you wanted to send. So what, instead of dragging lots of soldiers, and the Americans drag 50 or 60 around, so we'd send out six or seven three man patrols with a gunship up top.
- 09:00 And they'd patrol say from a couple of mile and they call it a wagon wheel, they all go out on a bearing and then they all turn right and move 100 metres or 200 metres and all come back on a certain bearing so you cover about half of that wagon wheel in one day. The next day you do the same thing and if they strike anything they don't, they dodge, they don't engage, they call us straight away and we have a fighting patrol on
- 09:30 standby and they flash out and they go straight in and deal with the situation and we found that very good and we'd cleared out AO and at one stage we went two months I think, and never fired a shot. Because we'd be playing the goose at their own method you see. They never knew where we were going to turn up. We picked up pay officers and instructors and visiting officers coming down and all sorts of things but they wouldn't come.
- 10:00 So we were laughing, but then we used to always keep two companies out in the bush, seven weeks at a time and two back in the fire support base for normal mundane things, if something come up and we had to send a company to raid something or something like that, so you got people on the ground to protect the fire support base and you've got a company that's flexible to do anything that the taskforce
- 10:30 asks you to do, and you've got your two companies that are set on being out and they've got to go out and they've got three platoons in each one, and they set up the same miniature fire support base out there with company headquarters with a platoon looking after that and two platoons patrolling and different things so it can cover a big area. And resupply them every five days with water and food and a change of clothes and they'd lose about a stone and a half
- 11:00 I suppose in the seven weeks, and bring them back after the seven weeks, give them a shower, a change of clothes and send them down to Vung Tau for 48 hours. Swim, drink, booze, do what you like.

Did you nip into Vung Tau yourself?

Yeah. Quite often, but I used to go to the hospital because I knew the RSM of the hospital there, beautiful sergeants' mess, plenty of booze, plenty of tucker and you could do what you liked. Swim and when the CO,

- 11:30 he knew this commander very well so we used to fly down in a helicopter and stop at the hospital for a weekend and keep out of trouble because when you're RSM you can never, ever get drunk in your own mess or in sight of any of your soldiers because you're supposed to be top notch all the time. And so they can't say, "I saw you drunk going around the street Sir." you know. We had one company commander who was always
- 12:00 in trouble for that. He was quite a good company commander in the bush but once he got liquor in him he was absolutely hopeless. And he used to embarrass the soldiers sometimes and they used to say, "I wish the Major would go somewhere else." but that was done and the CO was the same. He go to the hospital and we'd get on the booze and no-one would see us, that knew us anyway.

So you'd have your R&C [rest & convalescence] incognito you might say?

Yeah, yeah and then we had five days leave.

- 12:30 I came home for five days leave, while I was over there but that doesn't last long, you just get home and you're off again. But yeah, if things are run properly, now they don't have that sort of thing, it's so mixed up that no-one seems to know what they're doing, in my opinion anyway, but it worked well in the battalion and we spent our year there and we had eight killed I think and
- 13:00 we lost two of them, two people lost two legs, one above the ankle and one below the knee and they had those I'm just trying to think of the name of the mine, we used to call them, 'Jump up Johnnies'. They're about as big as a jam tin and they've got a plunger in the top and it's got three prongs made out of nails about the length of an ordinary
- 13:30 two inch nail, and you bury it with the nails sticking up and when you stand on it, it jumps up chest high and explodes so it blows you to pieces. And we were clearing an area once and we were moving along and suddenly a digger tripped on one and it jumped up and it didn't go off. And he fainted and everybody was saying, "I wonder why he's fainted?" and I said, "Hell, it's a wonder he didn't die of fright!" because he
- 14:00 fell down backwards and the thing fell on the ground and didn't explode. But you get funny things like that that people laugh about after.

What other kinds of ingenuity were the enemy renowned for?

They used to do terrible things. They'd get a piece of board and nail it onto a vine and put nails and spikes in it and bamboo spikes like pungi sticks

14:30 with the poison in the tip, and in the jungle they'd get a piece of vine and tie it back and you were moving along you know nice and quiet and then all of a sudden - zamm! This thing might just miss you and slam into a tree alongside you, stir you up a bit so they had terrible things like that that they used to play tricks on, not play tricks on but kill people with. And there were these pungi

15:00 sticks and they used to dip them in a little bit of poison and they'd go through the sole of a boot like cutting butter and of course it goes up into your foot and you pull it out and it's got a bit of poison in it and it won't kill you but you're written off, you're back in hospital for bloody months sometimes, when it gets infected, and they're everywhere. That's why early in the piece

15:30 they woke up to this because we were having trouble with it when we were in Vietnam in '63/'64 so they designed a boot, the GP [general purpose] boot with a steel plate in it so it wouldn't go into your foot but it used to make a hell of a mess of the sole of your boot. Because they sharpen them and dry them and oh, razor sharp. And they put them in pits in the drains at the side of the road. If you dive in there for shelter from fire

16:00 and you suddenly find that you're staked up with some of these pungs. So there was a hell of a lot of mundane things you've got to watch for and they leave a vine laying on the track and you step in it and to step in it you have to trip the thing, next thing you're hanging up by your feet from the ceiling because the vine zips you up like a bloody rocket.

This sounds like the stuff out of the John Wayne movie

16:30 **'Green Berets'.**

Oh yeah well that's all dinki di [truthful] what he was saying, they used them all the time. And you know they used to do it to the ordinary civilians in the villages, they didn't care about doing it to us and you see all the caves they, the tunnels they dug, at one place - they called it the triangle - it was out not in the Phuoc Tuy Province

17:00 but between Phuoc Tuy Province and Saigon and they found out afterwards that they were a kilometre down in the ground and in some cases the cave underneath, the tunnels covered nearly two kilometres. So you'd shoot a couple of blokes and one bloke would run away and suddenly disappear and the hole was so small that it's pretty hard to pick up, and mainly on the sides of rivers and so forth,

17:30 they'd dive into the river and of course the trench they've dug is underwater, they just swim underwater and come up and they're in above the water.

So they've got a water lock?

Mmm, and they're in this maze of tunnels and you can't get in it because you're too big.

Did you discover any of those networks?

Oh piles of them yeah. They'll have a bunker dug down and

18:00 there'll be little plants all over the place and you've got to look and you'll see a bamboo, they've hollowed it out and it looks like the cave might be ten foot down but they've bored a hole and they've cut the bamboo down through it and that's their air supply. And it's just about an inch or so above the ground and it's in the bottom, in the middle of this thing. You've got to understand what you're looking for and where it's likely to be and then you just plug it up or put some

18:30 stuff down that will stir them up, smoke them out and things like that. And things like they'll, if you catch them out they'll jump into a pool with a bamboo stick and they'll get in the reeds and they'll have the hollow bamboo - they've all got it with them - and it'll be sticking up in a reed and they're laying down the bottom of the thing and they hold their nose and breathe through this thing and they can stay down there for half a day.

19:00 But what we used to do was - if in doubt, just throw a grenade in there, that would stir them up and when they get mud and the water, they come to the top. But yeah, they were past masters of that and very tough, because well, if we killed them alright, but if not they'd get killed by their own blokes so they didn't sort of worry. But they treat people in Vietnam

19:30 and Korea like worse than we treat dogs so.

You mean life is cheaper?

Oh, I forgot to tell you before, when we went through Seoul in Korea the first time with the Marines the South Koreans come in, they shot 100,000. Anybody that was still in Seoul working they reckoned they were sympathisers with North Korea. When North Korea come back the second time they shot all the

20:00 that was left there, so they shot about 200,000 in Seoul alone just because they reckoned they were sympathisers and they get rid of them. So Vietnam was the same. You know they didn't think that, when the VC got into Hue, into the walled city there, it's the only walled city in the world I think that's left

that was fully operating then, it's not now. But the wall's about three foot six thick and they had

20:30 to get special explosives, the artillery couldn't even knock a hole in it so the Yanks had to get special explosives to knock it over so they could get back into the city because they got in and then there's only one gate in and out and they got in and they killed about six or seven hundred people, anybody that got sort of objected to them being there, they shot them. Or cut their throat and left them on the street, always leave them where you can see them and of course

21:00 all the inhabitants were terrified so they done as they were told until the Yanks and Australians and Vietnamese got back in there and rescued them again.

While you were RSM with the 7th Battalion were there any operations or contacts of particular significance that you'd like to discuss?

Not really because there wasn't, see there wasn't a great deal of

21:30 fighting in Vietnam. There was a few battles like when 5 Battalion first went there and they had to clear Nui Dat the VC were established there and they had to hunt them out and they did a fair bit of fighting. Later on in, well about '68 I think or '69 there were two battles; the Battle of Coral and the battle of some other place [Balmoral] and

22:00 we just established this fire support base set-up so the VC got pretty jacked off with this because we were stomping on their toes too much so they built up enough courage to attack these areas, they never had enough guts before and they didn't get very far. They done a bit of damage but not a great deal of damage but luckily the battalion was all in there and they had the artillery

22:30 and everything as a proper fire support base and it only took I suppose about three or four hours and the battle was over. But they were doing things like just putting explosives on a lid of a, like a dustbin and they would pull a tree back and put it on there and they'd sling it in and they'd sling it over the wire into the compound. They didn't care where it went.

23:00 But it'd explode and that's the sort of things they do you see. And frighten hell out of you; bloody see this thing coming through the air and then phoarr! But they'd pinch the explosives off the Americans and they used to do terrible things with kids. We were at Phu Bai once and this kid was, he was about nine, and Phu Bai is about 200 kilometres south of North Vietnam and this kid was wandering around the barbed wire and I said to the

23:30 policeman, a Vietnamese bloke, "What's he doing?" and he said, "Don't know. I'll find out." and he went down there and he said, "Oh he's a VC." and I said, "Oh rubbish!" - a kid of bloody nine. So I took him in to the interpreter and he said, "Yes he's been trained in explosives and he was brought down by somebody, escorted down into South Vietnam and told to go and blow up any Americans or Australians or anybody you see." And yeah the poor little bugger, he was lost.

24:00 So he told us all about the explosives and we had a vault there that had all the explosives in Phu Bai so we took him down there.

We were just interrupted when you were talking about that little kid?

Well we took him down the vault and he just went round and said, "That's HE [high explosive], that's this and this is this and you mix this together and it makes that." and

24:30 he had to rely on his knowledge to get food. So anyway they locked him up and sent him back to school and they eventually adopted him out and tried to make him a decent citizen so but that's the sort of thing they do with kids, they rely on kids to do all the dirty work for them. And as I said before Australian soldiers are suckers for kids and they get annoyed about this and when they

25:00 find out they just kill them or something doing something brutal. But that annoyed us more than anything. And the kids lost, you know a kid of nine, sent him out from one country into another but.... and they do that with women, and at one stage we got a message to say they'd been into one village and injected VD [Venereal Disease] syphilis into all the girls.

25:30 And they caught a lot of Americans, like at the big American base they had a great big recycling plant and all that and the girls used to go and there was a hell of a lot of people used to go down there sorting through the stuff and getting food and so forth and the VC woke up pretty well straight away and they sent girls down there that were infected with VD and the Americans, they caught them left, right and centre

26:00 and they never wake up, but it just ruins the kid's life, woman's life for the rest of her life. But they don't care as long as they get a result and when they surrendered, most of the officers that fought with the South Vietnamese Army that were connected with the Australians and the Americans, they put them in buses and drove them straight into minefields and killed them. And you know, shocking thing to do. But they don't care.

26:30 **Was VD a major problem with the Aussie troops?**

Not really, because some of the base units, but see the infantry blokes only had a chance every seven weeks or something like that. Whereas the blokes in Vung Tau, they got leave every night into Vung Tau

because it was classified as a pretty safe place. They could go in there for dinner or into a beer hall so long as they were home by half past eleven. Whereas at Nui Dat we never went outside the wire

27:00 unless we were on patrol. Everything inside the wire was blocked off you know, we never employed one single Vietnamese. Never allowed them in the battalion area. And we never allowed any Americans in there either.

So you'd say the pogos as you described them before got more cases of VD than the infantrymen?

Oh, I'd say so yes. And a lot of them I reckon, but it's only my personal opinion, that a lot of the trouble they have is their guilt when they come home with the way they played up.

27:30 And I've told a lot of people this and they say, 'Oooh' you know but that's what I think. Because we had very little trouble with the infantry soldiers, because they were too busy in the bush and if they went down to Vung Tau for 48 hours they'd only go into town one night. The rest of the time they'd swim and laze around and get drunk in the compound where it's all free.

28:00 So we had very little problem with them in that case.

Did you ever go to the Peter Badcoe Club [club in Vung Tau for R&R]?

Once, that's all. Mainly went to the hospital and stayed there. I only went in the 12 months; I think I went three times because we were far too busy. At one stage we were out at the horseshoe for three and a half months. Dat Do was a village close to The Horseshoe [an artillery firing position]

28:30 and there was a population of 5,000 and they reckon 4,000 of them were VC sympathisers but they never showed it in the daytime. So they put us out then to a fire support base and we used to saturate it with patrols at night in groups of five, six, three and we ended up catching about six. We shot two senior officers, and we captured four or five others and

29:00 then the whole thing folded up. They weren't going to do anything.

So they'd be captured and shot on sight?

No, the first two were shot but they were running away. But the others, you just bring them in, hand them over to the authorities and they send them back to choi hoy [prisoner camp] and try and convince them they're on the wrong side and you get rid of them and you don't see them.

Were you around for Binh Ba or Long Tan?

No, I was home when Long Tan was on. See Long Tan was a, it wasn't a battle,

29:30 the battalion got caught in an ambush. The soldiers fought like tigers, no doubt about that but it was the company's fault. It's very difficult unless you're well trained and keep onto the NCOs and diggers that you're out in the bush for a month and if you're walking back, we used to fly them back to stop the trouble, but once they get within about a kilometre of the camp and they know where they are and they know that things are pretty safe, you've got a hell of a job

30:00 to keep on, you've got to keep growling all the time to keep them on the ball, they get very lax. And that's what happened to 6 Battalion. Delta Company, they got lax and they walked straight into this ambush and they were outnumbered, there was about I think about three to one or something and they had it all set up and of course they fought like hell to get out of it, they were lucky that they got out of it as they did

30:30 but you know people today, "Oh Long Tan was a terrific battle." they fought well but it was the battalion's fault, it should have never happened. So you know, that's the way it goes and people got caught in Korea in just the same thing. The gooks [Chinese] used to hide in the barbed wire. They know they'll get killed but they don't care. And the lieutenant, the VC lieutenant that was in that film, he told them

31:00 exactly what time that he was in there checking up, he walked round all the wire as a civvy because you couldn't touch him, they had buffalos and so forth. When we were out at the fire support base we used to investigate straight away and hunt them off but at Nui Dat it's pretty difficult see. Because they complain that we're harassing them and so forth and so on but we didn't give a bugger about that and we used to get away with it, but this is what happens and they paced out how far

31:30 it was and they paced out all the mortar ranges and everything so they got everything spot on and they were lucky to get out with what they got.

Do you have any comments to make on Binh Ba?

No. I didn't have much to do with Binh Ba. Binh Ba was mainly Americans and it was, it's like everything else with the Americans, it started off when the 182nd Airborne was there, The Screaming

32:00 Eagles they called them, they were there and 1 Battalion went with them in '65 and it was a normal fire support base sort of business and then they cleared it all and it developed into an enormous big tent city you could call it. Run for miles and miles and miles all over the place. And of course the Americans

employed Vietnamese to work there and

32:30 that was the greatest downfall of the lot. Once they get in there they, if you're working there and I say to you, "Right, if you don't get the information I want and do this and do that I'll shoot you or I'll report you." so you're a loser straight away. And I mean if you lose the job, if you get sacked the VC will shoot you, and I mean if you get caught the other side will shoot you so this is what sort of happens when you let them in there. So we didn't have that trouble, we never let them in taskforce area at all.

33:00 So we didn't have any of that. But it was very bad in Binh Ba and up there and that and 1 Battalion were complaining all the time about it because of the lack of security, particularly after the airborne left. But this is the problem, it's all too big and they trust too many people. Whether they're trying to impress them or not I don't know but you don't impress people when you look like dying.

33:30 **What did you make of the Yanks in Vietnam?**

Well as I say the Marines were good, the airborne were good and the 2nd Division were very good. They were trained by what's his name? the general in charge of the Gulf War the first time, I can't think of his name...

Storming Norman [Norman Schwarzkopf]?

Yeah Storming Norman. I met him when he was a full colonel in charge of the division and he was very good.

34:00 Very solid and very... he was frightened of nobody. And he, we were alongside them at one stage and he took a lot of notice of what we were doing and he adopted a lot of stuff unofficially to do it and he didn't care. But the best soldiers that I struck in Vietnam were the Koreans. The 22nd Tiger Division was there and you can't beat Asian to Asian. They don't

34:30 stand any nonsense at all. Like we'd go out and do a cordon and search of a village and you go out, we used to sneak out at night or early in the morning and surround the whole village and then get up in the morning and warn everybody and you put out tape squares with red and blue tape, you know red is for us and blue is for them or vice versa. And you go to a lot of pains to help the village people to sort themselves out whereas the Koreans don't.

35:00 I went out with them one night, they surrounded this village, they got there at 12 o'clock at night, they lit fires, played guitars, sang songs and went on as if it was a picnic and I said to the major, "When are you going to do something?" and he said, "About four o'clock in the morning." So they laid a few sentries and they went off to sleep and anyway four o'clock in the morning I got up and he said, woke them all up with a loud hailer and he said, "If you're not awake now, those who are awake wake the rest because this is what's going to happen."

35:30 he said, "There's an area taped in white tape and an area taped in blue tape, if you're with us you go in the white one if you're VC go in the blue one." he said, "Otherwise, anyone else will be shot." And right at five o'clock he said right and bang! The first lot went through, and they shot kids, cats, dogs, anything that moved they shot it. And then the next lot come through and burnt the whole village down to the ground, level. Then the battalion, whole battalion went out to where the

36:00 people were and the blokes that were VC they took them away to the authorities, all the villagers that were on their side, they put them in trucks, took them down the road about a kilometre and the whole battalion stayed there and built houses for them, helped them harvest their crop because they were Asians you see and they stayed there two weeks with them and when they left the village was functioning as if nothing had happened. And the Vietnamese thought they were marvellous, you know. And of course they got all the information in the world and

36:30 once they got word, we were next to them and we had a fair bit to do with them, and they said to us, "Oh, there's some..." - they call them 'Carra' - they send down a bunch of instructors from the North and they said, "Oh, there's 13 people coming down in the Carra from North Vietnam." We'll know all about it in a couple of day's time and that was all that was said and they had their spies out there with the Vietnamese, they knew they were coming. They

37:00 just ripped out and shot the thirteen. As soon as they entered their area they knew where they were and who they were and they shot them and they called us up and said, "Oh, we've found those 13 and shot them." so no-one ever went in their area. And the Vietnamese thought they were crash hot because if they wanted to, if they were behind at harvest or something like that or anything or heavy rain the battalion would send blokes out to help them. And there were 22,000 of them I think, no, 18,000 of them there. And

37:30 they were very strict, because they were getting double pay, they were getting paid by the Korean Government and the Americans and they were all my size or a little bit smaller but not much smaller and they signed on to go there and unless they were disciplined they couldn't send them home and they used to measure their hair every fortnight and weigh them every month and you should have seen them. They were immaculate.

38:00 But they couldn't send them home unless there was something wrong, but they were a marvellous battalion, division and they helped us clear our area as well and we had a very quiet time for two or

three months. But Asian to Asian you can't beat them because they only say one thing once and it's done.

They sound voracious?

Nothing, nothing at all. But once the fighting's over, when they're dealing with the public, you know helping them on the farm

38:30 you'd think it was one of their sons or something. They're yakking away and working away no problem at all.

What were your worst experiences in Vietnam in terms of how it compared as warfare to your earlier war experiences?

Well I think the Training Team was the worst because of the uncertainty. You know, in a battalion you've got eight or nine hundred diggers and you know that they know what's going on and you can rely on them

39:00 and if things get sticky well they'll fight but when we first went out, in the first year or so the latter part of the thing when they went up there and stayed out with the battalions it was a different matter. But we were just sort of setting up everything for them and we had no communication, we were with three Americans which the Americans don't operate the same way as us, so you had to watch what you said because you'd upset the Vietnamese commander as well as the American captain.

39:30 It would make the Americans look a bit stupid. Things like, they'd send you with a company and we were moving along this ridge this time and the company in front of us, the VC would fire at them on top of the ridge and then they'd rush down the side of the hill and get away and of course the Vietnamese would charge up the middle and there was no-one there so anyway the interpreter, second day the

40:00 interpreter said to me, he said, "You know they're slipping off to the side of the hill and going down there and getting away?" so I said, "Okay." and I said to the American, "Right well, we'll, when they come for the company of mine to go first," I said, "I'll put one platoon up the front, and I'll keep one of the platoons well down on the side of the hill." and he said, "What for?" and I said, "Because the interpreter told me they're ducking down the side of the hill." "Oh, alright."

40:30 So anyway, he didn't worry, he didn't disagree, he didn't want to know, anyway so we moved along and about an hour later boom, boom! We get, we make contact and there were four of them, and they tore down the side of the hill and run straight into the platoon and they shot the four of them and of course the Vietnamese captain said to the American captain, "Why haven't we been doing this before?" you know and I didn't say anything at all because nothing to do with me and you know, politics and I'm not too good with politics so,

41:00 you know you've got to be careful what you do in those days. But when they put Australians in command, there was no Vietnamese at all, I mean when our blokes went to Special Forces you went out and you recruited 100 soldiers and they call them strike force, so they get three strike forces together, so they put a WO1 in charge, he'd be the commander of the three strike forces and a couple of warrant officers with each strike force.

41:30 You train them and you fight with them and that was much better. They still had trouble with the Vietnamese running away but I mean at least you know there's half a dozen there that are going to stick together if something goes wrong. And this happens quite often.

Tape 11

00:31 **You were just talking about special strike forces?**

Yeah well the Special Forces, the American Special Forces was built up of A and B teams and A team consists of about 12 or 13 soldiers, officers mainly, officers and NCOs and the A team were all combat soldiers. They're front line wireless operators, they're front line weapon instructors, the medic isn't trained

01:00 for midwifery, so it's 25,000 dollars I think, they allow to train a sergeant in medic Special Forces so he can amputate your leg or he can help a lady with her child and fix them all up so when they go out that's what they do, you recruit villagers and keep villagers, they get villagers under their command or safety and medical teams go out and they give the children injections and help the wives with babies and

01:30 sort of help the population for popularity, and that's the way that they get their information. The other side of it is the weapons instructors, they recruit people and then they train them in weapons and wireless operation and so forth and so the B team is the team back at base that's all heavy equipment and so forth and if they want any clearing done

02:00 they'll send a bulldozer out under a helicopter and do the job and come back, but the A teams do a very good job but the strike forces that they decided to have in Australia because we don't have medics that

are trained that well but we have good medics and they were mainly acting like an A team in the fighting side of it. They trained them for combat and they took them into combat straight away and they

02:30 done very well. The Americans are very poor at navigation and they do things repetitively which you can't do. I mean if you're in an area and you've got a patrol that's at dusk and dawn you never go the same way. Americans do. We don't, we very seldom go twice the same way because then they can't set up a trap for you, you see. But they get caught quite regularly.

03:00 **Do you think a lot of their casualties were caused by sheer stupidity?**

Well I don't know, I only served with the Special Forces and Vietnamese battalions, I was never with, in Vietnam never with the Marines or anything but I don't think that they were as well trained because the thing was that most of the blokes in Vietnam were National Service or conscripts whereas most of the people that fought in Korea were blokes that joined the army, the regular army.

03:30 Which is a total difference. I mean, one there's sufferance, you've got to suffer your two years whereas the other one you enjoy life in the army, so I didn't serve with them enough to know that but that American divisional commander, he was stupid, he got the sack after he lost that 8,000 that night, but I mean that's a lot of people to die to get the sack. But the main thing we found, I found

04:00 with the Americans, that most of the bases that you went to, it was an American commander. And in some cases they were shocking. They never went out in the bush of anything, they commanded the base as far as supplies and training and supervision of the Vietnamese and the Americans lived in one compound and the Vietnamese lived in another and never the paths did cross. But

04:30 some of them got the sack for inefficiency and America's got a funny system, they've got a presidential set-up. He wears a little badge on his chest here and a lieutenant can put in a report and sack a general. He works directly with the president. How I know, I was at Duc My and the colonel there was pinching stuff apparently, money, and he came and he slept

05:00 in the same room as I was you see and I got talking to him and I said, "What the hell are you doing here? Are you going bush?" "No, no, no, no, I'm one of the presidents men." and he raved on about different things and I said, "Well what are you doing here?" and he said, "I'll let you know tonight." So he was mucking around all day and he come back that night and we had a few drinks and he said, "Just between you and me the colonel will be gone tomorrow." and I said, "You're joking!" and he said, "No, I'll bet you

05:30 he's gone at lunchtime." Well a helicopter flew in and brought the new CO and he went the next day.

How much corruption do you think was there?

A lot of corruption in Saigon. From mainly the powers, the army sergeant major for America was stationed in Saigon and he could fly anywhere in the world and he got into a hell of a lot of trouble. I think he got put into, one of them got put into jail,

06:00 got stripped. He was up for about four million or something like that, some large sum of money but see in Saigon the Americans they called it the senior officers' club - it was colonels and above. It was the Rex Club, a marvellous hotel about three or four storeys high. Absolutely fantastic you know, swimming pools up on the second floor and all this sort of garbage. Built by the French, they look after themselves. And

06:30 when we went there, they don't have a warrant officer in the American Army so they didn't know what to do with us. So they gave us status to go to any officers' club and of course we used to go to the senior officers' club, bowl up there, you know make sure you were neatly dressed and everything and we got on well with them and they'd talk about different things. But that's all they did, they never went out in the bush, they were top heavy.

07:00 You know they had generals and lieutenant generals everywhere, and...

How did they view you being that you would be out there?

Oh yeah well they thought we were marvellous you know. Because they always, some of the generals' would be, "Yeah I was in Korea." And, "I was in World War II with you Aussies and they were marvellous." you know, blah blah blah. So it sort of went down the line and we were held in very high esteem

07:30 with all the Americans in Vietnam and the Special Forces would take an Aussie before they'd take an American. But some of them didn't get on too well because you know, blokes like Don Cameron says what he thinks. Which is good but the Americans don't like that, they like you to be very apologetic and Americans are very picky. Like in Phu Bai

08:00 it was a big training area and in our compound they had a mess hall and a recreation room and a bar where you could drink and the colonel drank in the corner, so no-one went near him. So he'd walk in and stand there and he might - because they always used to call me 'Mister', 'Mr Bandy' - and I'd go over and I'd be standing and he'd buy me drinks all night and then he wouldn't speak to a major and if a major come near him he'd say to

- 08:30 him, "Go away." He'd say, "Mr Bandy and I are having a drink together." And they're very, very cliquey and selfish like that and once something goes wrong and you're in the blue they'll sink you as far as they can sink you. That seems to be the big time. We were lucky, a couple of Australians got caught and two got sent home I think, both got charged but they're both dead now I think. One was
- 09:00 supposed to be, the Americans reckon was taking guns from the Special Forces and selling them but no-one proved it but he died soon after he come home. And the other bloke they court martialled him; he was pinching something and stripped him to private soldier and discharged him. So it must have been pretty serious but you know we just heard that, we knew him so we knew he'd been in trouble but you sort of keep away from those blokes.
- 09:30 **Did you see much racial tension between the Americans?**
- Not really. The strange thing about the Americans is that all the African-Americans or whatever you call them, the Negroes, they if they do something that they like to be spot on, so they join the Marines and the airborne where they get good pay and everybody in America thinks their top hole you know
- 10:00 and they get treated very well in those two units, outfits. And it's only the dregs which you might call them that, the people that get into ordinary infantry divisions that there's a bit of racial tension there occasionally. But I'll tell you a quick racial tension come up, now we were at Duc My and there was eight Australians there I think and a few Americans
- 10:30 and we had a certain captain who I won't name that was a bit of a dill. He had to be number one, he was Australian, and we used to, we were about 90 miles out in the bush and the colonel said to us, we used to come sometimes out the bush and stay there for a week and we said to him, "We've got nothing to do. Why don't you build a tennis court and some basketball courts and so forth?" So he got onto, rang up and this
- 11:00 Seabee battalion that I was telling you about, they're all special people, about four o'clock in the morning hear this boom, boom, boom, boom. The helicopters coming, out comes the bulldozers, they started, they cleared the area, about eleven o'clock at night out come the cement all mixed under a helicopter. By nightfall they had two tennis courts and two volleyball courts, 90 mile out in the bush. Next morning out come all the stuff, all the wire to be put around and all the mitts and stuff and balls and rackets
- 11:30 and so we started playing and of course the Yanks are very keen on competition and they had the ordinary rangers and the special rangers and they had another couple of infantry groups there and they put... each outfit had a team and anyway we were playing volley ball and we were winning and the major, he was on our side and he wasn't that good
- 12:00 so the Americans said to him, "You'll have to be reserve." so anyway he performed like a raving idiot and went up and started abusing the colonel and so I had to go up and pull him into gear because I'm the next senior bloke there. Anyway the next day an American Negro captain came and because there was nowhere for him to stay, we had one wing of rooms you see, and we were allowed, the Americans weren't but we were allowed to have a fridge in our
- 12:30 room with beer in it any time. So if we were in, we used to sit down there about four o'clock in our underpants and have a few beers and we asked him to join us and he was a very good bloke, he told us he had six kids back in America and this and that and the other thing and he was a good bloke but because we didn't invite any of the other Americans some American told the colonel, went and told the colonel, he said, "You know you want to talk to that Negro captain because the Australians don't like him."
- 13:00 So he called him up the next day and said to him, "You'll have to stop drinking with the Australians, we'll have to shift you because the Australians don't like you." and of course he's upset as buggery when he comes back and he's sitting in a sulk and I said, "What's wrong?" and he wouldn't talk. So anyway went in his room and shut his door and eventually I got in to the room, me and another bloke had a couple of drinks of beer and said, "Look, come on tell us what's wrong." and he said, "Well why are you coming in here for? You reported to the colonel
- 13:30 that you don't like me because I'm black." so I raced up and knocked on the colonel's door and went in and he said, "What's wrong?" and I said, "Who told you that we don't like - can't think of his name now - captain so and so?" and he said, "Why?" and I said, "Well, doesn't matter if he's black, white or brindle, he's a soldier and we get on well with him and we drink with him and we go out with him in the bush." and he said, "Well I got a report to say that you don't like him." and I said, "Well it's all garbage."
- 14:00 so he wouldn't tell me who it was but I said to him, "Well at least call the captain up whilst I'm here and tell him that it's all rubbish and everything's alright." but they were going to sack him the next day, send him out because of that so you know this is the way it goes. No wonder they get, it's all on rumours that the blacks don't get on with the whites. But we got on exceptionally well with him. Because
- 14:30 in the battalion in Korea we had six Aborigines I think and they're good, the Aborigines. I served with Captain [Reg] Saunders, he was my company commander for about four months, five months in Korea and he was very good you know. All the diggers nicknamed him Boong Saunders but never called him Boong to his face but a bloke would say, "Who's your company commander?" "Oh, Boong Saunders."

and he knew but it never worried him.

- 15:00 And he was a good soldier but it's happening, well it happened in the army with my son when he was in 1 Battalion they had an Aboriginal boy there and he said the sergeant didn't like him and he harassed him so much that he went AWOL and didn't come back. But it happens more now than it did before I think, it never worried them before.

What did you see as far as drugs were concerned in Vietnam?

Everywhere. Everywhere. You've got to realise that

- 15:30 the Iron Triangle in North Thailand is only just across the river of Laos, the bloke there that runs it, he's got an army of about 25,000 strong and is fully equipped so no-one will rob him. None of his army or none of his staff are allowed to touch drugs; if they do they're shot. He sells them for money yet all the people that work there, hundreds, thousands of them
- 16:00 and they're all druggies. They can have as many drugs as they like. Before the kids are born they're druggies so they just work there, he doesn't really have to pay them, he just feeds them and giving them as much 'poppy' as they call it as you can buy. So therefore it comes across into Vietnam is the strong stuff and they, some of these people are masters of fixing things up, such things as for a long time
- 16:30 they were wondering where certain people were getting drugs from and they eventually found out that they'd, you could buy American cigarettes on the street because people they got six cartons a week I think issued and they'd flog a couple on the black market and the black marketeers used to open a packet and they'd put three cigarettes in it with dope in it, cocaine or whatever, speed or whatever they have,
- 17:00 and they used to market it a certain way so as the druggies could go around, even the Americans, they'd go to the stall and they'd look around, you'd see them looking around. They could pick and they would pick it and buy it and that's how they probably got it and it was very bad, it caused a lot of trouble. There was a lot of animosity between ranks because corporals were drunk on drugs and you know they would think
- 17:30 you were going to shoot them and all sorts of things. I think in the 25th Division, they were attached to us once and I went out with one of the companies and he had about ten in the company, the company was about 290, 300 strong and I said to him, "What are these blokes?" and he said, "They're all druggies." They won't carry anything, their eyes stick out like startled bulls and they just lay down and I said to him you know, "What are you going to do?" and he said, "Hope a bomb comes in and kills the buggers. We don't want them; we can't do anything with them." And
- 18:00 they had a bit of trouble once but they stamped it out very quickly with an artillery group. They were on drugs but you know, you pick up drugs and hard drugs they were everywhere and you know you had to, I think the only reason we didn't have any trouble was the battalion - they were in the bush too long. So they only had a couple of days, they'd have a couple of days at Vung Tau and they'd have a week
- 18:30 back at the battalion and then we'd send them out in the bush again so they didn't get time to get a good supply and I suffer with hay fever and any of these drugs like that grow I can smell it and you walk along and... And I was walking along once with a section and I walked up behind this bloke and I said to him, "I'll open your haversack pack while you're walking along."
- 19:00 and he said, "Why?" and I said, "Because I can smell hash in there." so he admitted it straight away, he had to, so we locked him up then and that finished that but we were on to them all the time. Otherwise it's, and it's so cheap over there and if it kills them it doesn't matter but the thing with the Vietnamese families, like
- 19:30 once I had a major who was a professor, schoolteacher at university. We're sitting down one night and we're talking and he said, "Are you married?" and I said, "Yeah." and I said, "I've got four kids." and he said, "Oh I'm married." he said, "We wanted to have four but we've got eight." and I said, "That's a bit bloody doubled up!" and he said, "Well, it's common that four die before they're three or four years of age so you have eight and hope that four live."
- 20:00 and I said, "Didn't you say you were a professor at university?" and he said yeah and I said, "Well surely you have more brains than that." and see they don't clothe them till they're two years of age, they put a shimmy shirt in them and I said, "Why don't you put something on the bottom?" and he said, "Oh they only dirty it and you've got to wash it." So kids are running around with this little shimmy shirt on and they lay down in the street whenever they're tired and go to sleep and there's mosquitoes everywhere so they get encephalitis and malaria and every disease they can and they die like flies.
- 20:30 But they wail and scream and go on but they do nothing about keeping them around. So yeah, it's a funny old world. But it's the same with drugs, half the Vietnamese that are working there are on drugs so it's a common thing in that area so close. But the bloke that runs the thing and his army, he won't have anybody that's got anything to do with it, protecting it having it or they get shot.
- 21:00 But all these workers are doped up to the eyes so he won't lose them; he's got them all the time.

Did you see any live entertainment while you were in Vietnam?

Yeah the second time, the first time with Training Team, we were at Duc My and they sent two girls out, they were sisters I think, twins for America and they put on a concert, they sang and danced and done

- 21:30 very well but once it got dark all they were interested in was blokes. So that was alright with us, it entertained us but when I went back with the battalion there were two concerts I think. Newtons' wife [Patti Newton], she was one of them and she was very good. There were eight in the concert I think the second time and we were... the fire support base out at The
- 22:00 Horseshoe was unsafe; you know fire bases always aren't safe. So we couldn't get all the soldiers in so we asked the concert would they like to go out and four of them said yes and Patty was one of them, she went out and they, we put up a stage and they sang to our soldiers out at the fire support base. There was Patty and another girl, I see her quite often but I can't think of her name and Boyd I think was the bloke's
- 22:30 name. Boyd? I think it's Boyd. He went out and he was very good but it was a very good concert. They sang for two hours and then they all split up and when we were back at the base and they sent one person to each company to talk to the diggers and dine with the diggers and all that sort of thing. And they were very good but that's the only entertainment we had. It was difficult
- 23:00 spending so much time in the bush to get entertainment.

Did you ever get any visits from Red Cross girls?

Once. American Red Cross girls. There was a Negro, she was funny as hell, she was good. She was a real card; she thought it was great talking to diggers. But no, we did most of the things ourself, like they have a canteen system which supplies all your canteen gear

- 23:30 you know cigarettes, tobacco, chocolates and all this sort of garbage, shaving cream. Anything really, but they rob you left right and centre and you can put in to buy all sorts of stereo gear while you're overseas and we were getting the short end of the straw because you're out in the bush so much and the colonel that was in charge of amenities they call it, I knew him very well, he was a platoon commander in Korea
- 24:00 so I rang him up and I said to him, "Listen, we're getting the short end of the straw. What can we do to get all the stuff for the soldiers?" and he said, "Well why don't you order it yourself in bulk? And we'll supply it for you and you sell it and you just pay us the basic funds." and to get an idea how much money they get in 12 months we made 27,000 profit.
- 24:30 So canteens make millions and they waste it like hell. They're supposed to be for the comfort of the soldiers but they're not. So we looked after ourselves and so as the diggers kept up to date we used to send people off to Hong Kong to find out what was available and get catalogues and so forth and send them out and I think out of the 900,
- 25:00 700 bought stereo systems and brought them home, they got them about a quarter of the price and when we came home on the boat the customs came on board and you've got to be honest with the customs so we, the CO and I, went out and talk to the customs bloke and he was the navy, air force and army and the civvy I think, four of them, they come onto Darwin and they said, "What have you got?" and I said to him,
- 25:30 "To be honest there's about 700 sets of complete sets of stereo, tuner, speakers you name it." and they said "Oh jeez!" they didn't know what they were going to do you see and they said, "Oh, we'll let you know tomorrow morning." So they said, "Alright, you've been honest about the thing so we'll charge them 25 dollars for the tuner and they can take the rest in." So they paid them the 25 bucks and stamped it but they were very good when you're honest. I said to them, "A lot of blokes are going to get engaged and they bought engagement
- 26:00 rings worth 100 bucks here for about 200 in Hong Kong, we had a bloke we knew over there buying them for them." and I said, "What are we going to do about it?" and he said, "Put it down as personal property. Explain what it is - getting engaged when you get home." and they let them through. The only thing they're very strict on is dirty books; they won't have that at all. But we got off every good, they let us off with 25 pound but we bought all these things for them and then of course
- 26:30 to keep the up to date with cassettes and all that, long tapes, they had these, what do you call them? They played long tapes on them.

Reel to reel machines?

Yeah reel to reel machines. So you could buy a reel for a dollar twenty five and the diggers didn't like a lot of it recorded so we got into the amenities and they gave us recording machines and we got air conditioners and we set them up and we put them in a plastic room. Put up a room and

- 27:00 we lined it with plastic with zippers and sticker on it so it was sound proof and we put two sigs that knew what they were doing in there and we used to put a circular out to the battalion, to the company to say what you want and a digger would say, "I'd like John Wayne singing." or bloody Normie Rowe or someone like that, so we used to send off to Hong Kong, you can buy records there for twenty cents. The red ones are ten cents, the black ones

- 27:30 are I think twenty cents, the red ones will play for five plays that they guarantee but we played them for hundreds and they were still playing and they recorded all these things for nothing for the diggers. The diggers just paid for the reel and of course that kept them happy, they came home with a stereo set with oodles of, boxes of reel to reel and cassettes and all the latest jive music from the Americans and all this so that kept them happy that we were doing something for them
- 28:00 and of course all the rest of the people were saying, "Where did you get this done? How'd you get this?" and, "Well, none of your business, you've just got to find out." you know. But you've got to do all these things to keep them on the ball and of course when we came home with the money we could afford to buy flags for the battalion and do this and do that for the diggers and it was very good.

How were you treated when you returned from Vietnam both times? Was it getting progressively worse as far as the general public was concerned?

- 28:30 Well, the battalion was alright because you went with the battalion; you came home with the battalion. But when you came home from the Training Team I was 400 miles up in the bush I think and they rang me up in the morning and said, "You'd better fly down tonight because you're going home." So I flew down and got down to Saigon about this time of the night I suppose. They put me up in a BAQ, a hotel,
- 29:00 went in and got cleared the next day and they said, "Well you're not going straight home, you're going to Hong Kong first." so I said, "Have you notified the family?" "Yes, yes." I got cleared, I flew out that night to Hong Kong, you know you don't see anybody you just a lonely warrant officer trying to get home. Landed at Hong Kong and I went out to, there was a Pommy bloke he went and met me and took me out to the sergeants' mess and I slept there that night.
- 29:30 Next afternoon I got on the plane and I flew to Brisbane. Arrived at Brisbane at four o'clock in the morning, no-one there to meet me, no nothing. No-one knew I was coming. And I was hanging around till two o'clock in the afternoon before I got transport to go back to Canungra to go home. So I can understand, I'd been to Korea and I'd been to New Guinea so I knew what it was like coming and going so you know it didn't suit me but I can understand young people saying
- 30:00 when you go into a pub and they say, "Where you been?" and you say you've been to Vietnam and they just walk out and leave you. So I can understand why it's so bad. With the battalion, you come home, you get off the boat, you stick together, you march through, we marched through Sydney and then everybody went on leave. And then everybody came back and we went back to the battalion barracks in Holsworthy so it wasn't so bad. But a lot of the odds and sods that came
- 30:30 home like base people from ordnance and that that were in Vung Tau, they just came home and I think about 100 or 150 got permission to march with us as a welcome home, because they'd just come home and they'd just sent them back anywhere you know and they were young blokes and they were itching to have a bit of a celebration to march through Sydney so we didn't mind. We tacked them on the end and we marched through Sydney. But I mean, you tell soldiers
- 31:00 we'll have a hell of a party before you go and then in between's pretty crook but you have a hell of a party coming home you know, you march through Sydney and people are cheering and going mad and buying you drinks and so forth and I said, "It's not too bad. The good overrides the bad." but I mean if you don't have a party when you go away like we got, two of us got flown out to Vietnam and shunted up the bush on our own so you're on your own all the time and
- 31:30 it's alright, I was used to the army, but the young blokes that had only been in the army six months or twelve months, it was a hell of a shock to them. And of course when they come home and people say you know, "Get away from here, don't drink in this pub." and all that sort of thing it really upset them but it didn't worry me because I went back to Canungra and there were people training to go to Vietnam so I was lecturing them for a few days before I went home. And then when I come back with the battalion I was with the battalion and
- 32:00 my wife and family were there so that was alright but it was a mistake to just send people willy nilly. They did the same in Korea, 3 Battalion went away as a battalion, they'd been together for some four and a half years and as your 12 months come up they sent you home. And little things like I had an orphanage boy from Tasmania, he was my runner, little bloke and I mean he was with me for three and a half years and for him I was his dad you know, because he had nobody, and when we came out of
- 32:30 he was coming out before me and he said, "What are we going to do?" and I said, "What do you mean we?" and he said, "Well, I want to stop with you." and I said, "Well you can't." I said to him, "I don't know what I'm going to do when I get out, but," I said, "try and stop in Japan till I come home and I can do something about it." but he was gone. But he cried, poor little bugger, when he left you know, and it upset me to buggery because he'd been a good soldier and
- 33:00 he'd done everything I'd asked him to do and I don't know what happened. He was a Taswegian, and he'd probably got out of the army be he was fed up but...

How hard was it to re-assimilate after Korea and Vietnam?

To what?

To normal life?

Well I stayed in the army so it was alright. But the thing is that you, when I eventually got out you've got to make up your mind whether you're going to become an alcoholic and spend all your money or you're going to

33:30 do something and wind down which I did.

Why do you have to become an alcoholic?

Well, there's nothing to do. A lot of people are lonely and they start drinking and they start going to the pub for happy hour and then it gets better and better and a lot of them did the same thing. Even the regular army, I know half a dozen here that became alcoholic. And two of them stayed in the army

34:00 and they put them in AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] and they turned out pretty good but the other three or four they got discharged because they... and they had money you see, they've got their pension when they get out and if they weren't married they just boozed it up and in some cases they were married and they'd do the same thing. But see when I came back from Vietnam I went back to the Infantry Centre as the RSM and I was straight into work. So I didn't have any time, well I came home for

34:30 six weeks to Perth here but I was doing a job which I like doing instructing and then from the Infantry Centre as I said I went to England for three years.

How did you find that?

Boring.

How did the English find you?

They didn't like me much but you go to, see in the battalion you work from seven in the morning till ten o'clock at night sometimes and you're flat out you know. In the bush, you go in the bush you do twenty mile

35:00 a day and I'd go to work at seven o'clock and I was finished at nine. Nothing to do because public servants work that way and I used to call the Poms the indigenous you know, and all the staff at Australia House were Poms. There was only the, like I was the RSM of Australia House so I was an Australian, the clerk was an Australian and the officers that do their different jobs they're all Australian so... and we had 150 students in England.

35:30 All over Germany and all over England and it was my job to look after their leave and make sure their pay was right so it was a good excuse to travel around so I used to hop in a vehicle or on the train and go out around and you could always stay with them no trouble at all and every two months or so you'd have to go around, go over to Germany and the Germans make a hell of a fuss of you and go all round the place and

36:00 that was good but there was no work to do you know. Where, in the battalion if you haven't got paperwork to do there's something to do with soldiers but there's nothing you know. And the biggest problem was I knew so many people because nearly all the brigadiers and the high ranking officers were in London when I got there in '72 had been in Korea as lieutenants. And they all knew me because they were platoon commanders the same as I was and they

36:30 I went down the Inf Centre once and the CO said to me on Monday morning he said, "Get in a train and go down and see these people, these students at the Inf Centre." So I get in a train and I go down and I get there about nine o'clock interesting the morning, the RSM met me and he said, "We'll go and have morning tea with the brigadier." so I said, "Oh, alright." so threw my gear in the vehicle and went down and walked into the brigadier's office and I knew him. "G'day Reg! How are you?" blah blah blah. So we had morning tea and he said, "How long are you staying?" and I said, "I'm

37:00 going back tonight." and he said, "Like hell you are!" he said, "Stay here a week." and I said, "I can't." so he said, "Who's your boss at London?" and I said, "Brigadier Gray." and he said, "Oh, I know him, I went to school with him." So he picked up the phone and he said, "Hi Ron, it's so and so here," he said, "the RSM's arrived but he's coming back to Friday so ring his wife and tell them will you?" So what can you do? And I went around with the brigadier everywhere. And we went to a big

37:30 fire power demonstration and there was all high ranking officer there and the general said, "Alright well you can take..." he had an observation place that was a little bar and a few chairs in it for about six people and he said to the school RSM he said - there's a New Zealand RSM and an Australian bloke and another bloke and he said, "Get them and you can take over the bar for the day." so we sat up there and watched everything and all the high ranking officers, a lot of Australians there, "How are you going Sir? Alright?" and

38:00 tormented a bit but got on well and everywhere we went it was the same thing. Go to Germany and when we toured Germany the bloke said, when I went around Germany with the students and I said to a New Zealand bloke, no a Canadian, I said, "I'm going to bring the family over in the summer, in July or something." and I said, "We're going to spend days touring around." and he said, "Oh, I'll give you a card to get petrol." and

38:30 I said, "What's that going to do?" and he said, "Well, you get petrol for 12 cents a gallon instead of paying a pound or two pound for it. Just got to the army barracks, say 'I want to fill up with petrol Sir'."

and he said right take this, put it in the thing, it clips it and pay the 12 cents a gallon.

Some of the bonuses.

Oh!

Sorry how long were you in England?

Three years.

That's quite a long time if you found it a bit boring.

Too long, too long. If I'd had been in Australia

39:00 I'd have left the job in a week.

Did you really miss the contact between the men?

Yeah, yeah I hate office work. I don't mind paper work but I hate having to go to an office every day and then you go along and in London, well in all embassies they've got a terrible system. All the departments, there's three people, there's the bigwig, the boss, then the second in command that's going to get promoted next and

39:30 then you've got the dunderhead, he's knows he's not going to get promoted but he wants to hang onto his job and he's the most difficult fellow you're ever likely to come across. And I used to have to get papers signed for the brigadier you see and I'd take them around and he'd say, "Put them there lad." and I said, "But I want them signed now." "You can't have them signed now, you'll have them tomorrow." you see, and this used to annoy me. So anyway I met one of the bosses one day and I said to him,

40:00 "Why are you so bloody difficult to get in to sign a piece of paper?" and he said, "Any documents you bring from the brigadier you can bring straight in to me." so I used to go around, "Good morning fellow!" - whatever his name and he used to say, "Come here." and I'd say, "No, no I'm going to see the boss." Whip in to see the boss and he'd sign it, "Well, see that? I can get it signed in five minutes." And of course they used to get upset and the other thing is that the high commissioner

40:30 gets, there's about thirty embassies in London and the high commissioner will get invitations for five people or ten people, it depends and he'll nominate them. They might nominate who they want to go you see, they want an Australian or they want this or they want that so we used to have to get dressed up in blues to go along there and all it is is a straight out bum wipe, drinking alcohol and eating food and it

41:00 wears on you after a while you know. You might have to go to ten in a fortnight. Every day and it means going to town, doing your bit of work for a couple of hours and then going and getting drunk.

Doesn't sound like you very much at all.

And, yeah I don't mind having a drop of booze now and then but not in the day time really and of course when you come back you've got to write a report, particularly when you go to the Russian Embassy. You're supposed to report everything that

41:30 goes on.

Tape 12

00:33 **You said that you met Liz?**

Well for service in the battalion I was awarded an MBE and military award it is and they, I knew the governor of New South Wales Sir Roden Cutler very well and he said, rang me up and he said, "We're having a presentation of medals," he said, "Do you want to have yours presented?"

01:00 and I said, "Well, I don't want to be rude but I look like going to England." and of course these are staunch, or was, he's dead now I think, but he was a staunch monarchist, he said, "Don't entertain me giving it, get it done when you get to London." So when I got to London, she [the Queen] has about three medal presentations a year and so I went along and they send a big black limousine with a driver to pick you up and you've

01:30 got to be dressed in uniform and they announce you arriving and you go up. And the day I was there there were 220 of us I think getting medals, different medals and they put you in a different room and I was about 150 on the list I think and you've got no idea what the palace is like looking at it from the outside because the corridors are about as wide as from there to there, and all the architrave that joins the ceiling to that wall is about twice that size

02:00 and most of it is solid gold. Because it's cordoned off in sections of about ten metres I suppose and each Commonwealth country is responsible for furnishing it and there's pictures there eight by six, and the frame is like as thick as that and it's solid gold, so there's millions of dollars in this corridor and they

call you forward and

- 02:30 she stands on a platform with, she had the Ghurkhas guarding her the day I was there and there's a colonel stands behind her and I wouldn't have her job for the world because you come to the door like that and you march five paces forward, turn and go four paces to her and in that time - she must do her homework beforehand - but in that time as soon as I halted in front of her and bowed she knew who I was, where I'd been, how long I'd been in the army and so forth
- 03:00 and so on. She just rattled it off you know and he was telling her a bit but she must have a fantastic memory and of course she then pins the medal on you and says a few words and you bow and then take off and have morning tea and then the car comes and picks you up and you go back to, I went back to Australia House and they put on a party for me, another bloke and myself. So it was an interesting day to go there and see her but she just looked, when you get up close
- 03:30 of course that's years ago, she just looked like she was young then, she looked like a doll and she's snow white, you know not a blemish on her skin. But these Ghurkhas, they stand to attention there for four or five hours and yeah so she's quite funny and I met [Prince] Phillip a couple of times. He's as rough as guts. She has a garden party, she was four of them every
- 04:00 year and she takes 5000 people every time and the normal Poms don't get a chance to go because by the time they send out invitations to the embassies and Australia House and things like that the 5000's up and you've got to be all dressed up, we used to have to go in uniform you see so you go and you line up and put your pass in and go through the police, there's four or five police at the gate and then they direct you round the back, it's round the back
- 04:30 of the palace. And we got there, I knew the RSM of London District, a Pom, and he said, "Go early." and they've got a large marquee with the most gorgeous morning tea you'll ever have. Everything's there. He said, "Go early while the Poms are looking to see where Liz is go and have morning tea. Because", he said, "afterwards they'll all flock in there." so we just walked straight in the four of us and had morning tea, filled ourselves up and then they
- 05:00 come out onto, there were four of them the day we were there, the Queen, the Duke, Princess Anne and Prince Charles and the Queen's in the middle, the Duke's on the outside. Anyway they've got officers then that from a corridor for these four people to walk down and anyway the Duke come down our corridor you see and of course all the Poms are stomping to get up and I was standing about four back and he just parted the crowd and he said, "How are you Aussie?" and
- 05:30 shook my hand and all the Poms were like 'Arrgghh!' and they'd look at you and he'd talk to you because he loved Australia and Prince Charles was the same but the best one of the Royal family is Princess Anne, she's as straight as a gun barrel. Very good horse rider and we went to a couple of functions she was in and she come over and spoke to us, you know yapping about horses and so forth and photographers coming around and she
- 06:00 said to the bloke, "If you don't bugger off I'll get you arrested." She said, "I'm talking to Australians so I don't want you around here." But she was very good and when she was coming away from the palace once when she was horse riding, a bloke was courting her before she got married the first time and they tried to mug her and they fired about four shots and she saved him. He just got on the floor but she didn't, she hustled
- 06:30 around and organised the things and got away. She was great, I reckon she.... And Charles, every year they have a Commonwealth Parade for the Commonwealth soldiers, all the Commonwealth and everybody, one representative for each country goes and you carry your flag into the church and you put it in a thing and sit there while the service is on and it's quite strange because I think there was 25, I'm not sure now, about 25, I've got a photo of it and
- 07:00 of the 25 there was three and a half whites, all the rest were blacks. There was the Pommy bloke, the New Zealander, the Canadian and me and the Singaporean, he was half, all the rest were black and they're all dressed up in their gear but you form up in a V shape after the service and with the Pom in the middle and then the Australian and then the New Zealander and then all the rest and Charles come out and he spoke to this Pommy bloke and you know all the la-di-da Pommy crap
- 07:30 and he said, "G'day mate, how are you?" and then he shook hands with me and then he spoke to the New Zealand bloke and he went down the line and he spoke to all these black buggers and coloured people in their own lingo so he's very well educated and very fluent with languages and everybody, all the different people like him very much you know. But it was something to do and we used to, we lived in a close and when I went
- 08:00 to get my medal and the word got around, see it was a very rich close, they were all managers of Ford Company and sugar refineries and all this and we were the peasants, we were renting a house there you see and of course all the women say, "Ooh, I believe you went to see Liz!" and I said, "Yeah, I won't shake hands with you because I shook hands with Liz that day." It upset the Poms, just to annoy them. Oh no, it was good fun.
- 08:30 Then after we went to all the embassies well we knew all of them you see but when I went, I was going to tell you, I went to the Russian Embassy and this general, old bloke, and they wear a jacket with all

their medals on it, like a waistcoat you see and I was the only bloke in there that... See the Poms weren't, any serving member over there then didn't have any ribbons because most of the Korean fellows had got out and of course everybody thought I was okay because I had a few medals

09:00 and as soon as I walked in this general come over and he said, "I see you are World War II." and I said, "Yeah, why?" and he said, "Yeah, I was at Stalingrad." and he started telling me all about Stalingrad and how they shot three million civilians and twelve million got killed and what the war was like and so forth and he said, "Do you know, they can say what they like about the Russian Army," he said, "but you Australians are miles in front of us." He said, "You fought in the snow, in the tropics, you could fight anywhere." he said. And the poor bloody Russians, they can only

09:30 fight in the snow. But he was, and he said, "I know you've got to fill in all these forms but I can tell you now, anybody that want to know anything about, we've got a file on you." He said, "We know that you fought in Korea and you went to Vietnam and you're married and you've got four kids." and he rattled the whole thing off. So he said, "All this crap about you filling in what we talk about," he said, "we know what we want to find out about you." but you've got to go back and write out what he said and who he was and when you talked to him and all this sort of garbage.

10:00 **Were you taken aback a bit when he said that?**

No, no it didn't worry me. I didn't care because we had a fair bit to do with them in Japan. We used to go past the Russian Embassy to do guard and diggers sit back to back on the truck but the sergeant with the red sash stands up in front and if you've got anything red on you you're marvellous. So we'd stand up on the front there and yell out and the guard would present arms to us but if you didn't have a red sash on they were liable to shoot you.

10:30 But they're very stupid. Of course they're brainwashed all the time poor buggers and killed left, right and centre. But we didn't have any trouble with them at all, they used to talk to us. We only went to the Russian Embassy once but if you go to one embassy and not the other, I went to the Israeli Embassy once and I didn't go to Syria or some bloody thing and that was on the Friday and on the Monday

11:00 the executive officer was there and he said, "Are you Mr Bandy?" and I said yeah and he said, "Can I see you?" and I said, "Yeah, what's the problem?" and he said, "How come you went to Israel's embassy but you didn't come to ours?" and I said, made an excuse, I said, "It's a quota, we're not allowed to go to everybody's." and I said, "Secondly I was down at the School of Infantry inspecting some stupid thing." and he said, "That's no excuse." he said, "You're a senior member of the Australian

11:30 set up and you should go." So you've got to go next time, the commissioner will call you and say, 'You've got to go there next time RSM because of this, that and the other.' you know diplomatic bloody rubbish it is but that's the way it goes.

So you had a gutful and you wanted to come home?

Well I knew so many people and 3 Battalion affiliated, through Korea we're affiliated with the Irish Guards and also the

12:00 Hussars which are an armoured outfit and see when they come down to do, they call it public duty, they send a battalion down and they spend a month guarding the Queen and guarding the Queen Mother and all sorts of garbage and all the ceremonies around London. And when they come they send you an invitation because they think that you're a part of the battalion and when the Irish guards came down I'm sitting in my office on Monday morning.

12:30 A special courier and he's got an invitation and he's dressed up in his Busby and all his ceremonial gear and he said, "Are you Mr Bandy?" and I said yeah and he said, "Special invitation." and you open it and read it and he says, "I'd like an answer Sir." so you said yes, and on the invitation it says, 'There'll be a car pick you up at ten o'clock, you'll come down and have morning tea with the colonel

13:00 and then you'll have a look at the Museum and you'll do this and do that and end up staying for lunch and so forth.' And the day I went down I went to see the colonel and we had morning tea and he liked Drambuie so we had coffee and Drambuie at ten o'clock, interesting morning. Had a look at the Museum and then he went in to look at the sergeants' mess and they have in the British Army the senior corporal, they call them lance sergeants, they wear three stripes and they don't get paid.

13:30 And of course they're the genius in the mess and they do all the hack work so I went into the sergeants' mess and the RSM called them up and said 'RSM bandy's from Australia House and blah blah blah' you see and the next thing, four of these lance sergeants, I drank rum and water you see and they said, "Have a drink Sir?" and in about ten minutes I got eight rums. We stayed there for an hour and then the RSM said, "I've

14:00 organised an RSM luncheon." For 12 RSMs like the armoured artillery and so forth and each RSM, or the RSM or the CO they have what they call a table centrepiece and everywhere they go they take it. Like the armoured had a tank, not quite as big as, nearly as big as the bottom of that. Solid silk, it'd take two blokes to carry it. The artillery bloke come in, RSM, and he had a 25 pound miniature made of solid gold.

- 14:30 The amount of money that's on the table in battalion mottos if you like to call them and we had a five course meal there with wine and everything and then at the end of the dinner they have, which was about three o'clock by the time we'd got through dinner, and the RSM luckily drank Drambuie so they
- 15:00 cleared the table and toast the Queen and then the stewards come in and they out a bottle of Drambuie, whatever the RSM drinks, they put a bottle of that for every three people. And you've got to drink it so I arrived home, they took me home by car and I remember getting home and the wife said, "Where've you been?" and I said, "I've been to luncheon." Collapsed on the couch but that's the way the Poms entertain. They go big time and of course with
- 15:30 having medals they drive you crackers. People ringing up, "Would you come down to the parade? We're having this would you come to that?" and I knew the RSM of London district so I wanted to go and have a look at this Ghurkha guard change that they've got there. He said, "I'll take you down, wear your uniform." so he said, and RSMs carry a pace stick and a (sandbram UNCLEAR) and they knew him you see and all the police come to attention and salute and you just march straight through and
- 16:00 all around the palace about a metre in front of the palace there's a steam heated drain, that's to keep the sentries warm. So he said, "We'll go and stand near the wall." so we're standing near the wall and the heat is in front of us and it's freezing cold. About 5000 are all rugged up shivering and he said to me, "This is nice and warm isn't it? Look at all the peasants out there looking at the guard change." So you know everywhere, every year on the Queens' birthday they have a big parade
- 16:30 you see it sometimes on telly and all the RSMs, there's only one RSM goes on parade but all the guard battalions, there's seven of them, they send one company and one RSM goes on parade. All the other RSMs sit up in a thing above where the Queen stands. It was a reporters' box but the commander on the RSM took it over you see. He said, "I'll take you up there." so him and I are sitting up there in the front and the other
- 17:00 five or six RSMs are sitting there in the back and he said to me out loud so they could hear he said, "Give me an opinion on what you think of the soldiers as they go past because they're all from different regiments you see." and he'd give me a nudge and I'd say, "Oh they're bloody terrible!" you know and of course the RSM would be behind and he'd say, "What's wrong Sir? What's wrong?" and we'd sit up there and you'd get booze and everything you know laid on which is bloody good. And I went to Windsor Castle to see the
- 17:30 Order of the Garter, have you seen that on telly? The household cavalry do all the escort and they wear long leggings up here, white, you might have seen them on parade and they ride horses with pith helmets on and they march really slow and the guards are in it down the bottom but they come down this long hill for about 300 yards I suppose and the Queen Mother was alive then, she led the Order of the Garter parade. Charles was
- 18:00 her, whatever you call it. He carried the Scottish sort of bloody gown she had on so it didn't drag and then the Queen and the Duke come and then of course all the peasants come down. All the seniors. But I'd met the Queen and the Queen Mother's lovely, she'd give you a cuddle as quick as a flash you know and of course she came down and she's waving to everybody and of course the poor old Poms don't get to see them very often and of course they were thoroughly intrigued
- 18:30 with her. They were saying, "Is the Queen coming?" and I'd say, "She's just gone." but on top of the guard room they've got a big, they've made it into a big lounge. They've got tables and deckchairs and everything and of course when you see all you want to see is the parade and once the Queen and that's gone past you go back upstairs there and you have afternoon tea and drink booze and you watch all the parade go past and it's all free you know. So it's very good.
- 19:00 **I can see how you were worried about becoming an alcoholic.**
- Well yeah and of course it gets around pretty quick. 'Oh he drinks rum' you know, that's it. And you know you've got to watch it sometimes. And the Canadians, they're terrible because they buy a litre of rum for 90 pence and they were buying cigarettes, they'd buy say 3 cartons for six dollars so I used to get them to buy them for me you see and they'd get that bad that I was cutting the lawn once,
- 19:30 the lawn was about as big as this room and the Poms they have all push mowers us and I used to get out in my shorts and thongs to cut the lawn and the bloke next to me used to wear a duffel coat and rubber boots and gloves and a hat and a tie to cut it. The kids used to laugh at him. And then there was a Navy Canadian lived about 1000 yards away and he used to drink like hell and he drank rum and nothing on a Saturday morning I'd be cutting the lawn and he'd come over
- 20:00 at ten o'clock and he'd have a bottle of rum and a bottle of coke. A litre of rum and he said, "We'll knock this off." so we'd get stuck into it. What was left over. But they got it, they were in NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] so they got everything cheap and you had to watch them because they were terrible once they got stuck into it.
- Least it kept you warm though.**
- I figured that out before, before I started. But no you sort of had
- 20:30 to make your own fun and the thing is that because I was RSM they give you so much money for

entertainment and you've got to entertain six couples every month. And so I, just across the road from me was a building contractor and he was a nice fellow, he'd been to Malaya and met some of the Australians and we got on very well together so I asked him for the names of a few people and I had three or four and

- 21:00 so they, you put on something Australian so we used to put on all Australian food you know curry and rice and baked dinner and things like that and the first one I put on we had a roast with roast potatoes and roast pumpkins and all of the jazz and then we had curry and rice and then we had some other, three or four other
- 21:30 dishes and the Poms, it doesn't matter what you've got on the table they won't go till it's all eaten. They'll eat every sort of stuff that's on the table; anyway they don't eat pumpkin you see, they reckon pumpkin you feed to the pigs. And this bloke was dressed up in his bowtie and everything and we were eating away and then I nudged the chap across the road from me and I said to him, "There'll be fun when they eat this pumpkin." you see and he just laughed. Anyway they ate the whole lot of it,
- 22:00 the fellow said to me, he said, "Excuse me," he said, "what's that goldie looking stuff that was a little bit burnt that we were eating?" and I said, "It was pumpkin." and he said, "It can't be, we feed it to the pigs!" and I said, "You ask anybody here and they'll tell you it was pumpkin." but that's how silly they are you know, they reckon it's only good to feed the pigs but they never seen it cooked and of course when they order meat they order a one pound roast you know where we have four pound and they
- 22:30 the building contractor he was quite good, he said, "I can see why you Australians think us Poms are mad." because they're used to going up to the corner shop and buying one chop or one egg for breakfast you see and he said, he worked so he used to pay twenty pence to have lunch and his wife worked at a school and she used to pay twenty pence have lunch and the kids in the school fees you've got to pay lunch money.
- 23:00 Because that's about the only meal half the kids get you see so they don't have anything in their house at all to eat, only bread and butter and bread and jam. They get up in the morning and have bread and jam and then at four o'clock they have bread and jam and at eight o'clock they have bread and jam and that's it. And they couldn't understand the way we ate but they were quite good, it was quite funny but every time you had them, it didn't matter how much you put on the table, one bloke said to me once, he said, "That was bloody beautiful!" he said, "I
- 23:30 had nine helpings!" And they're supposed to be gentlemen and Australia beer knocks them over like steam. Three large cans and they're struggling and you say to them the first time we were in London and we couldn't get Australian beer and they sell all the beer then was hot in the tap you know and we convinced one pub to put cans in the fridge and that was alright but for entertainment we had to buy some beer
- 24:00 so I rang around and I found a place that sold bulk beer. That's all he did, you couldn't drink there and I said to him, "What have you got? What Australian beers?" and he said, "I can give you Carlton Draft," which was good beer, "in large cans." and I said how much? and I forget what it was now but it wasn't bad. I said, "Do you get a discount for the number you buy?" and he said, "Ooh, yes, yes." and I said,
- 24:30 "How much do you get off for a case?" and he said, "Oh I'll give you tuppence (or some bloody thing) off each can for a case." you see so there were twelve of us so we ordered 100 cases of beer for the year, had to get it in bulk, so I said to him, "Can you give me a discount' for 100 cases?" and there was no answer and I said, "Are you there?" and he said, "Yeah. Did you say 100 cases?" and I said yeah. He said, "You know they're large cans?" I said, "I don't care, we're Australians,
- 25:00 we'll drink it in no time." and I said, he gave us about 6 cents off each can, nearly half price and he said, 'We'll deliver them.' you see and of course where we lived was a three storey house and the garage was underneath, you don't need a bloody fridge in the wintertime because it's bloody cold enough but all the ladies are upstairs with their binoculars watching what you're doing all the time you see so I said to him, "Deliver it at four o'clock and unload it in my garage." and I told all the others, the twelve blokes
- 25:30 I said, "I don't care how you get it but come and get it before seven o'clock because I won't have any responsibility otherwise." so of course the truck pulls in there loaded up with booze and they go down empty so they're all looking and then utes started pulling up and cars with trailers and coke and beer and of course the builder across the road he came across because se my son used to play with his son and he said, "What the hell
- 26:00 are you selling?" and I said, "Sit down, I'll give you a can of beer and tell you what I'm selling." so I gave him this can of beer, it was fairly cool and he was getting it into him and I said, "Steady up, drink it pretty slow. It'll knock you over." and he said, "Oh no, this is great!" so he drank the first can pretty quick, I let him settle down for a little while and we had another can and of course there were blokes coming in for another drink so on the third can he was stunned and he called my son over and he said, "Go and tell my wife to come over, I don't think I can walk home."
- 26:30 and he was rotten [drunk]. But you know we thought it was a hell of a, he did too afterwards and he used to love coming to the parties and watching the Poms drink themselves stupid on Australian beer because they reckon, 'Ooh, it's a lovely taste' but boom! On three cans and they're gone.

Are you a monarchist?

No. But we had a lot of fun with it and

- 27:00 he come and seen us off on the boat to come. You know I send him a card occasionally, he had plenty of money but. But schooling they had to go to a special school and they're very ignorant. All the people from the embassy had to go to a special school and there was Americans and Africans and bloody everybody, Israelis, everybody at the embassy they go there and the teachers
- 27:30 were Poms most of them and Bronnie was going to school and my younger son and this teacher got up one day and he's giving a talk on geography or history or something and he said that New Zealand was a part of Australia and Tasmania was a separate state and she was like her father I suppose, she got up and said, "It's wrong." and he said, "How would you know?" and she said, "I've been to Queensland and New Zealand's miles away from Queensland and Tasmania's so many miles away from
- 28:00 Australia but it's a part of Australia." so then they had a parents and citizens meeting and the teachers complained about some of the foreign students pulling them into gear so they said, "Alright, once a month we'll have a parents and citizens meeting and each month one country will get up and give an hour lecture on their country." so I drew the short straw for the first lecture and Qantas have got marvellous maps of Australia
- 28:30 which tells you everything about it, tells you the acreage, the population of each state and in West Australia they say Europe will fit into West Australia as far as the acreage is concerned so we used to put them up on the wall and talk to them and none of them could understand, bar the Americans could understand that we'd drive from Sydney to Perth, 3000 odd miles. And they'd say, "Drive to Perth?" and, "Of course there's a road there,
- 29:00 what's wrong with bloody driving along the road?" and the Poms couldn't understand it, if they're going to go 100 miles that's a big deal. Some of them live in London and have never been to Dover and it's only 90 miles. They go out on probably out in one of the suburbs where they can go on the nature strip and they set out their table with all their finery on it and have afternoon tea and they've had a lovely afternoon you know. But
- 29:30 here we travelled around and got all sorts of things and of course then the, it was good entertainment because everybody gave an hour lecture on their country, and everybody thought Australia was literally alive with poisonous snakes and spiders and everything that would kill you which is all bloody crap anyway.

Which you told them was all true I suppose?

I tell them there's some there but I said snakes are friendly, they'll get away if you give them time you know.

30:00 **What do you think of Australia becoming a republic?**

I don't know. I'm not a republican I think mainly because I've been brought up in the wrong era and I mean the thing that was always in our minds and it was up till Malaya really, it started to wane a bit in Vietnam but I mean we didn't fight for England but we fought for the flag and you know

30:30 the flag represented the monarchy so that was a big thing to soldiers during the war. I mean we knew bugger all about the King and Queen and all that crap but we were fighting for our country which was the Commonwealth. We knew the Queen and King were there but anything about them but the flag was the main thing and having the Union Jack on the Australian flag meant nothing to us at all because it was a minority and people make a big deal out of it through that I think

31:00 so I can't see any after seeing the way America functions I can't see any benefit really of being a republic. I mean the system seems to function alright. It's the people put there to make it function that bugger it up. You know, so it doesn't really worry me which way it goes but I'm for more or less to stay with the monarchy as it is. Because of the, mainly the wars and fighting for the flag rather than fighting for a country.

31:30 **With regards to tradition - what do you think of the Anzac tradition?**

Well the Anzac tradition will never die while there's soldiers that have been in a war. Unfortunately Korea was the last conventional war that was fought, all the rest have been, in those days they'd call them 'minor skirmishes' you know like Vietnam was and Malaya even was

32:00 a what do you call it? Guerrilla war where there was no front so no-one that, anybody that didn't serve in Korea really hasn't done any fighting to the extent to really try them out to see what's what. But I don't think the Anzac spirit will ever die because in the last three or four years the education department and Veterans' Affairs have done a lot, like I'm registered with Veterans' Affairs as

32:30 a speaker on any war or any conflict and if a college rings up and wants someone to go they ring me and ask me will I go. And I go to five colleges every year because Year 11 has to do a whatever you call it, a lesson or whatever you call it now on it you see and the kids are very interested and they didn't realise, see they been pumped, this

33:00 bloody rubbish from Vietnam about how turbulent it was and how the soldiers suffered which is all

garbage to me. I think it's all self-inflicted and they're all after money, that's about all, 90 percent of them. Some of them are genuine but not too many of them because none of the battalions were affected at all. But it's the government's fault really, it's how they're trained and how they're controlled and I mean some of the battalions that went to Vietnam

33:30 were very mediocre and they were very vocal about everything because the discipline wasn't as good as it and the diggers had no-one they could look up to but I mean diggers have got to be led and controlled. Never be familiar with them but as long as you're hard, fair and helpful they'll always respect you and always believe in you and they'll always help you out. And in that vein, because like 7 Battalion

34:00 went to Vietnam and they are definitely mad about Anzac, the Anzac tradition because they reckoned, they were a good battalion, but because they were National Service and the regular army mixed together and we never sort of criticised either side, they were soldiers, the National Servicemen turn up to these reunions after thirty years and they love it. They think it's the greatest thing that ever happened so

34:30 it depends on the way they're trained and they're not trained at the moment.

What do you think of today's diggers?

There's nothing wrong with the soldiers but there's no-one in command that's ever fought in a war. There's no-one in the Defence Department that were in Korea, there's a few that's been in Malaya, there's quite a lot that been in Vietnam that never seen a shot fired so how the hell can they tell you that, or train anybody and instead of training people they sympathise with them.

35:00 In the finish in Vietnam it was getting bed, we were carrying seven water bottles, now water bottles are heavy. You get - I forget what they call it - a litre and a half, you get nine litres of water and in the finish the average soldier was carrying about I suppose 100 pound in weight. Now you walk along for six hours with 100 pound on you and you're hot as hell and it's hanging off you, you've

35:30 got your pockets full of grenades and you've got a weapon to carry, you've got a battery to carry for the sigs and you've got ammunition to carry for the machine gun and you've got this weight on you when you get these seven water bottles and I could never understand how we fought a war in the desert in the middle east and in New Guinea and in Korea carrying one water bottle and I never, ever seen anybody die from lack of water and yet I'd never seen anybody with heat exhaustion till I went to Vietnam

36:00 because people drink too much water in my opinion and water, once you get to a certain stage of tiredness, water weakens you, it doesn't strengthen you at all and it makes you go, it's like drugs, more, more, more! You want more all the time and then you sort of collapse and you're useless. You're better off to be thirsty with a stone in your gob that you are to be dying full of water but you can't talk, see the medics say it's got to be

36:30 and things like if we went on a 25 mile route march you'd average about 3 miles, 3 and a half miles an hour and you wouldn't drink any water and if you got sore feet or anything like that well your fault, but now bloody hell, they're blaming all the officers and the NCOs. And the diggers, they're not taught anything. When we were to become NCOs, to become a sergeant or a warrant officer you had to do a three moth course

37:00 because in those days if you were, particularly a warrant officer, you had to know everything, all about administration, all about weapons and to be able to teach on anything at all. Now they do a fortnight's course, they know nothing, absolutely nothing. You talk to them warrant officers and they know how to mark a role book or they know how to punch a computer but as far as leading soldiers they don't know anything about it at all.

37:30 Do you think Aussies are bred as tough in this day and age as they were in earlier eras?

No because, well I was born in the Depression so there was nothing. You walked everywhere and whatever Mum put up you ate, we ate parrots and kangaroo and rabbits and you know all good food but now, they're not brought up that way and although we were brought up tough walking miles and miles on the farm I mean if you had to go and round the sheep up

38:00 you might walk a mile and round the sheep up with the dog and walk back with them or even if you had a horse you'd walk. Now they people going to work, they get in their car, drive to the train, get in the train and go to work, they get in a taxi and got to their office and someone goes and gets their meals for them so they might walk ten metres a day and this is detrimental to seeing whether they're tough or not, they're not tough. I mean and the services do nothing about

38:30 toughening them up. I mean they're not allowed to march anymore than about ten miles I think now because it's detrimental to their health and you're not allowed to do such and such before breakfast and all this garbage, where we used to get up at four o'clock in the morning have a cup of coffee and a round of bread and we'd march 25 mile in five hours and then you'd go to breakfast at ten o'clock in the morning and train all day. Eating and thing like that and sleeping was just put on the backburner.

39:00 **What do you think the future of the Anzac tradition is in Australia?**

I think that they Anzac tradition will go on because you know everybody likes it and it's well known throughout the world and it doesn't matter where you go, everybody's got a very high opinion of the Anzacs and everywhere that New Zealanders and Australians have fought together, they get on very well together and fight very well together, support people very well, say in Korea

39:30 all the artillery that we had were New Zealanders and they'll come at anything. You know you go and see them and things like we were attacking hills and the Chinese were well dug in and the regulation says that they can't drop an artillery shell within 100 metres of you, now that's rubbish because as you move up the hill to attack the Chinese or the pill boxes and the artillery goes over the top they

40:00 know perfectly well so they come out and they get shot but if they drop it 50 metres in front of you, you get a bit of shit over the top from the shell but you know what's going on and by the time the enemy wakes up you're there, you've got them and that's the idea to kill them instead of them killing you.

I'm wondering though if we're not breeding generations of Australians as tough as we used to will that affect the Anzac tradition at some point in the future?

I don't think so because they'll find out that they're so weak they'll rely on

40:30 the Anzac tradition to boost their morale. We're getting we are now 90 percent Americanised which is bad. I mean we haven't the money and we haven't got the numbers and America can lose 8000 and it's just like starting another school whereas if we lose ten we're in trouble. But and we've got, we're losing the toughness through excuses.

41:00 They say, "Oh it's terribly hot in Afghanistan." So bloody what? I mean the army operates 25 hours a day, 7 days a week regardless of the weather and the worse the weather the better the deal because the enemy's holed up as well so they keep on, "Oh, it's knocked the soldiers around too much." so you only go overseas for four months so if we have another world war and we send our soldiers away and we're going to replace them every four months

41:30 they're no good to us because it takes a month to settle down and you wind down for a month before you come home so you get two months out of the soldier. That's why they done bugged all in Afghanistan and Iraq because they're not there long enough and people are frightened that because they're in the service they'll get killed - that's what you join the bloody service for. It's a risk

42:00 and it's a game, it's something you like or you don't like.

Tape 13

00:35 **So we're just talking about how they aren't long in Iraq?**

Twelve months is the shortest time you should go overseas. They give you a couple of weeks to do what they call shakedown exercise and get familiar with it and if you're fit enough you get used to the heat or whatever, the cold pretty quickly and then it allows

01:00 you the last fortnight when people start to get a bit jumpy when they know they're coming home that you can sort of ease down in the operation so as if they're not killed up to the last fortnight, well they're not liable to get killed in the last fortnight so you come home, you get ready to come home. So for going for four months is an absolute waste of money but the thing that annoys me that's creeping into the services now is that the theme is that they want to be in the army and they want to do a good job but people are telling you you should go to war to frighten people,

01:30 not to kill them. And this is what seems to be happening you know. You can't tell me that you can send people to two or three places and not get people killed because you're not doing these things to be done. You're not doing your job. And this seems to be, it's all talk and you know 'We're doing this and we're doing that.' but who checks up on it to find out you see and you know they've got General Cosgrove

02:00 who I reckon is as useless as a skate to a boot, all he can do is talk and everywhere you see him he's got women officers with him. That's the sort of pansy that he is. I mean he's only seen a short action, about the only action that 9 Battalion saw in Vietnam and he was in it and that's the only action he's seen and everybody portrays him as a hero, he's wearing about 12 ribbons and he should only have about 4 because he's been to every area

02:30 that the troops are in and they give him a medal which all the old diggers just, they just wonder and say, 'Oh yeah, he's another poofteer pie.' you know, so he's got no real general respect for the local, retired servicemen have got very little respect for him at all and very little respect for the hierarchy in Canberra because they've all gone soft and, 'We'll send people to Iraq but we don't want anybody killed so we'll keep them

- 03:00 out of it and we'll buy them...' - they started all this rubbish of paying them 130 dollars a week, 150 dollars a week tax free money to give them to go overseas. Now we got sixpence and I mean they're going overseas and they're not doing anything. So why pay all this money and run out the defence budget. I don't begrudge any soldier getting paid good money but I mean you don't bribe people to go peacekeeping
- 03:30 and all this crap because I know my son's mate down at, he was at SAS [Special Air Services] for a while but he got out and he went on every peacekeeping mission and he saved all the money and he bought four houses in Perth and he's single, I think he's about 35 years of age or something and he's retired. All through free taxpayers money. I don't blame him; the government being stupid enough to give it to him. You know pay him a certain amount and they go
- 04:00 the wrong way and the soldiers, because it's the general way of the public at the moment in my opinion anyway that everything revolves around dollars. If you can produce dollars you'll get things done. You'll get results. If you haven't got dollars you won't get results so therefore the soldiers are not looking like we are now, we were told about our pension and so forth and we worked it out, you know you're not mad, that if you do 25 or 30 years
- 04:30 well you can retire comfortably on your pension. Well they can't see but they do nothing about, you don't need money when you're young, they don't need money while they're overseas now, they don't need money when they come home but when they get to 60 years of age, that's when they need money and that's what they should be doing and the government or defence department should be doing which they're not. Never mind paying them all this extra money, pay it to them when they're 60 or 65 years of age when they need
- 05:00 the money, when they're probably divorced or their wife's died or they've got cancer or they've got some disease they can rely on their pension and live quite comfortably without worrying about working or anything like that but that's all gone by the board. It's like young people buying four bedroom houses with two bathrooms and we started off with two bedrooms and a lean to a one toilet and it's worked alright but it's delusions of grandeur that everybody's got that money is the thing and I think it's crept into
- 05:30 the service and no-one wants to live in army barracks, they just want to live out with a de facto or something like that and you can't train people like that. People have got to be disciplined and that's why they have so much trouble when they go overseas, they're not used to living together. See we used to sleep 25 in a hut and I mean it didn't matter what happened, everybody knew. If you'd had a barney [argument] with your girlfriend or something like that
- 06:00 everybody knew because the different systems were going and you get used to that and you get the camaraderie and a lot of these soldiers go away now and they hardly know each other.

That's what I was going to say - how does that affect mateship?

Oh, well there's none. Because they've got to get to know one another when they go overseas. And of course when they come back it's a different story altogether but then they go back into the system again. See when we trained 7 Battalion to go to Vietnam in the 70s

- 06:30 or 60s, '68, '69, they all lived in all bar the 'marriedees' and they came in at six o'clock in the morning and we had bed checks just to make sure, they get leave any time they like, they get overnight leave if they wanted to but you knew where they were all the time but a digger can go and be training now and be living at home or living in a de facto situation and he gets killed and nobody knows where he is. And I mean there's no-one worries about him because
- 07:00 they say, 'Oh he's living out.' you know. Whereas if you're living in and in the same environment like in Japan, 8 of us were in the sergeants' mess. Now there was never any fights because you kept away from anybody that annoyed you and you got into groups that suited you. So there might be four or five groups in the sergeants' mess that you drank and ate with and played sport with and all things like that and camaraderie and you know them and you borrow money off them, wear their clothes if they're not there and all these sorts of things
- 07:30 which brings you together. When we went to Korea, we all knew one another see. But they don't and half the officers don't even know one another when they go away so it's against the Australian tradition, the way the Australian army is training today in my opinion.

So do you think that Anzacs of the future will end up being soft?

Well no, I think they'll brag about Anzac because they've got to. That's about the only thing they've got left.

- 08:00 They've got no action to talk about and I mean you can see it because you get hold of a World War II bloke or a bloke that was in Korea and we only talk to one another unless we're being interviewed for a specific thing we talk to one another, we never talk to civvies [civilians] about anything. They say, 'Did you go to Korea?' and we say, 'Oh yeah, I spent a couple of months there.' and walk off because they don't know what you're talking about you see. But now they've got nothing
- 08:30 to talk about so they brag about things. I hear things that happened when I was in Vietnam that are utter rubbish. Some of the blokes were fifty miles away and they say they were involved in it and people

believe them because the big deal is, 'I'm a Vietnam veteran.' Nobody ever talked about veterans before, we were just soldiers in World War II and Korea and half the public didn't care anyway about us. But now with reporters and

09:00 reporters are the worst enemy a serviceman ever sees. Because they're big mouths. We were trained in World War II and Korea that they'll tell you things that you don't even tell your wife or your mother or anything but these people tell everybody in the world and take pictures of it you know. And they're very difficult to get on with. We found in Vietnam they were a real pain in the butt. And then they blame everybody for getting them shot. The bloke in

09:30 Thailand, I think he run in front of the tank and the bloke shot him and he didn't know he was there because he couldn't see him but when he fired the gun it killed him and of course they howled like hell and said that the soldiers purposely shot him and that's garbage. He killed himself. But that gets everybody a bad name you see.

So you think there was a lot of incorrect reporting?

More glamorizing. They had to to sort of ...

10:00 all the things that came back for Vietnam and it was very quiet and everybody said there was no welcome home, well, we didn't get a welcome home from World War II we didn't get one from Korea till five years after the war finished. And so what with the welcome home, we got a welcome home when we marched through Sydney so that suited us, but they went on and on and on about it and of course the public took it up and all the do-gooders that were against Vietnam they took it up.

10:30 All the people that paraded through the streets and burnt flags and all that, the sided with all the people that whinged when they came back from Vietnam. So the public thought, 'Oh, well it must be right.' and it's really not and when you speak out you know they say, 'Well ,your biased, you're too old.' or something like that which is utter rubbish but you never hear soldiers talking about how fit they are now or what they've done, they've marched 25 mile in so many hours and so forth.

11:00 because they say, 'We don't go for route marches now, we catch helicopters.' 'But they get shot down' 'Oh yes, but we've got things to do now.' because they don't know and you hear senior officers talking about it and I say to them, 'Ah yes, there were helicopters in Vietnam but they shot them down.' 'Oh.' they said 'They're different now.' and I said 'What's different about them? They fall further down do they?' 'Oh no, no,' he said 'They're better.' and I said, 'They're no better and they

11:30 still get shot down.' And they've got no answer because they don't think that and things like now they're mad on giving soldiers automatic weapons. It's the worst thing they can do. If a soldier's got any ammunition he can't kill anybody. And that was the big thing in Korea, we were the only... us and the Poms but the Americans and Russians, Turks and all that had all automatic weapons. We had a single shot rifle, the old Bren gun and the

12:00 Owen gun for night fighting which was marvellous and we never got overrun. We never run out of ammunition and we never shot any more than three shots at one time with the Bren gun. Whereas now they, every time you see them, brggkk - a whole magazine. If you're in the bush for six weeks you just can't carry it. And I mean they say, 'Oh, we resupply by helicopter.' You give yourself away straightaway because you've gone to all the trouble to get out there quite and then the

12:30 enemy know once they start seeing you throwing ammunition out of helicopters that they've got a chance of beating you. It's all back to front to what it was because the thing is that people don't seem to, they say, 'Go to war but don't kill anybody.' you know, 'We'll frighten them.' and that's all crap. If they start fighting the Chinese they'll find out different. It's all right fighting these people that run away as soon as you, I mean the Afghans have never been any good, the Arabs and all those. The Israelis are about

13:00 the only ones in that part of the world that's any good. All the rest of them ones they start getting a hiding, all these people in the Middle East, they used to do it when the troops were in the Middle East, they'd pinch anything, you had to chain your rifle to it and lock it to the pole and otherwise they'd sneak around at night. They'd never front up in the daytime but they'd race around and they'd pinch things and if you were drunk on your own they'd belt hell out of you but you know once you got a hold of them and give them a hiding well they

13:30 wouldn't front up. They're not that way inclined, they're not built that way and this is what we're getting like. Doing the thing on the sly and don't hurt anybody. So it annoys me but you can't do anything about it. I just don't have anything to do with them.

Did the fact that the Korean War being the forgotten war annoy you in any way?

Well not really because I'm not a glamorizer

14:00 of war but I like to be recognised and we got our recognition by going, like when we come home there was about 100 of us going home I suppose and about 50 of us used to meet in the Savoy Hotel every morning at nine o'clock, get on the booze all day and then play up at night till about three o'clock at different parties and we wound down that way. And the camaraderie was still there, we could ring up at any time and organise a party or and

- 14:30 we stuck to ourselves. We didn't give a damn about the publicity and see we got that citation for the battle at Kapyong and we were home four years and the RSL decided, when I come home from Korea I went to the RSL and they threw me out, they said, 'It's only, you've only been to peace action so that doesn't qualify for the RSL.' so I got a badge from World War II so that was alright.
- 15:00 But all the other young blokes couldn't drink there so I wouldn't drink there and of course four years after we come out of Korea they had a big deal and invited all the Korean soldiers to luncheon in Perth. And we turned up there and of course blokes were coming, senior business people were coming and, 'Oh, I see you've got the citation oh blah blah blah.' and I said, 'Yeah, but I've had it for five years.' 'Oh,' you know, and
- 15:30 that annoys me. Because they're so ignorant and they try to big note themselves to make a hell of a fuss. But this is the thing, we just stuck to ourselves and didn't worry about anybody else and we didn't glamorise the citation or anything. It's only recently it's come out, that it's published and everything. But that's the sort of thing that, but now you see everybody laps up all this bad publicity about you know what we did and what we didn't do and we can't tell you what we did but we killed so many
- 16:00 which is all crap but you know that's the thing, bad publicity, or wrong publicity if you might add but they do it to the Americans too. And they say things that they shouldn't do and they rave on about weapons that you've got which you don't tell the enemy what you've got. But

Do you think that these get-togethers that you had at the Savoy actually was really good counselling for you to come down from?

Oh yeah, it's good counselling

- 16:30 because you get the odd fellow that will come in and say, 'Oh Jeez, I was watching the milko this morning.' and the other blokes will say, 'Oh bloody, you want a good smacking there, you want to wake up to yourself, you know you're home now.' and the bloke will say, 'Oh well I'd better pull my socks up.' And it pulled a lot of blokes out of the doldrums sort of business and afterwards when like we all had our leave well they said, 'Well, you'd better go back to bloody work. If you're going to stay in the army then go and get a bloody job. You can't drink booze here all day.'
- 17:00 We'll meet you Saturday morning.' or something like that and of course they did. And when I come home from Korea all the blokes that I was in World War II with, there was about ten of us used to knock around together but they all got married and of course the blokes said, 'Oh I can't get on the booze, I'll see you Saturday morning for about an hour but I've got to pick Mum up.' you know and all this sort of... So you've got to understand that. It's a different world, they've been home five or six years and got married and some had small kids and they were building houses and they couldn't afford
- 17:30 to get on the booze like we could and if you run out of money you just stopped home. Whereas they didn't so you've got to change from one to the other. I still see quite a lot of the blokes I was in World War II with but we meet every January and there's about, in the unit I was first in, the oldest bloke there's 93 I think and the youngest bloke is about 75.
- 18:00 And it's down now to, there's 150 last year so it's in February, March this year so we go and meet and tell lies and have lunch, have a few drinks.

Does that help you? Just getting together and talking about it you know because you said you don't talk about it with civilians?

With the older people like World War II we just tell lies, joke about different things of what you did and so forth and what you didn't get caught for

- 18:30 and all things like that and you know there was lots of things done, we were at Dongara for arguments sake and a mate came from Carnamah which is an hour and a half from Dongara and there was a dance at a place called Carew and anyway the chap from Carnamah was a DonR [dispatch rider], he rode a motorbike you see, so he said to me about half past six he said, 'You like to go to that dance at Carew?' and I said,
- 19:00 'My word I would.' because I knew a girl down there and he said, 'Right-o,' he said, 'I'll go and get the bike.' and I said, 'We'll go to jail.' and he said, 'No, no, we'll be right.' So he went down and filled it up with petrol and made out a work ticket, we hopped on the bike, went down to Carew and got on the booze and danced till about three o'clock in the morning, went back and no-one said a word. He didn't tell anybody for months but we often joke about it. I say to him now, 'Still got that old bike?' and all these sort of things come back.
- 19:30 But the danger, the reunion from 7 Battalion in Vietnam, they just talk about all the funny things, they don't like to talk about you know so and so getting killed or anything like that because they all know that the bloke was killed because when a bloke got killed in 7 Battalion, didn't matter where we were, we had the bagpipes and the bugle and if possible, in the fire support base we used to blow a retreat every night at six o'clock. If a bloke got killed during the day we'd play the bagpipes
- 20:00 and we'd play what's that? Oh, Grace something,

Amazing Grace?

Amazing Grace. And everybody knew someone got killed and then they'd start ringing up and making enquiries but if we played the normal bugle they knew everything was alright. It's just a system you get without blapping around, 'So and so's got killed.' you just played the bagpipes Amazing Grace and people would say, 'Well someone got killed, I'll find out.'

20:30 So they'd ring in to the company and say, 'Oh yeah a bloke in B Company got shot.' Or, 'Bloke stepped on a mine.' or something and the news travels semi-secretly and common sensely if you'd like to put it. And the diggers liked it. They don't like you making a big noise about anything so when we have these reunions they just laugh about me punishing a bloke on the parade on some bloke getting caught in jail or caught with a girl or something

21:00 like that and it's all just one big laugh for three or four days. So it's good.

When Saigon fell how did you react to that after fighting so hard?

Well the thing was that we knew that we could have won the war easy if the politicians had let us alone, like the United Nations, because we'd done it once before and the

21:30 only time the United Nations done anything successful was in Korea. And the United Nations will never be successful while they've got some small country like they've got now with this bloke who gets up and says, 'We must do something.' He's got no money and he's got no say, it's only the position he's got whereas America's got money, Germany's got money, England's got money, it's got to be... See when the Americans controlled it MacArthur was the United

22:00 Nations representative everything flowed. Whereas this bloke says something and all he says is, 'We must be careful that someone doesn't get killed.' Now there's millions of blacks getting killed in South Africa and he's doing absolutely nothing about it. Which is what the United Nations is supposed to be for. And I mean he's got millions of troops at his fingertips and he won't do anything. And this is the problem, for a whole thing

22:30 is geared to I think decentralise all our efficiency that we've got in the United Nations and also getting in Australia. America's the only one that's got the guts to stand up for their country. In some cases they do things wrong but otherwise they get it right and in my opinion he did the right thing going to Iraq because he's killed probably 2 million people and people say, 'But why kill him when he's a good leader?' well, how can you be a god leader if you've killed 2 million people and the way he killed them

23:00 was shocking so you know these are the things that really annoy you and we talk about them on Wednesdays because there's 25 of us meet every Wednesday and I organise the whole thing and of course we just roll on and talk about things and air our views and so forth.

Do you think the world would be a better place if the United Nations didn't exist?

At the moment yes. I think that if you have the United

23:30 Nations it's got to control, if you're going to have a United Nations it controls the manpower of the world and stops anybody being stupid. In all the case in South Africa they should have stopped it; they should have never allowed these blacks to take over all these places because they know they don't do any good. Look at Zimbabwe when Smith was running it, it was a paradise. And they give it to the blacks and it's everybody's dying.

24:00 So it's like the Aborigines of Australia, the Aborigines of Australia should never, ever be in control of anything. Because they can't handle it. You're good people, I've got nothing against the blacks, I was born and bred with them but I mean and Reg Saunders was a captain and he relied on us to stop him if he did anything silly. And he was good but you get arrogant people now that think they own Australia and it's wrong. They can't handle it and the

24:30 thing about it, the government will not sack them or throw them out if they're doing something wrong so the whole leadership is to be nice instead of doing your job. In my opinion. And we elect some terrible politicians in my estimation anyway. And people seem to love it and then they grizzle.

Do you think that the current state in the world with regards to terrorism has actually been caused

25:00 by military softness?

Well no I think it's been caused by the United Nations' softness. No-one's controlling them. You can understand it, you look at Libya he's got oil to burn, he's got millions of billions of dollars so it doesn't matter what he wants to buy he can buy. Iraq, all they had to do was sell another 100 barrels of oil and buy so many tanks or promise America

25:30 oil for a year for free and they'd send them tanks and the Poms were there training them for years and years and years. And I mean the same in Syria and places like that. They own the oil and they've got the money and that the thing, that's what's controlling the world and they know that no-one's going to, they've got the oil and people want it so they know that the big countries are not going to jump on them straight away because they lose so much oil

26:00 or so much money so therefore they just go mad for a few years. Look at Libya, now they, since they

went into Iraq he changed his tune straight away, see now he wants to join the United Nations now and be a good boy and I mean if they did that before, if America hadn't attacked Iraq he would never have given up because he was the cheekiest of the lot. And you can bluff these people, they're, look

26:30 at the way Hussein is, everybody's going to say, 'He'll shoot himself.' and he'll do this and he was as meek as a lamb. Gutless as monkeys they are. When they've got the power they're the greatest killers of the lot but once they're cornered and haven't got the power or the money they're meek and mild. And this business of North and South Korea, South Korea will belt the pants off North Korea and yet everything you see on telly [television] is

27:00 North Koreans goose stepping around. That's alright but when you start shooting at them they run pretty quick. They don't goose step. And he's saying he's got 18 divisions of women and he's to 20 divisions of that but numbers are nothing, they only make a bloody nuisance, you haven't got enough to kill them but South Korea is so well trained now and the hatred is so bad that they'll kill every one of them if they let them loose.

Do you think there's going to be another

27:30 **upsurge within that conflict?**

No North Korea will back down. They started to back down now.

Because the guy in charge is a bit of a nutter?

Well, see you talk to people about North Korea now, there's concentration camps in North Korea that they know of with about 3 million people in them and they just put them there to starve because all the tucker that all this, relief rice and that that we send from America and all over the place the

28:00 services have first pick, what's left over they give to the peasants. Now what way is that to help a country. All you're doing is helping the dictator. Feed his army. No wonder they can goose step and ponce around and they say, 'Oh look at all the public coming out and clapping him.' If I said to you, 'I'm parading down the street tomorrow morning and I want you out there clapping and if you're not there I'll shoot you.' now would you go out and clap?

I'd be clapping.

Of course you would. So all the kids get out and clap and wave things and

28:30 they hate him but they can't do anything about it. And this is the stupid thing about people who watch television and listen to people talking that know nothing a bit anything and they believe it. You know, we've got to be careful of North Korea. They're liable to kill everybody in South Korea, that's crap. The South Koreans will do them like a dinner. And China knows that, they won't come into it anymore because they got trapped, they got soldiers just finding out now see they were

29:00 told that they came down to protect the border between China and Korea but they didn't they come to fight the war and of course they lost about two and a half million and now people are saying, 'Now how come we were told that we were protecting the border and we lost two and a half million in two years?' so it's all backfiring on them and now all these countries are pretty cagey about sending backing up all these small troops whereas before they'd send a couple of million down and get them killed and it would be nothing. Like Russia

29:30 going into Chechnya or Russia going into what do you call them? Where they got beat before when the Americans were fighting against them so you know you've just got to watch it now and

With how you think that there's been various misrepresentations, particularly in the media, is that one of the things that pushes you forwards when you're making so many talks to...?

Well yes, because I want to tell the kids the truth.

30:00 And the kids say to me in the finish, 'Well how do we know sir?' and I said to them, 'Now look, for a bloke that's been there and been in the fighting and he's been in a well trained battalion and you say to him 'Have you been in the war?' and the digger will say 'Oh yeah I was in Vietnam with 7 Battalion in such and such and such and such.' and I said, 'The smartass he'll say he was in 'Nam because that's American slang, supposed to be big time you see.' and of course people believe it. They don't ask him where he was and who he was with.

30:30 And yet he could be sitting at Vung Tau going on leave every night for 12 months. Admittedly he spent 12 months in Vietnam but I mean it doesn't make him a hero but as I always tell them I've got nothing against you if you have the guts to tell the truth. Say, 'I was in Vietnam, yeah I was in ordnance in Vung Tau.' you know and tell the kids. Not let them believe that you were over there tearing people apart

31:00 and all this sort of crap and they tell them lies anyway. So that's the reason I started going to the schools. And the kids take a lot of notice of you and it's good to see them, I see hundreds of them around the street and they all recognise me and speak to you which is very good.

Does the misrepresentation of Vietnam via American movies annoy you?

Very much. Very much.

What annoys you the most?

Well firstly

31:30 they pick terrible actors in my estimation. I've got no time for Tom Cruise, I don't think he can act; he couldn't act in my opinion as a puppy dog. And yet he's supposed to be the best in the world and he acts these big tough parts and he's a sook anyway. John Wayne is probably very good in my opinion because he's as rough as guts and he acts like a soldier would act and he dresses like a soldier all the time

32:00 when he does these movies and he talks very well. And things like that where they get all these bloody supposed to be heroes that act in these places and I don't think they're any good at all and you look at most of the cowboy movies now and they can't ride a horse. It's terrible I reckon. Where John Wayne and the other cowboys could always ride horses. And did all their own tricks.

32:30 So it's all money.

Is what you're saying, that the soldiers in the films just don't look anything like soldiers as you know soldiers?

No because they argue the point and yell out and scream out and don't do, all incorrectly dressed. We were never allowed to run around in Korea or Vietnam unless we were in the base doing nothing without a shirt on and wherever you went, even to bed, you carried your rifle

33:00 with you. Go to the mess hall, you carried your rifle with you. Well you see people that are supposed to have been in a hell of a place and doing a lot of fighting and suddenly they're sitting in a mess hall with no weapons. What's the good of that?

I can see why that would rub you up the wrong way.

Yeah and I went with the ranger battalion and airborne battalion in Vietnam for a while and they had an American captain there and he was mad and he believed in all this

33:30 brain washing, you know the Americans run along and they sing songs and they say, 'One, two, three, four, one, two, three, four!' and all that and so he taught this to the rangers it was and of course they say, 'Ma, Tai, Ba, Bon.' which is, 'One, two, three, four.' and they say, 'Ma, Tai, Ba, Bon, Ma, Tai, Ba, Bon.' walking in and they start to jog and they say, 'Ma, Tai, Ba, Bon, Ma, Tai, Ba, Bon,

34:00 Bek tong, bek tong, sa.' that means, 'Ranger, ranger kill.' and they jump in the air and he said, 'Oh this brings them together.' and I said, 'It's a heap of bullshit as far as I can tell.' But what, how's that going to teach them to kill? It's alright to entertain the kids I suppose or if you're marching through the town but you don't go in for that crap at all, we never did in the Australian Army.

34:30 Because you've got to train them specific things to do.

Is the counting and whatever - is that supposed to be some sort of brain washing?

Yes, well that's it and they try to brainwash these people, they reckon it's a joke which it is a joke anyway but you'll see the American soldiers, they'll salute an officer and every time they do they've got to say, 'All the way.'

35:00 That means they'll follow them anywhere which is utter garbage anyway you see. Why say it? And they don't salute them properly anyway. But if you respect your officer well you salute him and you call him 'Sir' and stand to attention to speak to him and speak common sense to him - if you've got nothing to say don't say anything. And it's the old saying, 'If it moves salute it, if it stands still paint it.' and they're the sort of things that soldiers remember. Even the National Service in Swanbourne they say,

35:30 'Oh yes I remember that.' But you've got to teach soldiers good things, not crap and they're teaching them bloody rubbish now. They don't even stand to attention because they reckon they don't want to put a strain on the bloke's body, well unless the fellows made to stand up straight and pull his shoulders back and stomach in and hold his head up they don't look anything. They just look like ordinary civilians reading the paper going down St George's Terrace. Here's me hat and my arse is coming sort of business. But

36:00 **What do you usually do on Anzac Day?**

I normally lead the march, I've got a photo there I led the Korean detachment, they led the march in 2000 and they asked me to lead it.

Is it always the Koreans that you march with?

No I normally march with the Training Team, AATTV, because I've only got about 15 or 20 here and I can march with about 8 units but I march with the Training Team.

36:30 And because of the shortage in numbers. 7 Battalion's got quite a number, they've got about 150 and the Koreans now are the Korean/South East Asian which is, you've got a heap of bludgers really. They're not all fighting men. You know what I mean? So it's better off to keep away from it and march with a few people and I always march and come straight back here to Cannington because it's close to home I

can leave

37:00 my car and walk up or drive over and ring Bronnie and tell her to come pick me up, she'll get a bit chirpy and...

So you do catch up with a few blokes afterwards?

Oh yeah and I run a Kapyong lunch at... there's about 20 people that were there in the actual battle at Kapyong and I know them all and they come every year and we go up to Cannington at eleven o'clock and they charge them 20 bucks and put on a lunch and free

37:30 booze from eleven o'clock to three and about 12 o'clock I have a short service which I've organised myself which recognises all the Korean veterans and particularly the people that were in Kapyong and we get about... anybody can come, we get about 80 or 90 there every year and all these blokes are

38:00 getting a bit old but if they're not known I just say to them, 'A lot of people don't know who you are so all those original blokes that were in Kapyong stand up.' and so they stand up and everybody cheers and claps them and so forth and then we have a bit of a service and take them outside and get their photos taken and put it in the paper or do something with it, send it over to the east and everybody loves it. They roll up every year.

It's quite a lovely thought behind that gathering.

Yeah, and of course I was there so they

38:30 all know that and we had the Governor come out two years ago and joined in with us and had a bit of a yap, but a lot of civvies are starting to come now, like relations of different people and they enjoy the service and then they go around and talk to the blokes and the blokes will tell them a bit or they listen in to people talking and it's good, but you see a lot of blokes around that

39:00 you'd never think they were there you know, but you see them on Kapyong day or Anzac Day and they're alive. It's good to see. They're easy to control, there's about 30 that every last Friday of the month we go somewhere. I arrange, we go to Cannington RSL, we go to Bullsbrook, we go down to Mandurah and we got to Belmont RSL and arrange the luncheon and everything and they turn up and they pay and then

39:30 I tell them what's on and what ever I say they abide by and when you go to Bullsbrook, we've got to come home in a bus so I just five to three I say, 'Right-o, go to the loo [toilet] because we're going at three o'clock.' and they get up and go to the loo and get in the bus and come home because I tell the wives and so forth we'll be back by four o'clock so I don't see any bloody nonsense and right on three o'clock I leave anyway without them. So they're very good and they pay up and they

40:00 enjoy themselves and have a lot of fun. And it keeps them off the street.

Thanks.

INTERVIEW ENDS