

Australians at War Film Archive

Janet Fry - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 11th December 2003

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1252>

**Some parts of this interview
have been embargoed.**

The embargoed portions are
noted in the transcript and video.

Tape 1

00:35 **So Janet, your family was originally from the UK, how did they get over to Australia?**

They came in an assisted passage after the Second World War. My Mum was a tailorist and my Dad was a flight engineer in the RAF [Royal Air Force] and after the war was over they applied for migration into Canada, Australia, Africa

01:00 and the marble came up for Australia. We left there and came out on a ship called the Ranchi on a ten pound assisted package in 1949, we arrived Australia Day '49.

So you were actually on the ship?

Yeah. I've got two sisters, two older sisters and my recollections of coming out on that ship was Dad used to make paper planes

01:30 over the stern and we'd throw them off and see the flying fish and the dolphins and the water spouts and yeah.

That would have been a pretty exciting thing for a kid to be seeing?

I didn't really think about it, all you wanted was your parents around you. Because I can remember them putting me in the crèche once and I was crying my eyes out, with some other baby in there because I thought I had been abandoned.

Oh no.

Can I puff this?

Yeah sure, its you.

02:00 It was, my first recollection of England was singing songs to my grandfather, he used to give me a lolly so I used to sing nursery rhymes to him. It was like my first paying, singing job.

This is in the UK?

In the UK yeah. He passed away of cancer and we were snowed in and he laid in the house for a week because we couldn't get out. And I used to sing to his lifeless body and my grandmother told me off. There was no more lollies,

02:30 he's dead, never mind, they were good because our maternal grandparents lived with us too.

Did you have a bit of a musical family?

Yeah Mum had formal training, Mum she could play the piano and at one stage the violin she said. And Dad used to play the guitar; he taught me how to play the guitar. And I was just self taught, I can't read music but I've got a good ear. Yeah, we arrived in

03:00 Victoria and you are nominated by a family from England; you get a list of people that want to nominate you out to Australia. We were promised this house at a place called Fostura [?], south Gippsland. And we got out there and there was cows living in the house, there was just no walls, no nothing. So Mum and Dad were pretty upset because things were on bits of ration and times were hard then, and they had three little kids.

03:30 Dad went to get a haircut and he told this chap he had nowhere to live and he said we could rent his house at a little place called Manns Beach, it was a holiday hamlet, it wasn't a man's beach, bless him. And we moved into a little two room shack, there was no electricity no nothing. Just a tank and an open fire place. And I think we kind of just camped in one room, while we were waiting for our luggage to come and

04:00 Dad got a job and bought 50 acres and an old shabby house. And when the wind blew, there was gaps in the floors like this, the lining used to fly up this high and you used to walk around trying to get the lino down. But it was yeah, Dad wanted to be a farmer. So he started off with 50 acres and he bought four cows and we milked them by hand. So it was like a family affair and we all used to work together.

There was five of you in one small little shack, you are packed in like sardines?

Yeah they said it was heaven after where they had to stay at Fotura.

04:30 Because the people that nominated us were quite crazy.

How does that work, people nominating you?

I am not sure but you had to have a nominee when you were, I suppose it would be, I think it is the same now, you could possibly nominate someone as a migrant and then go through the proper courses of getting them here or them getting themselves here but you have got to have somewhere to go to. Yeah, I had a good childhood.

What did you think about

05:00 **milking the cows?**

A kid doesn't question anything you know as long as you have got your Mum and Dad there. Yeah, it was good; Dad bought us a horse we learnt to ride a horse. We would go fishing; we had a garden, we lived on the land a lot then. And it must have been hard for Mum and Dad though straight from like London. Mum said she thought she had gone back into the cowboy and indian era. And we had a horse and buggy, I used to go to school in a horse and buggy. I would sometimes ride the horse.

05:30 And generally just work on the farm.

And so what you were saying is that you were actually self sufficient?

Yeah, Dad had a job, he got 5 pound a week. A farm hand on a place across the road from us and he was given a truck to drive too so. Yeah we bought an old Chev [Chevrolet], it was like a little ute [small truck]. And he used to put the packing case in the back of it and the two kids, the two eldest sisters in there and I would sit in the front. But this old Chevy,

06:00 its back wheel used to come off, the cotter pin would fall out and we'd be driving along and see the wheel go past, 'Dad the wheel is off!' It was a joke amongst us, the wheel would always fall off and us kids used to have to go and retrieve it and help him back on with it. Yeah it was bushfire country, one year, 200 people turned up to fight it. And I think it took two days to fight it to get it under control but we had driven all our cows down towards the beach in case they got cooked and

06:30 the Aussie mateship that is what Mum and Dad found was fantastic. I don't know if you have ever heard a poem "That Fire At Ross' Farm", it was what I was learning at school at the time and this bushfire come through and the last two lines were, 'two grimy hands in friendship met and it was Christmas Day.' because they used to call us 'the silly Pommy [English] bastards' because we were you know, you had to overcome that Australian, yeah you know, send up stuff because English people are more

07:00 straight I think, but they learnt. We lined up at the school the first day and were told what they thought of the Pommies.

You got lined up?

Oh yeah they lined us up, my first day at school I thought I was going to get killed. I wanted to be an Aussie real quick, I didn't want to get stoned. But yeah I have still got my friends from that school; those that are left alive because we were all radiated in Maralinga in the '50s, got previous information on

07:30 that. They did atom bomb testing, the British Government, in Maralinga and Montebello Island and that year all the cows were aborted, there was black rain.

How far away were you from the site?

Oh in Victoria, right in the far end. It goes up in the upper atmosphere and it radiated the whole of Australia except a little south west corner down in WA [western Australia]. That is

08:00 why there is so much cancer here. I lost a lot of mates with cancer. Young people. And I've got a thyroid problem, I was in hospital for six weeks. I had a temperature of 105 and I was blown away for six weeks, a bag of bones I went down to. I think it was radiation sickness.

Can you describe black rain?

Yeah it got all black dust in it. You know, you'd go out and it would be raining. And my sister, "Why is the rain black?"

08:30 Coming from the upper atmosphere. But why did all the cows abort? Why were there big clugs of inosation [?] all over the place? But there wasn't any sticky tape in our area where they used to measure the fallout but they had sticky tape all over Australia. But in our little corner of South Gippsland the closest sticky tape was 50 kilometres at Sale and then at Dandenong 150 miles the other way. And this little

09:00 part over the stretch of lecky ranges [?] had no record for fall out. But the medics noticed something wrong down there because there have been a lot of mentally impaired people born since then. Thank God I was born before, I know I am possibly mentally impaired by now, anyway you get that.

Well, that is really interesting.

I do, I've got a thyroid problem that they are just about to operate on it

09:30 if they can get my osteomyelitis under control but that is another story.

So you think you are really severely affected by that?

Oh heck yeah. Well, a lot of my friends all died of cancer. As a matter of fact the entire family next door bar one have all died with cancer, my best friend Heather, my first boyfriend Don, Heather Margaret, and they are too young. The government gave us iodine tablets every Monday.

10:00 So they knew something was going on, whether they were radioactive iodine I am not sure. But they noticed that every Tuesday the kids were sick and we told them we were having these little iodine pills and they said, why, because the government said it was iodine short in that area and Dad said rubbish, we live right on a sea bed, on the edge of the sea you know, the sea is full of iodine. So he said you are not taking them, so we weren't allowed to

10:30 take them.

You were just mentioning that the calves that the cows had were actually malformed can you tell me about that?

I remember seeing this young heifer, it was her first calf, and she had given birth with help because its arms were all like that with the skin across here and it had an eye up here and an eye down there and it was ugly.

11:00 And she got up after birthing and she looked at it and she just went troppo [crazy] and she stomped it to death. We ran because she was just like a mad - like she had mad cow's disease, yeah that kind of thing happened around about that rain time. And it wasn't till a series of events went on that we thought something is wrong.

With the iodine tablets, were they actually given to you at school?

Yeah by the government, the entire area down there, nothing wrong.

11:30 **Was it every Tuesday?**

Every Monday, every Monday.

Every Monday.

Yep, every Tuesday Dad saw that we were not well, so he said, "Don't you take them we are not iodine short."

What do you think the iodine tablets were actually for then?

I am damned if I know, they must have known they were doing something. I tried to get that story to Channel 9. And there has been some stuff done on it in Maralinga but you can't take the government on.

12:00 **Were there any sorts of publicity in regards to the testing when it was actually going on?**

No, not that I am aware of. I mean they even lined people up to stand there and look at it. Montebello Island and all that fall out drifted across Australia and then Maralinga and that went, especially in New South Wales, that has been real peppered radiation wise.

12:30 **That is an extraordinary story. Can you tell me a little about the school that you went to?**

Tarraville. Number 615. There was about 22 kids, sometimes there was as little as 12, it serviced all the rural area around there. We had, Mr Scanlon was one of our teachers, he was my first teacher, and

there was Mr Brown

13:00 who is, he is a comedian now what's her name, the lass with the hair lip.

Wendy Harmer?

Wendy Harmer, she was our teacher's daughter, she was born with a, oh you better not put that in.

Oh, everybody knows she's got a hair lip.

Ok but yeah, she was born around the time of the fall out. Makes you wonder.

Sure.

Oh yeah, her Dad was our teacher.

13:30 **What were the teachers like, did you like them?**

Some of them. All different kinds they used to be given a house and be sent there for a while. Yeah we went to grade 8 at that school because we were pretty remote, to 12 miles into Yarram, which there was no school buses. But there did come school buses to Tarraville but the kids had to come in off the farms and things to go to that.

How far did you have to travel?

From our farm to

14:00 Tarraville it was about three or four miles, three and a half four miles through the bush, gravel road, across a river. And then if you went to high school from there, you had to get that at Tarraville and go the next eight, ten miles to Yarram.

It is quite a distance?

Yeah. Milk the cows before you went, get home in time to help again.

14:30 **Did you have any other duties on the farm?**

Yeah I was - Dad didn't have any boys, and he used to call me his boy, so he taught me how to chop wood and milk cows and how to do carpentry, I even done rings and bearings on an old Vanguard car we had, and I got it going too. 15. And I got to drive it didn't I? He was in bed with a heart attack, because Dad had a heart attack. And

15:00 I found him lying on the road with the dog licking his face, so I rushed, and rung up, oh we got the phone on after a while, my Mum was petrified of it, so I rang up the doctor and the doctor came out to the farm then. And he said to Dad, "You need to go into hospital to have your blood thinned or you can be in bed for a year to recuperate." and Dad wouldn't leave so he stayed in bed for a year while I left school and ran the farm on my own. We had no power; we had an old bearing motor that I had to

15:30 crank up. It hit me in the head once there and I knocked myself out. You got the motor going and then you had to put these great big belts on to pulleys to get the pump happening until you milk the cows. We had 57 by then, we'd made our own cow shed, own milk stand and the truck used to come to pick the milk up off a stand about this big. I used to have to roll these 10 gallon milk cans and then lift them. And you would get all the wheat and

16:00 pellets for the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s [fowls] off of that. So no wonder I have got haemorrhoids, sorry.

That is alright. Were you doing this by yourself or did you have help?

No, Mum. My sisters had left the farm by then, because they had been milking the cows, Dad got a job with Woodside Lake Central Oil Company because of his diesel knowledge and he paid the kids, his daughters, half the milk cheque

16:30 and bought them some land and subdivided it and our name is still on the street for our street at Manns Beach, not a man in sight still. Yeah, so they are doing alright, but by the time they came to it the years were all leaner because we had a tide come over our farm and ruin it just as we got about got it right. There were creeks in Chile and it put tides up and we walked out the back door one day and there was the sea. We only had one inch

17:00 above sea level. Although we were a mile from the sea, it all come over our farm. And it took a long while to get that back on track. We were lucky we didn't get a lot of rain over there. I top dressed it with molasses.

How does that help?

I don't know, I came across it by mistake. We had a sick calf and I went down to feed it twice a day and when I went down this particular night it was dead and I went, 'Oh damn!' and I just threw the milk and the molasses and water

17:30 on the ground and it came beautiful. And Dad said, "What happened here" and I said, "That is where I threw the molasses." and he said, "We will top dress the farm with molasses." and it brought it all back, salt and sugar, I don't know. Our first old cow, Dad let it die with old age, Frances her name was, she just curled up in the bush, she must have been 20 not out.

That is quite an age for a cow.

Yeah we had dogs and we had horses

18:00 we had horses, not I. My sister was a really good horsewoman. And we were known as the three Pommy kids with horses.

Did you enjoy having horses?

Yeah, the horse and the dog, the dog would, if I went like this and the dog would jump up on its rump and we would ride it together. Yeah, there were lots of funny little things that happened. But Mum was a Cockney and she had a wonderful sense of humour, it was almost like an Irish sense of humour and I like Irish humours.

18:30 And Dad was very resourceful with his hands and we used to do all sorts of experiments. He taught me how to do a lot of farm work, 'My boy,' he would say, and he'd butter me up. He taught me how to play chess and he used to say, "I will never let you beat if you beat me it will be on your own merit." and I beat him once and he never played with me after. He taught me how to play guitar and he taught me a bit of physics and chemistry and things like that.

19:00 Used to frighten the life out of Mum, exploding things up.

That is hilarious, your dad sounds like a really great guy?

Oh he was, he was my mentor, but gees he worked us hard though. But yeah he was, I left school when I was in year 9, 9, yep, because Dad had had the heart attack and Mum would get me up in the morning to milk the cows. And then I would go to Tarraville

19:30 catch the bus go to school and nod off at school. Because I was so damn tired, get home milk the cows again, go to bed and yeah it was just like, there was only her and I to keep things going because the bank was wanting our overdraft paid off and because of the sea coming up over the farm Dad just stressed - he was good man. You know they went through two World Wars and a Depression and a migration and we never went hungry. We had lots

20:00 of love. The best. But yeah.

What sort of food were you eating?

Dad always had a garden and I would go fishing, we would swap some milk with some fish and you know, we had a plum tree and a pear tree. There was a kind of camaraderie, and we had our own chickens, we used to make our own butter, and everybody used to take turns churning the damn thing and we used to pat it and you know and get all the water out of it. And Mum did all her home cooking

20:30 and preserving and you went and picked mushrooms and sent them off to Melbourne Market and got money for them for pocket money and you lived basically off the land, but you would go and get your supplies off the local store, like your bread. Mum tried to make bread and it was so hard the seagulls couldn't even eat it. Poor old Mum.

Bit of a disaster?

She got good at it though.

21:00 She used to put in bed with a hot water bottle to make it rise. We got the phone on for her, she was so frightened she wouldn't use it. So she would go, "Answer that thing!" it is like a computer now, my kids tell me how to do that. She wouldn't you had to wind this old this thing, you had to ring exchange and everybody would listen in, you know, everybody knew what everybody was talking about on the phone because bush telegraph I think they call it, yep.

21:30 What else can I say?

I was just wondering, so you essentially left school because your father had a heart attack, were you about 14?

Yeah. I was writing about it the other day, I think it was about 1958, in March of 1958 the school year had just started.

How did you feel about leaving school?

I was at that rebellious age and I wasn't crash hot with the teachers because

22:00 my girlfriend Doris had run away and I ran with her, not because I wanted to run away but she was all upset because she lost her dad and she is a real strong lass still to this day, we still have a, she has got a thyroid problem too. One of the few of us left.

You and Doris nicked off?

Yeah we nicked off, I don't know where we were going. We

22:30 stayed in one of the other girl's sheds one night, under a bridge another night and then we camped in the bush and the kangaroos were about to run over us and she got hysterical and I could hear the police or whoever was searching for us and I ran over to the police car and that was that, and Mum said it was my fault Dad had a heart attack, that wasn't fair was it, oh she was upset. Oh yeah I was a bit of a rebel.

23:00 Never seemed to – had a lot to say but nobody to listen to. I hope it is different today.

We are listening to your every word today Janet.

Yeah, we used to go fishing a lot. And we used to sometimes get a rabbit or a kangaroo, I hated when we killed, I can't kill anything. We had cats and dogs, basically lived off the land. But

23:30 made this old house really comfortable, we had an open fireplace and a wood stove and then the electricity came through but before that came through we bought a 32 Long lighting plant and I had to wire all the house because he couldn't get up in the roof because it was only small. There was all shingles under that roof, that is how old the house was. Like it was an old miner's Scottish type thing.

It was like an old miner's cottage. You know with just skillion roof with a veranda

24:00 and a little box with four rooms in it, hallway, outside toilet with spiders living in it. We had a well and you used to have to pump the water by hand with an old Malley's I think it was, pump. And Mum used to say that if I pumped a lot of water I would grow big busts, it never worked, I pumped heaps, flat-chested, oh dear.

That is not fair.

No. A lot of people used to come to the beach for the holidays,

24:30 camping and we would take the horses down and give all the kids rides and we would sell them some milk. And we had an old pedal organ and we would take that down to the shelter shed so an organist could play for the Christmas carols and the Christmas service down there.

So did this pedal organ actually come out from the UK?

No, no it didn't Dad bought it somewhere maybe a sale somewhere he bought it. And he used to mend it and tune

25:00 it and you used to have to sit there and pedal and Mum would play. Mum would play these old classic ones, she was good, she was really good at it.

So how often would you have a sing-a-long?

Oh all the time, there was no TV, there was no power let alone TV. Yeah I said about the bushfire didn't I, I am trying to think what else. Can I refer to my notes?

That is ok, we will just keep going.

25:30 **Were there any subjects at school you actually enjoyed?**

Oh yeah I done real well at school. I got 10 out of 10 for everything except for spelling and I remember what that word was it was lamp and I wrote llamp, everything else I would have had a perfect score if I didn't write two Ls in lamp. We only had kerosene lamps and tea lamps you used to pump up and moths would fly into them.

Did you play any sport as part of school?

Yeah.

26:00 I loved, I think they called it softball, I liked that, I was good at that, we used to play cricket and footy [football] and skippy and hoppy and all those games that kids just play.

Was there any sort of religious upbringing as part of the community?

Yeah, yeah, the old church at Tarraville was the oldest church in Victoria. I think it was Anglican Christ Church

26:30 I think it was the Centenary, a fair while back, so maybe in the 1850s it was established there and we went to church every Sunday and there was grace said at the table and when Mum put you to bed you said your prayers and God blessed everybody, yeah you know we were christened, you were christened. And yeah that kind of stage we did nothing against the other religion

27:00 but that is just the food that is put in your mouth as a baby. So if you had a grizzle [complaint] about something Mum would say, 'No, never let the sun go down on your rock,' and she used to bring up all your problems and you used to think about what she meant. But I have looked into the Bible ever since and I am trying to write a book on it but because I've gone astrology, but if you learn the sights of

astrology you can see that also in the writings of the

27:30 Bible because the astrologers found him didn't they?

Well yes, the three wise men?

Yeah that's them. And he said, 'I am the beginning and the end of the bright morning star' but this is another story because I mean, I could, I am in the middle of writing a book called revelations. It is how it is revealed to you as an individual, it doesn't matter, there is only one God, it doesn't matter how you come through it I suppose, lots of wars are religious.

Well there has been a lot of fighting about whose God is right and whose...?

They are all right,

28:00 there is only one God, it is all according to which they come to it from you see. They, as astrology, there is 12 disciples and there is 12 apostles, 12 tribes of Israel there is 12 astrology signs too, it is what they call a covenant. One from each, even Jesus had Geminis in there, Simon called Peter. Yeah it makes, having learnt astrology it really offends the church people, they're really kind

28:30 of religious. Religion and faith are two different things, they are. And I think they've judged me and I've been found wanting. But hey that is ok, judgement is allowed I tell them. And it doesn't matter how you come to it God, whatever your god is, it is just the fact that you do. So's astrology. Later I married a Dutchman and he was a church elder

29:00 and they were Dutch Reformation church, they wouldn't marry me into their church because I wouldn't do my confession of faith in that church. Because I said that was just for men, God and me were fine. But I was judged again, why was I doing the devil's work, I didn't know what it was.

Well a lot of religion is based purely on judgement.

Yeah, yeah. Still like Mum said, 'God bless them all and let them do their thing'.

I think your mum was right.

Yeah.

29:30 **What sort of songs did you actually learn and sing when you were with your parents?**

Somebody gave us an old wind up gramophone, with records and everything and we used to crank this old thing and put a new needle in this thing, "Billy Williams I will meet you one dark night" I could sing that for you still if you wanted me to. And girls want everything, that is another old Billy Williams on an old 78 [rpm] record that was about that think and you used to have to

30:00 wind this damn thing up. Yeah, and we had a radio and you listened to the stations 3TR, 3GI, ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] and you could pick up Tasmania really good from where we lived, 7AD, we used to listen to all the hillbillies and learn as many as we could and fight over whose station it was going to go on. And you could send off and have birthday wishes put on it 3TR on a Sunday. So whenever it was our birthday Mum used to send off two and

30:30 sixpence to have our name called out and we could choose the song we wanted to hear played. And I sent two and sixpence on behalf of my sister. And the announcer says, "I know a very lucky little girl today because she has got a second good wish." because Mum's request had been paid for and she had been sent birthday wishes. And he said, "It is for Pat Fry down at Manns Beach" it was me, I had sent in a song for her, it was 'You are bound to look like a monkey when you grow old'

31:00 and she wouldn't buy a present for me that year, she was so pissed off at me.

You have got a very wicked sense of humour.

I know, it has always been there.

I was just going to say you mentioned you could sing the song if we want it, go for it?

Oh dear, can I get my guitar.

Sure. Rolling.

We are on, ok, you were talking about what songs I learnt first up apart from nursery rhymes in England and you know and someone gave us a wind up

31:30 gramophone with records and so I used to sit there and listen to them and learn them parrot fashion. And Billy Williams, I don't know, it must be 80 to 100 years this song and it goes like this:

\n[Verse follows]\n We've got a Tom cat we call a house cat,\n He is always out on the bloomin tiles.\n Yesterday he came across a she cat,\n But won her with his smile.\n He stuck his little tail out straight and flat,\n

32:00 Whispered to our Tabby cat,\n

I'm meet you some dark night,\n Oh I'll meet you,\n I'll meet you some dark night,\n Dulla la dum,\n You'll enjoy yourself,\n If I have to wait for years,\n You'll hear from me alright,\n That is when I get a call from the cat next door,\n I'll meet you some dark night.\n

It possibly went on. But there is another one called, Girls

32:30 Want Everything.

Just before you do Girls Want Everything I am just going to...

It is rather a sexist song isn't it?

Like the guitar.

The guitar is not coming out

No, I just thought we would get it on two separate channels.

Are we on? This is a song by the same Billy Williams, it is called Girls Want Everything. And oh how we have advanced.

\n[Verse follows]\n

Girls want everything, everything they can get hold of,\n

33:00 When you get married you know it's true, they want all of you,\n

You must agree with me that ladies are very fine,\n You can give them as much as you want, but still they are never satisfied,\n Girls of today they are a very selfish lot, they are always wanting everything that they haven't got,\n They want you to get out of bed in all your night attire, and heat the baby's milk and go down and light the fire,\n Oh girls want everything, everything they can get hold of,\n

33:30 When you get married you'll know it's true, they want all of you,\n

You must agree with me that ladies are very fine,\n You can give them as much as you want but still they are never satisfied.\n

That was one of the first songs I learnt and if the wind up ran out you used to run the thing like this and make it go fast and have a giggle. Because they sound like chipmunks.

34:00 Yeah we used to listen to the radio and play Hank Williams songs, Lefty Frizzell and yeah, all those old songs.

Shall we have a pause there? If you could just repeat that.

Ok, yeah I went I started going in eisteddfods and I got third the first year, second the second year and first the third year. And I have still got those little 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize cards.

34:30 So then I thought I will be a famous singer, but when I did get a job in a band, a local dance band singing. I earned one pound a night, my Dad used to charge me 10 shillings for the petrol, well I worked all week on that farm for nothing, my sister has got half a milk cheque and 24 blocks of land and I got charged 10 shillings, it didn't seem fair

35:00 Dad, but never mind, they were doing it hard I guess.

That must have been hard to keep up rehearsals with the kind of schedule you had on the farm?

Yeah it wasn't like it was now, it just happened, you listened to the radio you wrote the words down, we didn't have any recording material or anything like that, we used to go to the rubbish tip and get the - take the cans out of the big gold radiola things that were on there and get battery lead and melt it and stick it all round the

35:30 rims of the speakers so that it held the speaker. And there is a big magnet in the speaker and we would tap and die it, with - tap and die it and we would put a milk line with an air line inside it for a microphone stand. And with a rubber band in there because we couldn't get a washer to fit or something. We had one old crystal microphone. And one of my friend's cousins built our first amplifier, it was twelve and a half watts and it used to fart.

36:00 But it worked you know. And we used to think we'd arrived. Yeah, we used to play at all the local events then, dances, they were always way out in the bush.

Who were the people in the band?

It was called the Kelliens Dance Band and they were, there was a boy called Noel and I ended up marrying Noel because we had farming and music in common and then we started our own band, that is where it went from there.

36:30 **So the first band that you've got, who plays what instrument?**

Noel played piano and he was learning the guitar and Johnny played the drums and Bob played the saxophone and I used to sing. And you kind of, yeah you used to get together from time to time and have a little rehearsal, find out what the latest song was and stick that in you just did band dances and Pride of Erins [a dance], and things like that. Because

37:00 way before that when there was a dance at Tarraville it was like a community gathering and I used to sit and watch the pianist and the saxophonist and musos [musicians] and I would just sit there and watch that. Mum and Dad were good dancers, they used to go skating and everything, but not in Australia, in England.

What did they think of you doing these gigs?

Oh good, Mum was very yeah, Dad was pleased because he bought a guitar and I

37:30 was the one that learnt it. And we had this old organ and this old concertina and Mum, I can still recall this, Mum now playing this concertina trying to get a tune out of it and the three dogs sitting at her feet howling because they didn't like the tone. We used to play it just to make the dogs howl and laugh. Poor things, never mind. My story seems to be going all over the place because I keep remembering.

That is ok.

Various little funny things.

38:00 **You are doing a fantastic job.**

Yeah I started going in eisteddfods, went to Sale, 3GR Sale, and made an LP [a record album] with all these songs, Elvis Presley songs mainly.

So you actually made a record?

Yeah only for us, only for the family and Mum sent lots of them overseas to the rellies [relations].

How old were you then?

15, 16, 17 round about that age.

That is a pretty major thing to do, make your own record.

It just come with a thing and you recorded it and they took it back

38:30 and processed it, it was no big deal, I possibly sounded terrible I don't know. I haven't got a copy.

Where did you actually do that?

In Yarram, 3GR came down, they were down in Yarram doing some promotion and they taped me in a hall, because it was good in a hall because it was good acoustics in a hall. You used to try and play with acoustics if you went and sang in the dunny [toilet], you got feed back, you

39:00 got echo you know, there wasn't all the technical stuff that there is today. We only just got the phone and television on, oh the electricity on. And then in '56 the television came and it wrecked all the family life. It stopped all the sing songs and the card games, nobody spoke to anybody we just sat looking at the television. So I thought well I better get on television if I want to speak to them. So I did.

39:30 **That is a good thought. Just with the eisteddfods that you mentioned, how big where they?**

I used to do them over at Sale, I don't think they were very big, there was all sorts of different categories that you could enter into, yeah I've still got all the report cards on those. One time they said I was too shy and I was looking at the floor, I had to look up. Channel 10 came to Traralgon and

40:00 they had a, this is about the time of 6 O'clock Rock [television show] you know.

Bandstand [another television show]?

Yep. That era and they come to Traralgon and on Saturday afternoons there used to be Teen Time on 10 with Johnny Chester [a singer] compering. I don't know if you have heard of Johnny Chester?

Vaguely.

Yeah you possibly wouldn't. And Olivia Newton John [singer] and Ian Turpie [singer] were quite regular on that show. Sometimes you'd be working with them. But the studio was about as big as this

40:30 upstairs area and you used to have to push the cameras around for each other and hold the props up and I can remember somebody singing, "I am standing on the corner of the street to watch a certain little lady go by" and I was supposed to holding this tree up and I fell right off the set, it was live TV and yeah you get grizzled at but never mind, we got there. They often rang me up and asked me to sing a song. And I can remember Ian Turpie doing Autumn Leaves. I can't remember

41:00 a song Olivia sang, but I can remember doing an Eartha Kitt one, Santa Baby, I've still got that on tape,

but the tape is broken I can't hear it, it is possibly wiped after 40 odd years anyway. Yeah it would be 40 plus years. But just wanted to be, I joined the blind concert, which used to go round and do shows for hospitals and jails. So I went to the hospitals and jails with them.

41:30 Sale Jail and Long River Prison Camp to sing to the inmates. I'd sing here, I'd sing in the dunny, I wouldn't care, just sung anywhere, I loved doing it, it just kind of happened I don't know why, I had no formal training. I would have loved to have been a ballet dancer, in gum boots on a farm hello.

I think you were more destined to become a singer.

Well I had to get out of there somehow didn't I?

Is that part of the motivation you had?

42:00 To get out.

Tape 2

00:31 **What was the name of the group that you formed before you went to Melbourne?**

The Manks, M-A-N-K-S. Dad said it was a cat with no tail or something. Yeah we made most of our equipment off the tip and we bought guitars and we were all going to be stars. Yeah, we did the local band dance stuff. It was when guitars were just coming out and we were considered quite a rebel

01:00 if you played a guitar.

What kind of music were you listening to?

Beatles by then. There was always a sort of old time stuff that you had to do at the local dances because the people were slotted into a certain pattern of dances that they done. I nearly had a cup of coffee then but I won't. Yeah, we moved to Melbourne to have an interview, I sang for Channel 9. I sang Not Responsible by

01:30 Helen somebody, Helen Shapiro. Channel 0 went to Channel O, there was a Channel O, and we were just about ready to go on a show but they had but they folded or they sold out to Channel 10, I am not quite sure what happened there. So I went round to all the clubs, there was an exotic dancer that lived next door to some friends we had in Melbourne. And she done a snake dance and a fire dance and she took it round to all the clubs in Melbourne to see you know, are you hiring a

02:00 band, that type of thing. And then my hubby [husband] and I moved to Melbourne because his brother was in business, canteen supplies, we supplied health foods to this little canteen and a few shops. He built that up from scratch with an old FJ Holden [car] and an old Volkswagen van. Now Colvin and Ita wouldn't supply us because they had their own rounds so we sent it Sydney and imported Millers chips and things.

02:30 And we went into competition with Colvin and Ita and in the end they supplied us because we were giving better service I guess than the big boys were. But weekends we would - I had a job in a cigarette factory. And my husband Noel and his brother Ken ran - got the business up and running and weekends we would go out and sing and do Orama Ballroom in Footscray and rendezvous in

03:00 Mitcham and just constantly just went around and saw what the other bands were doing. And then in the summer of 67, 68, I got a six weeks contract at Peninsula Gardens at Rosebud and we played every night in the rotunda, they give us a little shed to stay in and all the campers, the holiday makers used to come and camp there so we ran hay rides, golf tournaments, swimming competitions and

03:30 talent quests and John Farnham [singer] and his family used to be staying there on holidays and he used to get up every talent quest I run I would say, "Just sing with us John, give the kids a..." he used to sing all the big ballads, "Why don't you become professional John?" and he'd say, "My Dad would kill me if I give up my plumbing apprenticeship." So yeah, we he used to sing with us on a regular basis down there. And then

04:00 six months after that we went to Vietnam and we come back and he was famous, see we missed out on everywhere we went, just wasn't the right place, too scared or something.

How did you get your first television appearance?

I think maybe it was through word of mouth. Maybe through 3GR Sale or something like that, I suppose the television stations were affiliated with the radio stations and somebody would give somebody

04:30 a number and I am not quite sure how it happened. Perhaps I'm getting Alzheimer's I can't remember.

Whereabouts did you live when you went to Melbourne?

In Altona in a little bungalow at the back of somebody's house. We had a friend called Brian who - he used to have a big menagerie with snakes and lizards and he used to work at an animal house and he

give us a couple of monkeys to look after because he didn't want them killed for the vaccine glands, so we looked after

05:00 Espastis and Abdul and the boys took him to the pub and he got pissed, he run amok on the bar.

Which pub was that, do you remember?

The one at Footscray. And we used to go and help Brian catch snakes because he could get a dollar a foot for venomous snakes for the milking of the venom. He worked at the animal house at Prince Henry [Hospital]. I hope I'm not dobbling him in [informing on him] because, because we used to get a few monkeys out.

05:30 **What?**

He used to get attached to the animals and didn't want to see them killed for their glands, that is how we ended up with monkeys, we weren't supposed to. And we used to go and help him catch snakes out in the, anywhere there is a lot of rock, rock walls. And come September the snakes all come out to shed, out of hibernation where they hide in the walls in winter and they are kind of quite dopey and they can't see for a week

06:00 while they are shedding, and Brian would make us big probes and we would hold them down for him, just behind the neck here, and he would pick them up and put them in a sock for milking.

Lucky you are a country girl, hey?

Yeah it was good, country life. Even going over to the city was like a culture shock.

What was that like Janet?

Scary, I saw big buildings and trams, I was still on the farm in an

06:30 old 26 Chev and you go out there. I got a tram one day and you were told to give the tram conductor the right change, you didn't give him a five pound note or something because he didn't have the change. And this Italian lady got on and she gave him a five pound note and he just looked at it and said, "Bitch." and she said, "Yes, the Beach, I want to go to St Kilda Beach." but he called her a bitch and the whole tram just broke up. He was being so rude and he got egg on his face.

07:00 Yeah, Melbourne was a bit of a shock, you are young and you learn and it is all part of growing.

How old were you?

Then I was 20. I had married Noel.

Where did you meet Noel?

In the dance band, the first one I had started working with and we were more or less mates, we are still great mates, we grew up together. We had our music and we both wanted to be famous and we were both farmers. And

07:30 about three weeks before I married him I said, "I don't want to get married." and he started crying and I felt upset so his mum and dad met my Mum and Dad and they said I had prenuptial nerves and the wedding was going on. Ok. It is the church door and I grab hold of Dad's arm and I said, "Oh Dad I don't want to get married. You know I like Noel I don't want to get married." and Dad started going like this and I thought, 'Oh God, he is going to have another heart attack!' And I went, "Now come on, calm down, come on, let's go down." And he walked up the

08:00 aisle and I had tears coming down my face and I heard someone saying, "Oh how sad, she is crying for joy." and I thought, 'If you knew, I am here against my will.' I was so nervous at the other end I kissed the minister instead of my husband. I wrote the registrar all wrong on purpose because I thought I might have had a way out. But oh, poor old Noel, he is a beautiful soul, he is married with four children, I have just

08:30 been to see his family last June. And we all played 'remember when'. And he got to be the band on Hey Hey Its Saturday [television show], he was the bass player on that before Wilbur. Red and Wilbur [musicians]?

That would have been a good gig?

Yeah he showed me it all. We went to Vietnam; we had a marriage break up in Vietnam. I am skipping all over the place now aren't I?

No that is alright, when we get to Vietnam you can talk about your relationship

09:00 **there. So you've just gone up to Sydney is that right?**

Yes it was after I did this thing at Peninsula Gardens, this little stint that we done, various agencies, working at clubs and where you were working. And I was approached to join an all girl group that just got back from Vietnam and they had more overseas contracts to fulfil. And they had a contract to fulfil in Cooma. So I said to Noel,

- 09:30 "What are we doing?" and he said, "Well, go and see if it is any good, it might lead to something, if it is ok I will follow." so I am like the dog that goes ahead to see if everything is ok, I was the pushy one, it wasn't good enough, you had to keep striving to get better and so you only got better if you played with musicians and good singers and things like that. So I went to Cooma and they were a nice enough bunch of girls but their music was awful,
- 10:00 I mean awful. We had an organ, drummer, guitarist and I played bass. I started playing bass guitar because we lost our bass guitarist, bass is pretty easy to play, percussion instrument as well as a musical thing. So we finished this one at Cooma, and then we went to Sydney where we auditioned for the underworld people that run all the clubs in Kings Cross. The young Morris. Well known underworld person who was always wonderful to me
- 10:30 I have got no complaints with him. We auditioned in 77 Pitt Street, 77 Sunset type of club. And he said, "Hey girls, the only way I will hire you if you go topless." so I get up and I walk down and I say, "Mr. Morris I've got talent and no breasts." I just walked out. Oh dear. I went back to my manager and I said to him, "Look,
- 11:00 I'm going back to Melbourne because this band doesn't sound good and Young Morris wants us to go topless and I've got no tits." in spite of all that pumping of water. And he said, "Would your band like a contract in the East?" and I went, "Oh yeah, of course we would, fantastic!" And he said, "Well, ring them up and find out if they all want to go." and I said, "Well, where is East?" Japan, Okinawa, Philippines a little bit of Vietnam, a little bit of
- 11:30 Thailand, we done Thailand. So we were all rapt, we are going overseas, we are going to be full time musicians, now our dreams are coming true, wow! We got air fare paid, accommodation and we got \$100 Australian which was \$120 American at the time, our dollar was higher than theirs and sent the money back through our agency through Chase and Manhattan Bank so we would get the best rate of exchange. Because we had a fully
- 12:00 qualified accountant that came with the job. Full show group management, they were in Pitt Street, Sydney. And we went from Melbourne to Sydney, we worked at the Petersham Inn in Petersham and we stayed there also while we rehearsed every day in their lounge room getting a show band, we had a band and now we had to have a show as well, so we had to have other people come onto the front line, oh excuse me I just burped.
- 12:30 Someone helped us produce a show and you know, tell us what they wanted, what they needed on the road as far as a show band went. Having injections, and July I think it was maybe late July 1968 we took off - to Saigon.

Sorry Janet, who entered the group and what was the act that you developed?

There was lots of different acts, there was May Harris, so we called it the network, there was Gail Burnett and she was

- 13:00 a dancer, vaudeville type of act. There was lots of other solo artists within that company that we were working for that we contracted to showground management and they would come out to us. Maori singers, they were always good at singing and playing and Ingrid Hart was another one, she lives in Adelaide now, that was Ingrid on that video that I just showed you, at the beginning. And she was quite a good cabaret singer,
- 13:30 a good front line act. I didn't have the confidence to be, I was I was picking all their brains trying to; I didn't even know how to put make up on. I had long hair down to my bum and yeah, we just went there, we were picked up at the Tan Son Nhut air base and were taken to the Majestic Hotel in Saigon. We had management over there. They used to sell us in turn to a place, another agency, so there was agents and agents right
- 14:00 the way through before you got your pay. Majestic Hotel we stayed there for a week, it was hot, we all went into a culture shock, it was dirty, but the women were absolutely beautiful and spotless. But yeah, there was a lot of heavy sadness there because of the war. So then we moved into our villa in Wei Min Chu[?] and that was our base in Saigon, but they had another villa in Quin Yon halfway up the country
- 14:30 and another villa in Da Nang right up towards where North Vietnamese were.

How often did you move around between those three villas?

Heck all the time. Every show it took through, we must have taken through 1000 all up. And you get to know the ropes and you could, there was a lot of black market, there was a lot of graft, I will sing you a song about it.

What were the ropes?

The rules, there

- 15:00 weren't any. You kept yourself nice and there was a lot of dope [marijuana] that went on over there. A lot of musos, I never did do that, I was that ignorant I didn't even know there was anything to do, I didn't know dope existed. And when the GIs [general infantry - American soldiers] they must have

thought we were so stiff and they would throw joints [marijuana cigarettes] on the stage. And I thought they were just like my Mum and Dad who used to roll their own cigarettes and I'd think, "Isn't that nice, they roll their own cigarettes like my Mum and Dad."

15:30 And they were throwing dope on the stage, and the boys in the band they knew and they would say thanks. And one boy in a band vegetablised himself by jumping off a villa roof, thinking he could fly. Because you're on the Golden Triangle over there and the dope is pretty full on stuff. I had one puff once and freaked out, never done it. I am hyperactive so it doesn't make me mellow, it didn't, I saw cockroaches this

16:00 big in my hand and freaked out and ran into a closed door and broke my nose. Why do they do that stuff for, it gives you a headache.

So drugs hadn't entered the music scene here yet?

No I think it was a little bit of experimentation going on, but we weren't, we never done any, I didn't even know they existed. I guess there was some people doing some stuff. We did try to smoke a banana one day, a banana skin. Nothing happened. That was about the full extent of my drugging.

16:30 One puff and freaking out. But there was a lot of them that were dead I don't care what people do, it's their bag, not mine. In fact we got to Manila once and they were having a going away party and they hired all these big bongos [smoking implement] and he came round to me and I said, "No thanks don't do it." and they all said, "Don't you smoke?" and they had been working with me for seven months maybe. And I went, "Nup." they said, "We thought you was the biggest stone head of the lot of us!"

17:00 So basically I am just naturally stoned. Oh dear ,sorry. But yeah there was a, there was rehabilitation places over there for the GIs go down town and get on it - can I have a sip of coffee now?

Sure.

Do you want to stop?

No take a sip, that is alright.

Cheers.

So who is managing those centres, those rehabilitation centres?

Americans. They were military,

17:30 I remember seeing a couple of GIs, they come in, bodies, they had been administered something down town and they were all cracked open like you'd drained all the juice out of their body, like they looked like they fried overnight. I don't want to be. But yeah.

What did you know about Vietnam before you left to go there, before you landed in Saigon?

I knew there was a war going on, so I thought somebody had to go and look after them.

18:00 That was my excuse. But it was like my conscientious objection was to go there and sing to them and nurse them if I could.

Were there protests here in the street before you left?

No I don't think there were. Oh possibly there was, don't know, tuned out. I was going to be a full time muso and that is what I was going to be. And Vietnam was just on the agenda. We were in Cambodia too, but legally we weren't there.

18:30 I don't know if I am offending the government or not but we were in Cambodia. We went to a place called Noi Son[?], issued you with a body bag, they said if you go missing over there, you are not there because we are not in there but we are in there that type of thing.

What was there?

War, a war was going on there, there were bases there that we went in and flew into Cambodia I suppose they were in Laos too. I think that war was right the way across, Southeast Asia

19:00 and because when we went to Thailand across the river, there'd be all bodies floating down the river. It was the same as Vietnam, but you get that, that is war. It did offend my childlike sense of justice, war does, it is not healthy and I have been practicing that line. And yeah you kind of do go into a shock; I have got before and after shots. Our passports were all dear little

19:30 Australian upright people and after later they said our passports were stolen and put on the black market, I don't know whether they were I think our agency done us. They were, the next round of visa photos we had it is like we were all in shock, we look... We are all like this on the first

20:00 passport and all like this on the second. And then the shock had set in because you had been through a few ropes by then. Whenever I drove the truck with the band in the back, girls in the front to Long Binh, which is about 25, 30 kilometres out of Saigon you had to go over the Mekong [River], over a big bridge and you went out about three or four in the afternoon and got into the base and you'd set up your gear

in the clubs,

- 20:30 you've done that show, you moved onto another club, did that show, packed up, then you went to the gate and waited for the convoy, the American convoy and then you would go back to Saigon on the end of the American convoy, the civilian part. But we used to be shot at all the time, you could see the bullets coming because of the red and green traces and war didn't make sense, "Why are they red and green?" "Oh, one is ours and one is there's." Hello, you mean there is rules in war?
- 21:00 So you can see bullets coming towards you. And let me tell you it doesn't go straight, it goes like this. I don't know how you get the bloke at the other end, you know, you could duck and get hit. So we stopped going with the Americans because they would retaliate with M60 fire and yeah, there was a lot of injustice in war, I mean there's got to be. Our band offended the base commander once by, the boys said to us
- 21:30 keep the guys on this side of the truck, we are going to paint the whole thing with red kangaroos, so we did, we had a stencil and a can of red paint, they done it and the whole convoy. It was our last night on our contract luckily because I don't think we would have been allowed back.

Was that an American or Australian base?

American base, we were basically working for the Americans, the US, which is Mac V, Military Command, they give you a mug shot and

- 22:00 fingerprints and you have got no authority and yet if you had gone as a USO [American entertainment organization] singer you would have had authority of a full colonel, they were better paid than we were. But we got \$150 the second time around a week, which was still damn good money, I mean the basic wage here was about \$30 a week, at that time. \$40 at the most. So we was on over a \$100 and that was... I was a woman, I can't, I mean things have changed, a women couldn't earn that much money in Australia at the time.
- 22:30 But we, yeah. We had a bit of left, we didn't leave, I come down the street to fix the organ and come home and the mamma san come rushing up to me, in the village you have got mamma sans, she puts a big knife in my hand and she says, "Kaka dal kaka dal!" [phonetic] which means kill. "Your husband No 10." and I thought, 'What the heck has happened?' and I said to the others, "What happened?" Nobody answered, oh, No 10 is up there and she lead me up the
- 23:00 stairs by the hand and I opened the bedroom door and he is in bed with a Vietnamese lass and I go, 'Oh shit, now what?' Poor bugger, I mean I had been sexual with him, I couldn't blame him, he wasn't a bad boy. So we just kind of kept working together until the contract was over and then went our separate ways, but we are still mates because we went through a hell of a lot together and you grow.

That would have been hard performing together though,

23:30 after personal...?

Yeah, but you weren't allowed to let your personal stuff in, the show must go on. You weren't allowed to let that interfere with what you had to do I suppose. So I just kept on re-enlisting because divorce was an absolute no-no in the '60s. You know, you must've been the pits. I just kept on re-enlisting, the money was good, I was doing what I loved to do and life went on.

24:00 How many tours did you do Janet?

You mean up and down the country or like... I come back to Australia a couple of times. Bought a block of land in Terrigal, sorry about the flies. Bought a car, went back. Used to always, accommodated by C Morris, he had a lovely house overlooking Double Bay, Rose - Double Bay on Darling Point, it was a beautiful old home

- 24:30 with a heck of a reputation that place. Prime Minister lived around the corner and the underworld lived there. But it was ok. We used to go back to Mt Isa and play in the hotel there while we were re enlisting to go back to Vietnam again, but you didn't always come home after each, if you had to re-visa you would go out and do the circuit in
- 25:00 Thailand, Budapal, Ubon, Sanahip [?], they all had American bases. We hired a bus and we had a Japanese bus, road manager and he sung Sukiyaki the whole damn three weeks we were doing it, I know that song inside out. He was a funny bloke, a Japanese road runner. So we done all the bases over in Thailand as well. Oops sorry. I am making funny scratching noises on the audio.
- 25:30 **How often did you, how many times did you come home to Australia?**
- There wasn't really anyone to come home to, my Mum and Dad had gone overseas, my sisters were busy with their little families up the bush and I come home to Sydney and they were in Victoria and you just kind of got on with it. I was a bit upset there was nobody else or come to the airport to see and greet me. Everybody else had family. I would have to come in
- 26:00 with everybody else's duty [free] that they got me to buy on the cheap. The water was really dirty over there and I had my eardrums blown out with an artillery battery I come too close to it and nobody said you had to go like that if there was an artillery thing, big shells, and we pulled in off the side of the road

on the way to Long Binh and somebody let an angry shot off while we were there and we

- 26:30 didn't go like this and I got my eardrums blown out, I was stone deaf, everything was muffled. But then I got a fungal infection from the water and the headache was oh, you might as well have shot me, got off the stage, I was dizzy, I couldn't stand up. They took me to hospital and vacuumed out the crap in there and had me on strong painkillers and antibiotics for a long time. I came good, it takes more than that to kill this old weed.

Where did you get the medical treatment?

On US bases

- 27:00 at the hospital in Saigon. There was a hospital there once going over that big bridge out of Saigon. It was like a situation of errors, you could see about to happen because it was seeming traffic, everything from little pushbikes to Lambrettas, to motorbikes everywhere, all oozing out like diesel fuel and so it was
- 27:30 two lanes out, two maybe three, two lanes in, it is 4 o'clock and it is busy. And there is a Lambretta coming along, it is a three wheel little French thing. I don't know if you know what a Lambretta is?

Like a scooter?

Yeah, but it is a little truck. And they pile everything onto those little things and he had bits of wood on top and as it was coming over the bridge, over the top of the crest, you see this great big piece of wood fall off his Lambretta and it went across the road and it was 4 x 4.

- 28:00 Coming behind the Lambretta is an ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam], a Vietnamese soldier on his scooter. And you could see it happening that he is going to hit that and he is going to go down in the traffic. Coming behind him is a whopping great low loader with two bulldozers on it or tanks or something, like it went like a road train. The wood fell off the ARVN chap, hit the thing, he went down, the truck just crushed him and he exploded
- 28:30 all over my vehicle while I'm driving, like it happened there and you could see it happening and there was nothing you could do. And the two girls in the front screamed, one threw up, I can't see where I am driving and there's traffic, like unreal traffic, I have got the wipers on there is blood and guts all over the windscreen. And it took ages to get over, 'cause it is left hand drive over there, the other side of the road to what we drive on. It took me ages to get over that bridge into that little lane and get out so we could wash the
- 29:00 windscreen and clean up the vomit. But we went on and done the show, we just went anyway. It wasn't nice.

Did those kinds of incidents just become part and parcel of the Vietnam experience?

You build a stupid sense of humour around yourself, you would hear a gun shot and you would say, "Didn't die!" you know. We was in a club once, it had a lot of racial unrest in it, blacks and

- 29:30 whites, they were all having a big barney [fight], one got evicted from the club, went out and got a grenade and threw it into the club we were working in. The compression just about knock you over, there were I think 9 were killed, 17 or 18 wounded and they teargassed us and oh teargas is, because it was a riot in the club, they didn't teargas us, we were working in the club doing a show, we kind of got off the band
- 30:00 at the back and we were all. And I turned to them and I said, "I didn't think that the show was that bad that they threw grenades in!" it was nothing to do with that. But you made stupid comments to each other to try and keep everybody from losing the plot, got to have a sense of humour. If I hadn't I would have died a long time ago really.

How bad was the racism over there?

It varied, it varied, from it seemed the Southerners

- 30:30 people, the ones from Alabama and down south of America they had a bigger prejudice problem than the Northern ones, two different, they were almost like two different races of people. You know the New Yorkers down to midway and then the Southern people, that is generally where the prejudice comes in, a lot of rednecks, but you get all types of people and it was a war.
- 31:00 We didn't care, we just got on with it, we had friends of all colours, shapes and sizes and nationalities. People are people if you look at it humanity wise. But I suppose if you are a soldier you are taught to go out and do it for your country so you can't really tell them that you know they are wrong and you are right.

- 31:30 **I just realised there are green markings on your coffee cup?**

Is it that?

You don't need to worry about it; it is just going to be a problem when that appears on the screen a lot.

I have got green on here.

No, not, that is not on the camera, it is ok Janet.

I will sit up and pay attention.

So there was a division between black and white American forces?

Yeah not always, but yeah there was.

Do you recall the Black Panther movement?

Yep

32:00 I do, especially in Sydney. I got back to Sydney, this is another story, are you sure you want to put that in? One of my friends who is a muso arrived in this, I am working in the Pitt Street Hotel which is the pits, it was the pits, the Civic Hotel, really rough. But after Vietnam you're all spaced out, you don't really care. It was just like being back in Vietnam to tell you the truth, what used to go on in Pitt Street. First night I worked in the hotel, playing

32:30 the bass, I get down and I sit on the band table, the band always had their own table, the boys went downstairs for a beer because it was cheaper, and I sit on this band table with all these girls. And the police come in and they said, "Ok girls, in the paddy wagon." and they start arguing and I went, "We haven't done anything!", he said, "You too." I said, "No, but I work here." and he said, "So do they, in the wagon." I think they were taking the prostitutes' table.

33:00 and they are saying to the cops, she does, she works here, I am going, they are taking me out and I'm saying to the bloke behind the bar, "Quick ,get the boys in the band they are putting me in the paddy wagon!" I sat at the wrong table. I am a hard learner aren't I? You have to laugh Julian [interviewer], you have to laugh.

What was life like in Saigon while you were in Vietnam?

Busy, I

33:30 got really sorry for the little kids, the women and the elderly people, they were totally unjustly treated in my opinion.

How?

Well there had been a war in that country for so long, they didn't know anything but war, you can understand them sometimes being sympathetic to the Viet Cong. I say that without prejudice because how would we feel if some other culture came into our land

34:00 and was trying to eradicate our way of being, with the expense of war, that is a bit like a rat coming here and saying, so you've got to try and understand. The people they might have been or branded VCs, Viet Cong or whatever, the North Vietnamese Army was really highly respected, they were quite professional. I am trying to think of interesting things that happened that stand out most to me.

34:30 That was going to [UNCLEAR], we went for the 1st Air Cav [Cavalry]. And we were in a club working one night and all of a sudden there was all hell to pay. The place had been overrun by some sappers and they knocked down all of the helicopters I think there was quite a few helicopters I can't remember how many, they got knocked out and things were exploding closer and closer and we had to put flak jackets and helmets on and get down and I'm trying

35:00 to do a head count on the band and I got the giggles at the Yanks because they have had their flak jackets and their helmets on and they are sitting there with their arses up in the air. And I thought, 'Why don't they put a flak jacket on their bum because if we are doing to take a full hit, they are going to get their bums wiped off?' So I got the giggles and I got told off, "If you think this is F'n funny then P off!" Anyway there was a big fire, they called for backup and there was this big fire going on with bullets flying out of the sky from everywhere.

35:30 And we went back to the base after an hour and I can still recall seeing the Catholic person, the Catholic pastor, what do you call them, chaplain, and he was so drunk and he was sitting at the bar and God blessing everybody, and he had God blessed everybody and his chair fell right back and he'd fall flat and we'd pick him back up and put him at the bar, and he would God bless everybody.

36:00 Because he had lost a fair few that were there in the company that week.

How did you shelter from the fire?

In this ditch outside, and we had lots of bunkers in [UNCLEAR], they used to have it pretty rough up there. We went to the hospital the next day and continued the show and there was a lot of wounded and I think a fair few died that night. And I can always recall this chap that was bandaged like a mummy and he must have been burnt, because they used to use flame throwers, perhaps it was Napalm, I don't know.

36:30 He must have been burnt, he was just a mess, he looked like a mummy sitting there and the toes were

out at the end, and as we were playing the show you could just see his toes and his feet, you couldn't see his face or nothing and you kind of, you go, 'Oh, poor bugger!' And they give us a medal. I don't know why.

That must have been pretty rewarding for you though seeing that?

To see him doing, tapping his feet yeah. Yeah because I'm a nurse by nature.

37:00 **You had some nursing experience too hadn't you?**

Yeah I was a nurse. I went nursing at 18 in Melbourne where they teach you at Toorak and then you go to a hospital and I was nursing in Yarram when I got news that my Dad had another attack so I had to go home to him. I had a boyfriend that had been with me for four years, we were engaged, his name was Don and he has since died of cancer too, and

37:30 he left with somebody else. I have got an abandoning complex. He left with somebody and he rang me up and said, "Are you going to say goodbye to me because I am dying of cancer?" another one, so I did. And yeah. Ooops sorry.

You're right.

Another time we went up to, for the Green Berets. We went up into the, from Pleiku we were taken in a Caribou aircraft,

38:00 up to Ban Bi Toit right up on the trail the big mountain ranges run right through Vietnam and there is still indigenous people that live up there called Montagnard, they are bigger than a pygmy but not much and they are very emotional and they live in a tribal state. And the Green Berets had befriended them and they would alert them to whenever the North Vietnamese were bringing their army through the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

38:30 They were using all these bloody defoliants on the place; poor little things didn't stand a chance. So we were up there for a week for a Montagnard festival and I don't know if you have seen Apocalypse Now but that Montagnard festival and Apocalypse Now was really much what I had saw there that week. We were taken up in the Caribou aircraft, we flew up and we were taking up a water buffalo that was crated up and injected and sedated it was put in our transport up there.

39:00 And it went demented while we were up there and we all thought we were going to crash and burn. But we didn't and we held it down and we injected it and again helped to hold it down. See were the farm stuff comes in handy. But they gifted this water buffalo to the Montagnard for sacrificial purposes and we had to be part of the festival. Great big earthenware crocks of rice wine that they had been stewing for weeks with bamboo straws coming out. Got all

39:30 pictures of this. We are all sitting there, drink with these great big bamboo straws. And all the gritty bits were in the bottom. We had dysentery for a week and I got lice and God knows what else. But the dear little children, the kids, I loved the kids. They would come and sit in our laps and they would try the wigs and props on and I looked in their hair and they were all lousy, so I was all lousy too. But never mind. Martha Ray [American entertainer] was there, Carol Burnett [American entertainer] was there, they didn't like me because I'd beaten them at cards but

40:00 never mind, you get that.

Also what kind of entertainment, did they do their own sort of traditional performances while you were there?

I think so I didn't see them do it but they were there for the morale of the GIs I think. They were well known American entertainers. But that Montagnard festival we got so sick, we were so drunk on the rice wine we had to have, and they speared the poor buffalo in the

40:30 hamstring and it falls down, it was horrible watching it and they catch the blood and they pass it round and you all drink that. They made you blood brothers somehow or other. They used to weave the most beautiful fabric out of something from the jungle, it was highly priced and I was given one but somebody stole it, damn. Anyway it was a hairy week and I can remember flying back down to Pleiku, I think it was Pleiku,

41:00 in a DC3 what did I, DC3, a DC3 twin props [propellers] and there was no doors on the damn thing and just a mesh net over the door and I sat there with my legs out of the aircraft just looking and trying to feel all the way back to Pleiku because my feet were frozen, because 10,000 feet and we didn't have any oxygen and we had to skip the hills about 10,000 feet they were they were high,

41:30 it was a high mountain range, because you can't fly over 10,000 feet without having oxygen or air pressure so it was pretty thin and cold up there, but I done it. I got it in all the photos, it was another time.

00:48 **You were going to talk about flights?**

The flights yeah, we had no authority so we had to get flying orders and sit on the manifest line

01:00 and wait until there was available space on a military aircraft, and we go from the bases up and down in helicopters and over those four years we had a few bumpy flights, the first one I recall was in a transport plane and we kind of, we seemed to be circling this area, this runway. And I looked out the window and observed a fire truck and ambulances coming out and we were on fire and we didn't even know it. We had to get

01:30 out in a hurry. Nothing happened, that was like a near thing I suppose.

Were you actually on fire?

Possibly, I am not sure, we were on fire, but we came in and they came alongside us as we were going down the runway and they started hosing us, the plane I mean, and we had to get out the back door in a hurry. For whatever reason, I don't know why we were on fire, but we were. And another time we were in a

02:00 helicopter we went from right out in the boonies [away from towns], it is really kind of dangerous stuff out there after dark.

Did you realise how dangerous this was at the time?

Ignorance is bliss sometimes you know. I suppose so, we went out in the Chinook which is a twin rotored chopper. There was a pilot, two gunners, one on each side and great big guns looking out the front windows and a loadmaster at the back and

02:30 all our band equipment would be placed onto a pallet, strapped down with like a mesh thing, put on the back door of the... and the door was left open so you could fly. We were all given helmets and things so you could speak to each other because the noise was pretty full on, you can't just speak, you can't hear, unless you've got a... so there was nine of us in the group, 13 of us all onboard.

03:00 And we are going out into the boonies somewhere to do a show. And all of a sudden we are getting burnt with hot oil, it was coming from somewhere and it was burning us and all this oil was coming in through the back door and I can still hear it hitting the drums, hitting our equipment, a lot of oil, and the drum skin popped, and I thought what the, and we could hear the pilot saying, "Mayday Mayday!" and we went

03:30 "Oh no!" and everybody was like waving goodbye to each other and the pilot is saying, "Mayday!" and the bloke on the other end is saying, "Can you repeat please?" and he said, "Are you effing mad, we are going in!" and we went, "Oh shit, we are going in!" The back hydraulics had gone and he was able to lock the front hydraulics in some kind of what they call autorotation and then you lose control of the craft because it just goes in circles and we come down through this valley

04:00 with big mountains either side of us, we come down through it. And we had a pretty bumpy landing. And a GI, the chap that was flying it, he got out and he swore, swore, he got out and kissed the ground, he was like wow. He wasn't going to fly again, they sent in another helicopter to get us but he wouldn't even get on it, he said, "You send an effing truck for me, I am through with Uncle Sam's Army I've told them they haven't put maintenance on my machine for so long." because they had to do PM, preventive

04:30 maintenance, and it hadn't been done on his chopper. But we flew and we still did a show with half of our equipment because we lost a fair bit of it and some of us got a few bumps and bruises but it was very scary, it was a horrible flight, especially when you have got to get in another one five minutes later.

How much did you think you were going to die at the time?

Oh a lot, we waved goodbye to each other, goodbye, nice knowing you, but he done well, getting, it

05:00 doesn't fall out of the sky at 32 feet per second per second it just, it was just trying to come down.

So what happened next, after you're on the ground and the pilot has declared that he is not going to get in a chopper again?

Get out with the gunners, because we are out in the boonies and it is really dark and it's VC territory and we have got to wait for another chopper to come, and you are looking around thinking I hope they are here soon, they were and we went on.

05:30 GIs really appreciate it when you still want to do a show.

What were you told to do when you were on the ground while the guys are out there with machine guns?

Just stay close to them, to the chopper, because you could use it if you started taking fire from anywhere, you could always hide behind it you see. But it is likely to blow up with all the fuel onboard too. So there is a lot to be taking into consideration.

06:00 **How did you get from there to your destination for the show?**

Another chopper come and got us and half of our equipment was damaged but we still did the best show that we could.

Where was the destination for the show?

It was inland from Pleiku, somewhere outpost, I don't recall, perhaps if I ring up the other band members they might be able to remember where we were.

That is alright.

It was just a, I think I know Vietnam better than the Vietnamese,

06:30 I've been all over it. Another trip was, we took off.

Hang on, before you get into the next trip I just need to know, when you did your show that night did you tell any of the soldiers?

Oh yeah they all knew, the club manager would say you know, "This band nearly come to grief tonight in chopper so and so and it is still out there and we brought them in and they are still going to do the show for us." so you know, and they really appreciated that. We only had an air drum

07:00 the rest was all - carked it [was destroyed], the hot oil I can still see that, things stand out in your mind. All the skins, the plastic skins, with the hot oil made them all shrivel up. And yeah.

How many folks were you playing to that night?

Oh, a couple of hundred, it was only the one show and I think we stayed in that club overnight because we had lost our chopper, you had to wait for one

07:30 allotted to you to get you back to where you came from. I think it was Pleiku we came in from or Qui Nhon it would be one of those.

What did the club look like that you were playing in?

They were all just kind of put together, army barrackish looking things. You wanted to talk about Cathy didn't you?

I think we can get onto that whenever, but we are a little bit all over the place. I will just...

It is me I'm sorry.

It is alright. You were going to give me another example of

08:00 **flying?**

Oh yes we took off, I don't know where we were but it was, the runway was in a valley. See a lot of the runways were just metal, they had just been laid out over the land and they had to really put the brakes on fast when you got down because there was no way you could... they weren't miles long I'll put it that way. Only certain size planes could get in and if you were in a C130 which you mostly were, we took off and we went round and round and round and round

08:30 and we would all start looking at each other, it is all open, it is not like sitting in a, have you seen a military aircraft? You all start looking at each other and the loadmaster kept going from the back to the cockpit, what the hell is going on are we in trouble, we are going around and around, next thing he goes up to the cockpit and he comes out with a parachute on, and we went, oh shit, the crew is bailing out and there is not

09:00 enough parachutes for all of us, there might be 70, 70 soldiers in the back of one of those troop carriers. And we thought he was going to jump. But what had happened was, we found out later, the back door wouldn't secure and they couldn't get the pressure up to get up over the hills to get the heck out of there. And when they take off over there they have to get up as quick as they can; A, because their runways are short and B, because sometimes you take ground

09:30 fire. And here we had been going round and round and round, the back door wouldn't secure so he had to go down and secure it manually and in case it came open wide while he was there he had to have a chute on. But we didn't know that, we just thought that the crew was abandoning us, scary. Another time.

There were a whole lot of troops onboard with you as well?

Oh yeah we travelled a lot like that. Lots of times they would make the women go up into the cockpit for the trip if there was a cockpit big enough because there was just one urinal in the back of the, in the

10:00 back of the C130s and C123s. Another time...

Sorry why would they make you go to the cockpit?

Because the men would want to have a pee. On a two hour journey if you were going from Saigon to Da Nang, that is two hours. And they used to get up and go out over the sea and then up that way so you are not taking ground fire.

So, in other words that this is modesty?

Yeah. Not only that the people in the cockpit wanted to fraternise with my girls. As a matter of fact at one stage

- 10:30 they just put it on automatic pilot and said, "Lets have a party." and I am going "Who's flying the plane?" "Oh you can ma'am." "What do I do?" "It is on automatic, you don't worry, you sit there." and they would go like this and go like that because the plane was going like this because it's not like driving a car and the blokes in the back, I don't know, they would've died. So they just said, "We are on for a see and be seen so if you see any other planes don't go through those clouds because they are called plane eaters." the big, bubbly ones.

Plane eaters?

Yeah the big, see it was in tropical

- 11:00 so the cumulus nimbus were pretty rugged in the middle of a cloud, so we had a few bubbly flights. So we are going along and I am looking, I don't care about them having a party here I want to know this plane is going to stay up here. So I am looking and the next thing we go through the little clouds, down there was a tail of a Caribou aircraft. And it had a red kangaroo on it and I knew it was the Aussies and I am going, "Look at that bloody plane over there!" and
- 11:30 these ones open up the speaking to that one, they have got numbers on their tails, and I don't know how they get to speak to each other but they did, "Wallaby 1, Wallaby 1." I think they called, and we just overhear, "Yeah, right, we got you on our radar." "We have got people here that want to speak to you guys." "Who is it?" you know we said, "G'day mate." and they said, "Oh fuck, Aussie sheilas, hello!" we are flying along going "hello"
- 12:00 it was just, "Got any Vegemite [an Australian sandwich spread]?" because Vegemite was hard to get. Another time in Da Nang we sat there waiting for a flight for two days and this young fellow, he couldn't have been more than 19 honestly. He had been in a big skirmish and his company had nearly got wiped out, he was a mess, he was just, he needed a mother real bad and because I mother everybody and he told me all about his war stories and they were medivacing him home, "Because my nerves are shot ma'am." and I would say, "Can I sit near you on the plane?"
- 12:30 "Yeah." two days later we got up we were going to Cam Ranh Bay, we took off in a C130 and we banked over runway 2 and to go out over the sea, just as we were banking, bang, the biggest explosion and the whole plane just went like that and everybody went, oh shit, and you knew you were in trouble in and the captain said, "Leave your seatbelts on, we are going in for an emergency."
- 13:00 And the kid beside me just dissolved, he started screaming and crying, there was people throwing up and pissing themselves, because a lot of them were short time, what they call short timers, going home soon, in the last week or two they get really, really nervous, because that is generally when they are closest to going home and they think, 'Oh my goodness, I have got to...' and they get highly nervous and throw up and piss themselves, excuse me. We got down alright, we didn't know what
- 13:30 happened till. Excuse me I am going to cough.

That is okay, cough.

Excuse me. We didn't find out what happened to that flight for two weeks, we worked in an airman's club down south somewhere and they went, "Hi guys you flew with us out of Da Nang that big, bad night we had an emergency." "Yeah what happened?" they said, "We had taken off and a Phantom jet got clearance on this runway and we banked

- 14:00 onto its path and as it come through it broke the sound barrier." and they said, "Now, it was so close," they said, "It was so close it broke the sound barrier when it was right directly, we are going like that, and it is coming like this and it broke the sound barrier there." and it shattered the wing and the wings got all the fuel in it. They said all the red lights come around the cockpit and we just went, 'oh shit' we just went straight back down and in.
- 14:30 Nothing it was a good landing, nothing. But we didn't know that for two weeks that that was bloody close.

So when that happens do you just get off the plane, what do you do?

You just get off the plane, wait for another one.

Do you talk about the incident with the rest of the...

Sometimes, because the young kid, the young kid he just dissolved in a mess. I often wonder if he got home safe and possibly did. I have got some good footage of taking off in a place called Tuira [?] which means stink and flying into the

- 15:00 sunrise across all these archipelagos it is beautiful country and then landing at Cam Ranh Bay which is the biggest runway, they could put the biggest star lifters in there. And another time we got shook off, we had all chairs lined up against one another for our beds one night and woke up to, the whole place

was shaking like an earthquake was going on, and a roaring noise and we thought, 'What the hell is going on?' And one boy just, he was asleep

15:30 and he fell onto the floor off the chairs it was rumbling that much. A B52 struck on the perimeter, it was like an earthquake it was say, maybe here to 150 metres away. And the whole place was just shaking. "What the hell is happening" "Oh it is just a B52 striking." evil looking planes they are, have you seen one? They even look evil – with all that firepower. Those poor people that was killed, I was praying for them. Never mind, you get that.

16:00 **I was just going to ask you after that night when the young man was a complete mess, did you do a show that night?**

No I don't think so, because I don't think we caught a plane until about four o'clock the next morning.

How do you find a plane after that has happened?

You just go back on the manifest line, they give you a number and you wait in line. Because you had your flying orders and because we were one

16:30 standby. If you were a military person you had, you know you had priority so yeah. I don't recall doing a show that night. It was all we could do just to get out on a plane.

What sort of equipment were you carrying?

Amplifiers, guitars, drums, sound systems, I had a Marshall amplifier, a

17:00 big one, beautiful and a Fender guitar. I had to have a short one because I'm only little and my arm wouldn't reach the end of a big one. So yeah, you just, you know, you got it fixed where you could and you become very handy yourself because you just had to do a lot of your own maintenance. Sending home for more strings and you would say to one that was coming home, "For God's sake, get the show group to send out two sets of bass strings and

17:30 some underwear and some deodorant." because your clothes absolutely rot on you, you sweated all the time, you had to keep the fluid into you all the time.

What sort of costumes did you have?

Well I just had a basic band outfit.

Like what?

Culottes or something like that, I didn't want to flaunt myself because I was too skinny. And I wasn't a front line act, I did a lot of singing and playing bass and

18:00 sometimes we had little dresses up to here with different various little pictures. You could get nice little things tailored up, people were quite... They were very, very resourceful, they would make Ho Chi Minh sandals out of dead tyres, they would cut them out of the tyres. And beer cans or coke cans, they would take the top and bottom out of them and flatten them and then put them all together,

18:30 roll the edges together and make sheets of aluminium which they would put up against the houses, or they would make trunks with it, I have got a trunk made out of beer cans, yeah they used to live on the rubbish tips, I've got photos of that, you'd go past a rubbish tip and people would set up house. Use the cardboard boxes; make a house out of cardboard boxes, big one, rooms in it and everything. All what the GIs discarded they would put to use.

19:00 And they would make quite a good living; they would exist off a rubbish tip. Which was absolutely full of flies and God knows what else and rats. Used to eat off the street a lot in Saigon, sweet corn and iced coconuts, and sugar cone they used to cut into little bits like that, buy a bag of that, and all the fruits, beautiful tropical fruits, French bread, French bread

19:30 because they had a French occupation over there so a lot of the French pieces had rubbed off there. They looked to me Asian, well they are Asian, I can't tell the difference between Vietnamese and Chinese but they can. But they didn't write in hieroglyphs like Chinese, they write in the A-B-C-D but it is pronounced like Chinese, it is a

20:00 really diverse, weird thing. And I remember one time a Chinese soup man used to come around and this little man would come knocking on two sticks and you would go, 'Here comes the Chinese soup man.' and you'd go down and order from him, "Who wants soup?" "Yeah, I want soup." "How many for soup?" and it'd be 100 piastres and maybe, "OK, two soups." and he used to come round with his little wheelbarrow and he used to turn it into a street side dinner. He'd put one side down and the other side down and the middle would

20:30 come up with a little roof and you could sit there and in the middle he had Bunsen burners over boiling water and up the top he had all his ingredients chopped in little bowls and you go, "I want that and that and that." and he would put noodles in, oh yum. Absolutely beautiful. And after a while I said to him, "What meat is it?" "Number 1 rat and Number 1 dog." up until then it had tasted really good. I'd been eating rats and dogs but it was good. I did use to make him boil it.

21:00 Oh dear, but that tasted fantastic, Number 1 rat or dog or whatever. We used to have to hustle a lot of food off the bases. We could get come by a big load of C rations [combat rations] and you'd know that at least if you were on the road at least you could eat.

So you were actually taking some of your own food?

Oh yeah I would go to the supply sergeant and say, "Have you got a show in your club?" and he would go, "No." and I would say, "Do you want a free one, well not a free one but we

21:30 need food supplies." "Yeah man, you just tell us what you want, C rations, beer, eggs." We would come out with a truckload you know a little Toyota one tonner. "Today I'm going hustling, come on girls put your mini skirts on, we have got to go and get some food off these GIs." There and the mess halls a lot.

So you used to roll up in your mini skirts?

Yeah, "Can you give us some food?"

How did that go down?

Yeah, alright.

22:00 It was good.

How much did you use your sexuality to get what you want?

Not me, but a lot of women did, because I am not a real sexual person, that's why me husband left me. I've got an abandonment complex. I had been with my first boyfriend for four years and still had my virginity intact because you were supposed to save it for your wedding night, in the '50s and '60s it was a total different ball game, which was okay by me because I am more intellectual than physical.

22:30 But you can learn you know. Yeah a lot of girls did, a lot of the girls made a bit on the side too.

Did they?

Oh yep, yep.

Know anybody that was doing that?

Yep but I won't mention names. Oh dear.

Was it a profitable exercise?

Oh yes it must have been. I can remember a real shock at one base we were on, and I won't mention this man's name in case,

23:00 he was a sergeant and he run the club system at this particular base. And he was drunk and we had just been through hell with a big fire and we had been locked in bunkers for days and he said, "I would give you the whole takings of the club for this week if you would have sex with me." I said, "If the government catches you doing it they will make me go to jail and don't be upset if I say no." I said, "Go and comfort yourself." He must've thought what a - that would've been about

23:30 \$10,000 or \$12,000 but no I was never, she wasn't for sale. I'd think about it now though, no I'm joking. Joking Joyce. No it was brought up but don't go there.

Well it sounds like some of the other members of the...?

24:00 Takes all types.

Were some of them a bit rough?

Yeah, but that is a judgement, you didn't particularly like everyone you worked with but under the circumstances you had to glue together because you were always in each others hat on the road, you know it might be the difference between surviving and not surviving, you had to have a common bond, you didn't have to agree with them. Or do drugs or prostitute yourself, but if they were doing it, yeah there was.

24:30 Some stories I won't even tell ya. But you get that.

I want to know how the girls who didn't put out for cash felt about the girls who did put it out for cash?

One lass that was putting it out for cash was a Vietnamese lass, she was a dancer and I was rapt for her because she was

25:00 supporting her entire family, her old mother, father, all orphan kids, she was doing it to support her family, it didn't seem wrong. There was a tram we stayed in at the hotel, a tram, and there was a whole bunch of girls that used to work from that bar, I've got pictures of them all, they were a great bunch of girls, absolutely great, making a living off the GI. And there was a real ugly one who had a hair lip and squished face like that

- 25:30 and she was an underdog, they always come under my wings, look after the one at the bottom of the pile, it is my nature. She, a lot of the GIs would pay her for sex because they didn't want to be involving themselves in a pretty girl relationship, they might feel something for them, they are going home, they are just having sex, while they were away from home, a natural normal thing
- 26:00 for a bloke. Whether you agree with it morally or not is neither here nor there, it happens and it, those prostitutes were you know. Those girls were really good to us. They used to come and do our hair and this poor little ugly one, she tried to get out the gate one night and as she did the cowboys, that is the local thugs, pushed their bikes in front of her and wouldn't let her out, she was trying to get to a cab,
- 26:30 she comes into me, "They won't let me out." she tried, to you had to make up a lot of the script because she couldn't speak English and even if she could you couldn't understand hardly what she was saying. They wouldn't let her get out to the cab, they just wanted, she had worked all night, try and get her money home to her family and then the thugs would pick her up on the way home, so she would have to come back and start again. I saw this happening and I went out and I got so mad with these boys.
- 27:00 I saw that she got into the cab and as I turned around to go back into the gate they closed it on me with their bikes and I thought, 'Oh shit, I am a gonner.' so I just pushed the bikes out of the way and one of them grabbed me by the arm and it was eyeball to eyeball contact and I go, "Go on, try it!" and acted all tough. "You leave her alone!" He says, "You Number 1 you same-same us." and they opened it up and just let me go.
- 27:30 They must have liked what I had done to save the girl, I don't know. It was eyeball to eyeball and it was you know and it was up yours. And all of a sudden yeah he had me by the arm like this and I thought I am going to get done, flattened, but I didn't he said, "You are Number 1." which means good, Number 10 was bad, Number 1 was good. Yeah, 'You Number 1 you same same us.' So he have felt that I had compassion for her I don't know.
- 28:00 **You are obviously in a situation where nobody followed you out there to protect you did some of the band or other male band members or any of those sorts of blokes look out for the girls?**
- Oh yeah, that is what I say, we had to glue together we had to, yep we did. Can I sit cross legged, oops, flashing the knee.
- That is alright.**
- OK.
- 28:30 Yeah there was, and at Nha Trang was, it was like a, did you get in Nha Trang when you were there, no you were in the north sorry. Nha Trang was like a holiday resort where the kings and princes and all that, the royalty used to go to, the presidents or whatever they went, a very pretty place. But the whole of Vietnam is pretty. Sometimes when you flew along and they were doing defoliant and it rained, it was like, it washed a hell of a lot of the defoliation, bared a lot of the ground and the monsoon rains
- 29:00 used to wash the soil off and it would be out to sea a couple of miles, like yellow, turn the ocean yellow with the water running off, you could observe this from the planes when you were flying. We often used to take ground fire, the thing was to get up there as far as you could and get out, get out over the sea because there is a long strip of coastline there. Unless you were in a chopper going in country, that type of thing.
- 29:30 And up north it was very horrible, we went to a hotel once up there. We had to stay in a hotel while we were moving from a villa and these little Vietnamese people come in with little cans and they de-cockroached the place and eat them. "What are you doing with that Pappasan?" "Oh number one eat, we eat, eat number one." They'd be walking around with little cans picking up cockroaches.
- 30:00 I suppose it is no different now.
- Was it like a food in that area?**
- Yeah well war is war, yeah there is quite a big population down there and I suppose it was just one of many things on their menus, like they eat dogs.
- So were there a lot of cockroaches in Da Nang?**
- Yeah there was cockroaches everywhere. I worked for the navy once, we went out from Da Nang into the Gulf of Tonkin for a whole week on an aircraft carrier.
- 30:30 And I was given the admiral's quarters because he wasn't onboard. Oh it was a lap of luxury, you know from an old hootch or airport crate into the admiral's quarters, thanks very much. We worked on that boat for a week, you fly in and they catch you on a steam catapult and you go... and your seat would have been turned the other way because the G force would have got your neck. And they chip you up, and then they pull you off onto the side and the Phantom jets came
- 31:00 and they went, the whole time it was like storey and storeys, the phantom jets would land, they would take them to the side, they would go down on an elevator and in under the next thing where they would be re-bomb loaded up again, because they were bombing Hanoi. And there were three American boats,

this was the USS Coral Sea I was on - three of them were doing a triangle out there. And the Phantom jets would just come and go onto bomb North Vietnam at all times. Think of that firepower. Got all my bands, dental work

- 31:30 done onboard. Got all our dental work up to scratch, you would scrounge whenever you could. It was really best if you stayed with the medics, because nobody bothered the medics.

Why is that?

Well, you never know when you are going to need a doctor over there. Hang rank on somebody, you might need five minutes down the track It is a bit like M*A*S*H, [television series set in a hospital during the Korean War], you know M*A*S*H, it was a bit like M*A*S*H for me over there,

- 32:00 because having nursing, I would say, "Can we stay with the medics?" you would get a better place, you wouldn't be harassed by the GIs. Because the GIs were a big worry to us, round my girls when you were on boats, you were likely to get raped and murdered.

Was there a real threat of that?

Oh yeah, hell yeah, at all times. At all times.

Would they be in sort of a single thing or would they actually be walking around in a pack that you were frightened of?

A bit of, a bit of everything.

- 32:30 You had to be really, really aware. And when the new girls come through you had to teach them that, "Don't go there, don't go there, these guys are all away from home, they are all horny, they have all got guns, so you know life is cheap over here so just keep yourself nice." And you would have to really go into bat for them. Like, I had a little story come to mind then and now it's gone.

That is alright, we can go back to that bit, I want to find out like on the USS

- 33:00 **Coral Sea, were you actually doing a show there?**

Yeah.

What sort of a show were you doing?

The same sort of thing, you know like the dances, the juggling. I am not quite sure which show it was we took out there. I know we were there for a week and it was lovely.

When you say you hang out with the doctors, what do you think of the doctors?

Oh fantastic, because I'm a medical person, they were really good. I bought a book

- 33:30 by a Perth doctor that was over there, called, I Protest, I tried to find it this morning. His sum up of it was really good, a bit like Hawkeye yeah [a character in M*A*S*H], down on Christmas of '68, '69, when we were down south. We come on base late at night, well when I say late night maybe 7 or 8 o'clock, we didn't have to do a show that night, you go to the mess hall and you get fed.

- 34:00 Then you get billeted somewhere. And the sergeant told us that the billet we are staying in is a transit barracks, all people in transit that are coming and going through the bases are generally put in transit barracks. And they said the transit barrack there last week we had incoming, we had a red alert, five girls couldn't go home, some asshole GIs killed four of them and raped them. "Where, in that barracks we're in?" "Yeah."

- 34:30 "God thanks for telling us that" "Hey you guys, you going to blue [pornographic] movie tonight, we got a blue movie on?" So the boys said, "Yeah." they wanted to see a blue movie" I said, "I am not going to a blue movie, I am going to me barracks." so they all went to the blue movie and I went to the hootch and I'm thinking about these four girls that had been murdered in there and I twitched the door and there was a door each end and five double bunks on each side of this transit barracks. We have got all the band equipment down

- 35:00 the centre of this hootch. So I twitch this door here with a piece of wire, I didn't go down and twitch that one and it is hot and horrible.

Are you in there with some other girls?

There is only me in there because the rest had gone to see a blue movie. I don't want to see a blue movie, God.

The girls had gone to see the blue movie?

No the other girl that was there was out with her boyfriend somewhere, her boyfriend had come along, he was a sergeant,

- 35:30 he had come along and she was off with him for the night. So I was in the transit barracks on me own. So you get your poncho on, which is a little silk thing, and you get down to your knickers, you sat down, and I am laying there and I'm listening to all the noises outside and there is big planes flying close and

you could hear the occasional bomb going off, and you hear all the men laughing, perhaps at the blue movie I'm not sure. And the next minute somebody is rapping on the door. And I went, stand up and

36:00 then it wouldn't open because I twitched it with wire and I could hear them walking on the gravel around the edge and I went, 'Oh my God, they are going to come in the other door.' the door opened and I could see a GI there, and he comes and he shuts the door, he come in and he lit his lighter and he started off in that corner over here and I am half way down this side over here. And I could see him checking all the beds looking for a woman,

36:30 looking for a woman with his lighter and I got out of my bed and I got between the end of my bunk and the beginning of the next one, and I pulled my poncho right over my head because you could see through them, they are silk, and I am shaking and I am thinking, 'Oh, this is the bloke that killed the people last week.' there was possibly a group that done it. And he is coming round, he is getting closer to my bed, and he comes to my bed and he is looking in there and then all of a sudden, thank God, he is standing right there,

37:00 if he had of looked and seen, my poncho would have been going like this, because he had a knife in one hand and a lighter in the other and I can still see his sneakers and he had this crew cut and I thought, 'That is the bloke that brought us in from the airport.' He was one of our escorts on base; he was just looking for a piece of arse. And it sounds like on this base they are going to take it at the expense of people's lives. And this is all going through my mind honestly, and I could see, he had a knife so he wasn't going to be messing around, and it was all showing

37:30 up in the light of his lighter and all of a sudden thank God, there was a noise outside, something went crash, bang, outside and he put the light out, he put the lighter out, and I heard him walking to the door and I got up and I thought, 'Oh Christ, I have got to get out of here, this bloke is a murderer!' he possibly wasn't but you wonder seeing that, that situation that happened in that very hootch.

That is pretty suspicious.

Anyway I got up and I ran

38:00 towards that door and I ran into the bloody microphone stands in the middle of the room, and they went crash, just as he had opened the door to walk out and I can see him turning around like that, wondering what the bloody hell was behind him, and I passed him flat out and I only had my knickers on by now, I had dropped my poncho, I was running, the next thing I was bailed up by a guard with a gun in my face, "Who goes there?" "Oh ma'am." he goes and he takes his shirt off, his coat off and puts it around me for my modesty and I'm

38:30 trying, I'm trying to tell him there is someone in the hootch and he goes and organises somebody to look but nobody found him, but I knew who it was. So somebody went and got the boys from the blue movie and brought them home. And everything was alright again. But the next morning that bloke come to pick us up to take our equipment somewhere.

And how did you react?

I told the boys, that is the bloke, he was the one that brought us in, so the boys in the band fronted him about it, and they got the MPs [military police] and he was arrested, he cursed

39:00 the shit out of me, perhaps he was the murderer I don't know, I don't know. He didn't touch me, he didn't hurt me, but he scared the shit out of me. But it was like that nearly all the time, you had to be careful of the GIs, they were crazy. One of the other girls in the other band, they tried to rape her, on one show she was in, with Big Jamie, Big Jamie was a great big 22 stone Maori boy, a

39:30 lovely heart and soul, and he used to frighten the life out of the Vietnamese, they thought Buddha had come back. But you felt awfully safe with Jamie. And she was in his group at the time and we got down south and he used to think that the same club manager was on down there so I rang the club management and said, "Well if he was the bloke that tried to rape her in another band why was he still in the club

40:00 management because he should be shifted out?" And he said, "Go to the base commander and tell him." so I did and he said, "This is serious, we will get him and we will get her and we will get the last band manager." and we sat there and she laid her charges that this was the bloke that tried to rape her in another band, and he is going no no no no. And so the base commander asked Jamie, "Is this the man that attempted to rape your singer when she was in your band?" and Jamie said I have never seen the bastard, mistaken

40:30 identity. Contract cancelled; get your damn arse off this base 7 o'clock at night 150 miles from anywhere. But we got back, we got back.

So the prejudice was then actually upon you after?

Oh yeah, yeah, hell yeah. I had to go before an enquiry board to find out why and then things got stupid, I am sure he was after me for a bit.

41:00 And it was only because I had to stick up for one of my girls, nothing that I had done.

But that is insane, is that just a sign of the times or is that just a wartime phenomenon?

It is Uncle Sam. Don't do as I do, do as I tell you.

So you think that the Americans essentially were sticking up for themselves at all costs?

Oh hell yeah, oh yeah, they were, there was a

41:30 lot of things went on over there.

I am just surprised by the fact that you know you are there to be entertainment, you know providing a really positive service and they are not taking care of you in any way?

Some places were very good, but it was all - you didn't always get a good one. You know, your billets left a lot to be desired. It is making me feel ill thinking about it right now. Yeah so I was told, when I had to go before this meeting,

42:00 told to ask for a general inquiry or something, a GI into the base which...

Tape 4

00:30 **So we were going to talk about the enquiry?**

Yeah, happening, we were down in the Delta somewhere, can't remember what base it was and the club management there were being quite mean to our group.

What kind of conflict were you having?

Well, because we had a Filipino backing group they wouldn't allow the Filipinos to go to the mess to eat and we were a group, incoming wounded, listen, it's a

01:00 chopper. That's what you think, incoming wounded ... we were down South anyway and this particular club manager, yeah they try to chat the girls up at all times but they wouldn't let the Filipinos, they said, "Come over to the mess hall but don't bring the gooks." Now, that's how they

01:30 think of people. But that's my band and you, they're like my kids so we decided we'd just sit and have C rations in the hooch. And one of my singers said, "That is the club manager that gave me a hard time. I know he's in another group and he attempted to rape me. And he's supposed to be out of the club system." I said, "Are you sure?" She said, "Yeah, wouldn't forget a face like that." She said, "He's an asshole." So, I thought

02:00 well, she said, "And why hasn't so and so got him out of the club system?" "I don't know, I'll ring up and find out." So, I get on a field phone and ring up the club management and say, "Look, so and so said that this club manager was the one that tried to rape when she was in so and so's group. How can he be still in the club system?" "Oh," he says, "That's pretty serious stuff, Runt." Either used to call me Runt or the Saigon Road Runner, that was my name over there. "Take that to the base commander

02:30 and voice your concerns on that matter." So, I did. He said, "These are pretty serious chargers and I went, "Well, I'm only going on what that girl's telling me." He said, "Was she in your group in the time?" I said, "No, another one." He said, "Well, we'll get that band manager down. I'll get her, I'll get the club manager, yourself and me and we'll have enquiry into this." So, we did. So, he got, we're all sitting there all officially before the board and Big, the band

03:00 leader had come down. She was asked to voice her displeasure with the club manager which she did and he's going, "No, no it wasn't me." And so the base commander turned to the other band leader and said, "Is this the man that harassed this lass when she was in your group?" And he said, "I've never seen the bastard." So, the base commander got really upset, gabbled down and just said, "Get your mother effing group of our

03:30 now!" And it was like six o'clock at night, five, six o'clock at night, dangerous time to get out. So, we put all band equipment out the side of the perimeter and I went down town and got, bribed two cyclo drivers to drive us to Saigon which was a bloody long way and paid them well because the roads were real dangerous. Put all the band equipment in one and all the band in another one and I got them back to Saigon. And the villa was all full because we weren't supposed to be there

04:00 but if the villa was full, across the road was a brothel and after short time at ten o'clock we could go and hire those rooms to bed our groups down. "Sam are you finished with short times yet?" "Yeah, ten o'clock come, you can have bedroom." So, we used to have to go and spray everything because everyone had crabs. It was, it was, anyway, I was asked; I went and asked for the club management. Well, they said, "What have you done, you've got...." Well, I said, "This happened." He said, "Oh, just

04:30 tell them you want an enquiry, base enquiry. When you before the board you've got to answer to this cancellation of your contract." So, I did and I told them, I said to them, "I want some, ..." I don't even remember what I was told to say but I repeated what the sergeant told to me GI, general inspection I

think, which means everybody on that base had to be investigated. Well, there was, it wasn't a clean base in a war zone because there's black marketing, there's all sorts of things that go on within that little township,

05:00 within that company or regiment or whatever you call it. So, next minute I've got people coming quoting numbers and figures at me and telling me I looked flaky because I was, well I didn't know what happening. Then all of a sudden mysteriously our contract was renewed and we went back down South again. Well, my group was billeted on the base but I was given a downtown villa, beautiful villa, boy. And the water in the shower's electric. And I'm

05:30 sitting there and there's a big coffee urn and I'm wondering why aren't the group here with me. And I got up to get a cup of coffee just as a gun went off, thank God I moved because this bullet came in the window behind me and hit the wall on the other side. I heard it hit the wall and go plink on the floor. I still have that bullet somewhere. It's got a flattened end on it. And so I just hit the floor and went straight in to my bedroom and in my bag I had a gun, a thirty eight gun that'd I'd, I'd

06:00 acquired along the way, somebody had given it to us, okay so needed it with a clip. And I couldn't find a clip and I'm trying to find it and I'm thinking, 'They're out to kill me, this mob.' Whether they were or not, I don't know. I'd convinced myself they were and I hid under that bed and there was nothing, not a sound. And I've got me gun, under the bed and then all of a sudden the MPs come and they're kicking and bashing at the door, "Are you okay in there ma'am?" And I figured, oh, God they've come to finish me off or something. I did. Perhaps by

06:30 this time I'm getting shell shocked, I don't know. So, they boot the door in and they come in and they're like this, "Ma'am we've had a report of a shooting." I said, and I'm under the bed and I go, "Oh, Ma'am put the gun down." and I went, "There's been gunfire." "Oh, ma'am we've had a report of gun shooting, we've come to see if youse are all right. But you're obviously okay so we'll go." And I went, "Have you guys got a jail?" They said, "Yes, Ma'am." "Can I come and sleep in your

07:00 jail?" "Yes, Ma'am." "Take me back." and took off with the MP because they wouldn't have known.

Suspicious that they were on the scene so quickly?

It was suspicious; yeah I took about half an hour, it felt like two hours because I wasn't on base. But why was I split up from my group that night? Don't know. I don't know. I went out to Thailand, re-visa-ed, changed the name of the band, came back in and done it all over again.

Did you suspect a conspiracy?

I did. I suspected that I was

07:30 being singled out. You don't take Uncle Sam on. 'We have vays', that's what it felt like. The others will go, "Oh, no that didn't..." Bloody did. Shit, that lass reckons we were kicked off a base because we wouldn't - they would've thought, how bad was Filipino, what a low - Got it all, movies.

So you said you left, re-visa-ed and changed the name of your group? Where did you re-unite with them?

Oh,

08:00 just your different ones come and go at all times. Just went out to Thailand, down the circuit there, kept my Filipino backing group, came back in, put different people on the front line and did it all again. Just kept doing that.

How did you recruit the group?

Through agencies in the Philippines, one called Sangless[?]. There was a lot of unrest in the Philippines and I felt sometimes safer in Vietnam than in the Philippines. I'm starting to feel a bit ick, perhaps it all just comes up and you've got to cleanse it. Oh, okay.

08:30 There was a lot of anti-American feelings in, in the Philippines. They had the Clark Airbase there. And they'd killed one or two American students there in Rizal Park and they're very emotional people Spanish blood and hot minded and jeepneys are on strike and taxi drivers weren't and they would just shoot each other as quick as look at each other. There was a lot of corruption there.

09:00 And Imelda [Marcos] and all her shoes and all that, Marcos, I think they were in regime at the time. So, I'd gone down town to the agent, Sangless to do the paperwork on this group that I was coming out with and I was in a taxi and had a blonde wig on, looking very Western and very American or whatever. And the taxi in front of us they were jeepney drivers and they were all milling in the street and yelling and screaming, everyone was walking around with placards and

09:30 they rolled the taxi in front of us and set light to it and I'm going, "Oh, hell!" And I'm the next cab. They pulled somebody out and started belting them in the other cab and I said to the chap driving my cab, I said, "Quick, bugger off down there, here's the money, just go!" And I jumped out the cab and I pulled my wig off and I let my long hair fall down to my bum and walked around like this so I didn't look too obvious that I was a Westerner and there was a placard lying there. And I picked up this placard and I put it in front of me and I marched

10:00 with everybody else. Don't know what the placard said. It more than likely said, 'Piss off Westerners', but here's me walking with it. And until I got back to the hotel and it was a bloody long way, across Rizal Park. But I got there safe. But yeah, that was the Philippines. That was pretty hairy stuff. There was an earthquake there, always earthquakes there. Always.

Did you have an earthquake experience there?

Yeah, I did.

10:30 Manila Hilton had all cracks down it, brand new hotel. And twenty two stories up I think the dining room was, twenty stories up, it was going like that. We had a, we had an earthquake last night in New South Wales.

Oh, really? What did it measure?

Three point five. Near Wollongong, the Bulli pass. At the Daggerville road,

11:00 now I've gone off.

That's all right. We were talking about earthquakes in Manila.

Yeah, they were always having them there. That was scary too. You had to be lifted off the roof because all the, the lifts jammed and twenty two stories is a long way down. One of the, one of our colleagues, Big Jamie, the big Maori boy, I said look, "The minute we get to a nice restaurant I'll take you out. We'll have an Aussie dinner or New

11:30 Zealand dinner." So, we all come out for dinner. And they bring the menus and we all, Jamie says, "I'll have this and that." We all had steak and chips and things like that, we hadn't had for ages. Jamie got a peach melba and a rasher of bacon. We said, "Jamie, why did you order that for?" He said, "I don't know. I can't fucking read." I never knew. He was only seventeen but he looked about thirty and he could sing. He'd say, "I'm going out to sing the fight music." because they used to do a

12:00 lot of well there's three different kinds of clubs over there, enlisted men, NCOs, non commissioned officer, people who have left a life of military and then you've got the officers. So, you had three different types of shows, Bobby McGee was my best song. Oh, I can kill that one.

What other songs did you have in your repertoire?

"We got to Get out of This Place", Oop Paloy, "Cheap Charlie", Yeah, there was all sorts of

12:30 the show, like there was the dances where they showed their legs and their breasts and got some GI up on stage and you know played around with them. There was sight act which was like a juggler, which you didn't have to speak the language if there was South Vietnamese people in the audience, then they could appreciate the sight act.

Music, popular music was really changing at that time,

Yeah, it was. Was, was, was, was.

13:00 It was. Should I sing what I know for you?

Would you like to sing a song now?

If you want me to. We used to love going to the Australian bases, I'll just do this before we do it. Ah, love to get with our own because the Americans left us a bit dumbfounded I suppose but we were contracted to them and we knew the Australian Government didn't have the dollars that the American Government did to spend on their troops so we used to say you know,

13:30 on time, if we had maybe four or five days off, one of the boys would set it up that we'd go down to Vung Tau or Phang Rang Bay, no, Phang Rang, Nui Dat, no I never went to Nui Dat, did I? Vung Tau was the main place anyway. That's where I got my movie camera there. You have to read somebody's APO, their number. And they get it really cheap. So, you'd give them the money, they'd use their card if they weren't buying one. And you'd get a

14:00 cheap piece of equipment.

Is that through the PX [American canteen]?

Through the Australian PX you bought it yeah, but we done three shows down there for them and we used to just get all pissed and fall over and it was good to and we'd have all, telling jokes about the Americans. One American joke said, "I had a fine time in Australia, couldn't find where people kept on telling me to go to." We said, "Where was it?" "I have it written down, Buggery, they kept on telling me to go to a place called Buggery."

14:30 So, every time it was the GI, we picked up on this one, every time the GI would say, "Where's a good place to go on R& R?" We'd say, "Buggery, you've got to go to Buggery." And it was kangaroos everything but you know it was always great with the Australians, can I just stand up and get my guitar ... we're on. She's talking about loving, going and working for and with the Australians. For

- 15:00 free because we just loved our own people. And there's a little song that I'm sure most of the Aussie diggers would remember, it's called Uc Da Loi, Uc da loi means Australian [in Vietnamese]. Cheap Charlie means we don't spend as much money as the Yanks. And Saigon Tea is where you could go to a bar and buy a bar girl a Saigon Tea and it was very expensive but there's other things that came with the tea. The song goes like this.
- 15:30 \n[Verse follows]\n Uc da loi he cheap Charlie,\n
He lived by my Saigon Tea,\n Saigon tea cost many, many pee,\n Uc da loi is Cheap Charlie,\n Yay, Uc da loi, cheap Charlie,\n He lived by his Saigon Tea,\n Because Saigon tea cost many, many pee\n But Uc da loi is a Cheap Charlie.\n
They like that one and today down at any RSL [Returned and Services League] clubs, any Vietnam veterans will sing that one along with you. Everybody,
- 16:00 everybody knew it. At an enlisted men's club we would've done it. You want Bobby McGee. Get my Janice voice out.
- \n[Verse follows]\n Busted flat in Baton Rouge, waiting for a train\n And I's feeling near as faded as my jeans\n Bobby thumbed a diesel down just before it rained\n Rode us all the way to New Orleans\n
- 16:30 Well, I pulled my harpoon from my dirty red bandana\n
And I was playing soft while Bobby sang the blues\n With those windshield wipers slapping time and Bobby's hand in mine\n We sang every song that driver knew.\n Because freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose\n Nothing, it ain't nothing if it ain't free yeah.\n
- 17:00 I said feeling good was easy, Lord, when he sang the blues\n
You know feeling good was good enough for me, mm hm\n Good enough for me and my Bobby McGee\n From the Kentucky coal mine to the California sun\n Bobby shared the secrets of my soul\n He was standing right beside me Lord, through everything I done\n
- 17:30 Yeah, Bobby baby kept me from the door\n
Well, one day near Salinas, I let him slip away\n He's looking for that home; I hope he finds it,\n But I'd trade all o'my tomorrows for one single yesterday\n To be holding Bobby's body next to mine.\n Because freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose\n
- 18:00 Nothing and that's how my father left me.\n
I said feeling good was easy, Lord when he sang the blues\n Yeah, feeling was good enough for me, mm-hmm\n Was good enough for me and my Bobby McGee.\n La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la\n La, la me and Bobby McGee yeah\n
- 18:30 La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la\n
Hey, hey, hey Bobby McGee,\n You know I call him my love, call him my man\n Call him Bobby McGee.\n You know I call him my love I call him my man\n I call it my Bobby McGee, here Bobby McGee, yeah.\n La, la, la, la, la, la\n Hey, Bobby McGee\n
- 19:00 There you go. Sorry, it was belted. Sorry, did I blow the audio? This is a song I wrote for my second husband. It's about the prejudice that comes from religions and faith.
- \n[Verse follows]\n While you're all in your houses of worship\n And I sit at home all alone\n Soft thoughts and sweet meditations my friend\n
- 19:30 God talks to me in our own home\n
Because there's many ways to divination\n Not one of them's wrong or is right\n The answer to all life's creation, my friend\n Is there if we'll just see the light\n And the higher the mind the broader the view\n Live and let live and we'll see all through\n
- 20:00 Just do unto to others and as you have them do\n
The higher the mind, the broader the view\n They'll stone you for being a Christian\n Or they'll stone you for being a Jew\n And they'll stone you for being a Muslim or a Buddhist\n And they'll stone you for just being you\n But giving ourselves all these titles\n You know really we're not very wise\n
- 20:30 Because God creates all rich, poor, great and small\n
So we all have a right in God's eyes.\n No it's not an eye for an eye,\n Nor a tooth or a tooth.\n Live and Let Live and speak of your truth\n But don't franchise heaven and turn to hell\n Because we're all on this planet\n And you, you've done well.\n Let the higher the mind and the broader the view\n Live and let live and we'll\n
- 21:00 See it all through\n

And death when it comes must be just like a hole\n And there passing through not the body, just soul.\n

There you go, that was a little song that I wrote for a circumstance in my life. There's others but I don't want to bore you with them.

21:30 **Can you tell me the story about Cathy Wayne?**

Yeah, I suppose yeah. Yeah, Cathy was a lovely OS who worked and was contracted to our same management as ourselves and she was in a band. We very often changed all our acts from one to another to change the format. They were up North I think working for the marines up near Da Nang and,

22:00 the club was half bamboo and then flywire. Now we were in a stage about the size of this room working to a little audience down there and we'd done the show and she used to sing Respect and she used to sing it like it should sound. She was a fantastic singer. I'm going to stand up and gesture what

22:30 happened, no, I better not. Anyway, come to the end of this show and the front act who was ever on always says, "Put your hands together for the drummer, put your hands together for the bass player and you go through the credits of a, of a

You all do an encore do you?

Very often yeah but they introduce all the band members to the audience and they each get their own applause because you're a show. And she said, "Let's put our hands together for..." and she walked right in to the line of

23:00 fire that came from behind through the flywire and it was supposedly reported that the man was trying to get his CO who was in the front line of the audience because everybody had a gun and you had to be really careful what you said over there because life was cheap, it's a war and very often there was a few people sorted out in a, they'd say, "He'll been gone by the next sortie." That type of thing. So, this bloke obviously had grievances with his commanding officer and

23:30 he had a silencer on his gun so it was pre-meditated and he was firing in through the flywire, in his sights and when she just walked in front of that and she squeaked and went down. She was not, I was not in that show, she was in a show that was within our company but we're all mates type of thing you know, and it really kind of knocked, bowled over that show

24:00 completely. That was that show finished and then those people come in to my groups and various other groups, the front line acts. But

What happened there that day with regards to the rest of the concert?

Well, the concert that particular day was just finished. It was at the end of it and so someone came up out of the audience and did mouth to mouth resuscitation on her because there was no sign of life because it, the, it had, reportedly gone straight through the heart and there was no

24:30 pumping. They didn't tell us until she was rolled over and there was a little blood wound there. And yeah they had to have her embalmed. There was, I think the bloke got seven years at the enquiry. You try to blot a lot of that stuff out because that's really, I showed you a picture of the drummer. That was her boyfriend. Mortified him and it shocked the pants off a lot of the, well our

25:00 entire company because we were all kind of mates and fellow musos and she was a really nice lass to boot. But that's all I'm going to say about that. I wouldn't...

How long did you remain in that camp after that incident?

We was in, we were in Da Nang at the time, we was out there. It didn't have any effect on my band,

25:30 like working because the show's still got to go on. You just but that one like we had to go in and do all our pick up on all their cancellations, that type of thing. It's just life or death whatever you like to call it. Yeah.

How long was it before the attempt on the CO had been determined?

Don't know.

26:00 Wouldn't have a clue but this chap obviously had thought about it because he had a, he had a silencer on his gun and like I said, shot through the flywire. But there's lots of people over there that run their command and if they, if they were really unjust, first, first round of fighting, jeepers the enemy must have killed a CO. So, yeah it was, it was, there was a

26:30 war going on within a war. It was, I better shut up. Some things are best left unsaid.

Did it make you want to come home?

No. What? Come home to what? There was nothing for me to come home to. My marriage had broken down. I thought I'd have been ridiculed for that when I got back. I would have had no job. No, I stayed

on. I just kept on re-enlisting because I

27:00 was a woman in the sixties who had, had no education, had no, my Dad said women didn't have an education. I can prove different to him now. But yeah, I just came home when it all finished. '72 I came home. Every March I came down with malaria for three or four years in a row. You could set your clock by it. Three times I got that.

What was your health like while you were away,

27:30 **Janet?**

The infection in the ears was a bummer. The fevers, you know the malarial things they just came and went, came back it was dreadful. I sat in a room in Sydney and hospitalised because, I woke up in hospital twice. Don't remember. But I'd obviously got in to a fever, malarial fever. Somebody had come to my room and found me there and put me in hospital. They

28:00 said I was walking around with only my hat on. I don't remember. That's what they told me. And if I did remember, I don't want to. Wonder what went on because I can't remember. Oh, dear you've got to laugh. We always stayed with the O'Roras. There's another story, what else can I tell you? Do you have any particular things to ask?

Yeah, I was curious to ask before about the props that you

28:30 **had that you mentioned. Wigs and frocks and...**

Oh, yeah, yeah. You had to take your props with you. It was so hot over there. You couldn't keep a decent hairdo. So, you done the best with what you got and if you, you'd be travelling all day and your hair was all over the mess, you'd pull a wig on. Yeah, it was just stage props. One night, oh I've got to tell you this one, our dancer who used to do cartwheels okay, she used to do cartwheels. She was

29:00 quite a good acrobat, Anthea. Done a lot of vaudeville stuff, sang a few songs, had good, she got dysentery as, we had to be on malaria tablets and they would give you dysentery and if you weren't on them you got dysentery anyway. Anyway, one time she's on stage, now can I draw a picture of this? And she's doing cartwheels and she shit herself. And we didn't realise where the brown spots

29:30 were coming from. And she's done the splits and she's going, "Stop, stop." Like this, so we stopped. She got off and there was a great big bloody poo on the floor and she ran, out backwards, poor girl she was so sick. She really was. And we were right down South in the boonies and they were what they call grunts, the ones that really do it hard. GI marines and they're the basic age of nineteen ones, front line stuff

30:00 and it was such a shame that Gail couldn't work, she was so ill. And I went, "What are we going to do to give the blokes a bit of cheesecake, type of thing?" I went, "Why don't you guys get dressed up in Gail's outfits and dag them you know." So, one of the boys with a beard, great big tall lanky thing got all dressed up in Gail's outfits and went out and flashed his willy at them and God knows, it's only men you know, it's men and he brought the

30:30 house down. Absolutely brought the house down. They loved him. And all the gay ones come out and propositioned him. He said, "I'm not doing that anymore. I'm not going out there no more. I got more propositions than Gail ever gets." Oh, dear it was funny. And on that same date they'd accommodated us in a room about this size but off the room, all the way around, were the bedrooms. And outside the bedrooms was a big sandbagged bunker because it was quite a,

31:00 active area for bombings, mortars and rockets and they said a lot of it was undermined and VC would pop up sometimes in the compound. They tell you all this before you go to bed and you go, oh, god you get a look like this. There was a Filipino group in there with us and we were all allotted these rooms all around the outside of this particular community building. And they had little doors along that went out in to a bunkered area if we got income because we couldn't get off the

31:30 base, off the compound within the base sorry. So, we've gone to bed, the next minute there's a bloody curdling screams coming out of the Filipino's bedroom and we all got up and we found the light and got our little torches and we were, and here's a great big GI soul brother and he's dragging this Filipino boy by his hair because he had long hair. He was a muso. And he thought he'd found a woman. So,

32:00 he's dragging off this drummer with long hair towards the little bunkers to rape them or whatever he was going to do with them and the Filipino bloke thought the VC had him. It was like a comedy of errors. Now we all went in there and, and got the lights on and the soul brother dropped him and goes, "Oh, hell, I thought I had a woman!" So, stupid things like that. Silly things like that. You can't help laughing. You have to laugh.

32:30 **What kind of relationships did you form with the GIs?**

Oh, some of them were okay. It was best not to be intimate with anyone because of venereal disease over there was rife, really rife and one of them infected one of my band members one time and that was pretty hairy. So, that was the place, it wasn't that kind of a relationship. I had a few, don't worry.

33:00 I met a nice doctor that played chess and other games. But they used to let us, I'd say look I've got a

couple of nurses or I'm a nurse, we'd stay with the medics, we're safer with you guys. You ain't gonna, give us a call if you need help in surgery. And they would. See you'd see cases like leprosy, you never see cases of leprosy in Australia or if you do I wouldn't know where, napalm burns, smallpox, all things that the rest of the world's eradicated because it's a third world country and

- 33:30 yeah. Pretty horrendous looking. Poor old war wounds but you'd just help where you could. We stayed with the veterinary team once and they told us they'd been out in to the boonies up in the Ho Chi Minh Trail to patch up a herd of elephants that had got too close to the bombing and a couple of them had been killed but there was quite a herd of elephants up there and they'd landed their choppers in the bush and after they'd darted the elephants that needed, one had his tail hanging off. So, they
- 34:00 sewed it all back on and pumped him full of, some had their ears blown off and they darted them, tranquillised them, put the chopper down in the area that they'd flattened and they rushed out and would sew up any of the damage on this herd of elephants. I thought that was rather nice. That was the nice side of the war. There was still people out there that did care, for animals as well as people. But the medics, they're just a team all on their own. They really are. They were dedicated. But
- 34:30 everybody's got a different section of life to fulfil you know. They put a gun in a 19 year old fellow's hand and sent him off to war, what's he going to do? He's only young, he's only learning, he's going to make a mistake and they do. They did. But we had a young one, a GI came in to our dressing room once and he what they call a Goose gun which is a semi-automatic thing and they're like a sawn off thing and he dropped it and it went t, t, t, t, t and it put holes right through our, right through the
- 35:00 costumes and one through the drummer's calf muscle. That wasn't our band but I was in there when that happened. Because he was in there chatting up and big noting himself, trying to get on to the, few of the Pinnay girls or whatever it was, yeah. You were told never to buy a lighter downtown because sometimes they used to put a little bit of plastic explosive in them instead of the flint and GIs would come along and buy them, bang they're dead.
- 35:30 Yeah, and you were told not to buy soft drinks or beer off the Vietnamese because there were cases of powdered glass in them which would just chew your liver up. There was a beer called Ba mi Bah would knock your head off and nuoc mam was like a sauce that they made out of rotten fish and it was like a national dish over there. It was like we use tomato sauce, they use nuoc mam
- 36:00 and it phew, stunk, absolute stink but tasted like velvet if you can get past the smell and taste it. You have a go at everything over there, I did. Well, not everything but...

What was the security like around you and the girls because I can imagine if you are performing in that environment men are going to want to try and get to you in any way they can.

Yeah, they did. Yeah, there, there

- 36:30 was always a master of arms on like at the clubs and it was the club manager's responsibility to get you from A to go with the, with safe people but if we were going out, security wise, if we were going out to a Marine camp in a truck then they'd have a gunner on. A gunner would go with you everywhere. One morning we were going in from the Da Nang Villa to the Da Nang hotel, airport
- 37:00 and the gates, it was early morning and the gate had just been opened. There was a Claymore mine sitting in the road and the driver didn't see it until we were just over it and he goes, "Oh, shit, Claymore!" And we all went, "Uh?" Nothing happened. It straddled it and it didn't go off. So, how close can you get? Yep. You had to stop before you went across bridges, if you were in a truck. We had to get out of the truck, go under the bridge to see if there was any bombs because
- 37:30 this particular bridge you could see the Vietnamese sitting in their dugout boats down the river. They might be just sitting there with a little device waiting for a truck to go over it and press it and go boom. The vehicle in front of us once went across the bridge and the bridge blew up and went in like that. I've got a picture of that too. We were the next one. We couldn't get on to do that show because the bridge had blown up.

Were there any kind of personal habits that you developed because of the

- 38:00 **danger of your environment?**

Sense of humour. Yeah, you had to, I'm not saying alcoholic drink, but you had to keep drinking at all times because you, you just would dehydrate but the American beer as far as Australians beer, then Coke, Sprite and things like that. I

- 38:30 was already a smoker. I wasn't a drinker, but I am now, personal habits, not the drugs, didn't do them, a lot of them did.

Were they just looking over your shoulder or...?

Oh, I see what you're saying, okay. You get like shell shock, you do. Pete picked Jamie up at the airport and the management rang and said Big Jamie's come back from Saigon, pick him up from the airport, he wants to go to the Cross [Kings Cross in Sydney]. Okay, so I had a little Mini [car], go to Mascot, pick Jamie up. Jamie on one side, little

- 39:00 thing driving along like this because he was such a big man. He used to have a mohawk haircut, great big Maori warrior face, you know. Heart of gold. We go to the Cross and there was a pneumatic workmen on the footpath, we stop at the lights and workman on the footpath just there and they went ta, ta, ta, ta, ta, ta with the pneumatic drill and Jamie and I both went, down under, tried to get under the dashboard of a Mini. We both clunked heads. We're looking at each other and I
- 39:30 went. "Jamie, we're home", he goes, "Sure don't know, sweetheart." Sorry, I disappeared didn't I? Ooh.
- Visual gag.**
- Yeah, and everybody's tooting at you because you've gone, you've gone through, the light's have gone green and you're still sitting there because you're hiding under the dashboard. Another time, coming down Parramatta Road in my mate's car, paperboys always
- 40:00 blow their whistle. In Vietnam somebody blows their whistle it's a checkpoint and you stop otherwise you're getting shot at. So, we're driving down Parramatta road and a paperboy blows his whistle and I went, and the car behind me went boom and I went, oh. And he got out and he come over and he said, "Why the hell did you stop for? Wouldn't have hit you but you stopped in such a hurry." Hadn't done a great deal of damage but of course I couldn't tell him that I've just got back from Vietnam and I thought
- 40:30 he was a checkpoint." Vietnam. Down here, even just recently. They let a lot of fireworks off here at Mandura. I was coming home from the hospital over the old bridge that you come over to get here and there was a boat just in the estuary down there, having a birthday party and they put up three fireworks and it went bang, bang, bang but you see I'm coming, I've got my nose on the bridge, I'm on the way home. In my
- 41:00 mind it was incoming and flares and I went all over the bridge I only just missed the car coming towards me. I had to pull off and just shook because it never goes away. You think you've come to terms of it. There might be times your nervous system's a bit more ragged than others too. So, yeah, you don't, you find it is a shell shock to go through that. I don't, I don't pull up now when I hear a paperboy's whistle or a pneumatic drill but helicopters always remind you of, it does,
- 41:30 it the oncoming wounded. If you was on base and we was with the medics and you'd hear the chopper come, you'd go, oh come on they're going to call us down there in a minute. You'd go down here and it was just a whole lot of bags of blood and wipe up the floor, or whatever. You know just help them out, medically, if you could but you get that.

Tape 5

- 00:34 **You just mentioned that you felt that it was really important to keep the show on the road. What were your duties as part of keeping the show on the road?**
- The longer I was in country, the more you know the ropes, the more your management ask you to be responsible for. I'm driving between Long Binh and Saigon. Normally used to come back with the convoys but after a while we
- 01:00 started going on our own, coming back and going there even though it was after curfew, if you could get through the checkpoints as long as you stopped when they blew the whistle, and you grafted them, you gave them - under the seat of the vehicle I used to have thirty thousand piastres which is not a great deal amount of money.
- Why, why did you have that?**
- To bribe the, bribe the checkpoints because you never knew when you were going to come up with a VC check, you know, yeah
- 01:30 sometimes you got pulled up with a gun in the window and you just looked them in the eye and told them, "Calm down." "Uc da loi?" "No Englinka." I used to tell them I was English, because I was. It had England written on my thing, but, of course England wasn't involved in the war. Same, same every night. "Pappasan, what you got? What you want." Guess some wanted dope, had an ounce of dope underneath, probably wanted money, some wanted cigarettes, some wanted booze
- 02:00 so he just, "Same, same tomorrow night?" "Yeah." So, you'd go to the office and you'd say, "Look, I've got two checkpoints to come through, I need that much money to buy that much cigarettes: and they would. We used to hustle all the GIs with their APA numbers, their ration cards.
- Hustle?**
- Yeah, like get, get them to buy us things that we couldn't because we were living down town. Like, they got PXs and we'd say, "How many cigarettes can you get us? "Oh, how many do you want?" "Do you smoke?"
- 02:30 Find a GI that doesn't smoke, give him the MPC [military currency] because you don't, you didn't have

greenbacks over there but you might use, see I'm getting away from what you asked me. You asked me about my responsibilities. It was to look after the group, especially newcomers who used to freak right out. But because she was on old hand at it, you were able to calm them down and go, oh, well you know. It's okay. We'll all get this stuff through from Sydney and mail will be going and they loved it when they got their mail.

03:00 Driving them to and from booking the shows, getting all the paperwork signed.

Would you be doing that booking sort of thing while you were actually on the ground?

Yeah. But you'd have to, say I drove the group tonight to Long Binh, you'd check in at the administration office and you'd say this is show so and so we're on base and our roster says we're playing the NCO club and you listed, club at, your 1st

03:30 Air Cav or 126 Airborne or something like that because it was all pre-booked in a big block booking.

Would you actually do that booking?

After a time, yeah. We had to go for an audition and they gave you, the Americans gave you a, a rating and we got a \$475 rating on our show and we'd do two a night so we were bringing in, sometimes we'd do three so we'd be bringing the company in a thousand bucks a day

04:00 and over nine months that, you didn't work every day but most days you did.

How would they audition you?

You'd go before a board at Tan Son Nhut or Long Binh and people who, yeah they just wanted to see what kind of a show you were, whether you had round eyes or whether you were, had slant eyes that what's they called Asian people and round eyes have got a higher rating than Asian groups. Some got \$250 and some were \$500.

04:30 **What's the top rate?**

I don't know because the USA used to pay phenomenal amounts of money. We had Dwayne Eddy [guitarist] come through, through our agency and he was, he had, was a one hit wonder and he wanted everything. He was really hard to manage.

Did you have a lot to do with him?

Oh, just driving, bit of booking and things like that. Nivan Baker[?] was an American Negro lady.

05:00 She was fantastic. She had a black outfit and a white outfit and she'd turn around to the people and sing like a black song to the black side and then she'd turn around and sing the same song, white, and she used to go really good. She was pretty well stoned a lot of the time but she was a fantastic person. I remember taking her on an aeroplane to Thailand and the captain comes in and goes, "This is your captain speaking. We're flying at 32,000 feet." and she stands up and goes,

05:30 "Honey, you still ain't high enough for me." And the whole plane just broke up, yeah but she was a good soul. She was really good to work with and for. Yeah, just booked.

What was it like having to deal with these USO people?

I don't know, just don't tune in too much. You just run in to everyday ordinary problems but they weren't, you mean the people that auditioned us?

No, the actual

06:00 **performers that were coming from that hired market?**

Yeah, most of them were okay, musos are musos. We're a mad mob. There's not many kind of, the Bob Hope show was there in Chu Lai and we was on base.

What did you think of that?

Yeah, it was okay. It was, the troops were sent in from everywhere but it was a really easy target because any place where you've got a whole bunch of military people in a war zone overseas like could you imagine something like that in

06:30 Iraq at the moment? Be a great place to lob off a few bombs wouldn't it and get a few scores so, Bob Hope never used to stay in Vietnam he'd go out to Thailand and fly in, in a little plane, do a show, go again. Yeah, he used to bring all the Miss World people with him and things like that.

Was that really big budget and...?

Yeah. He never used to do us but they loved him, you know, Americans have got different sense of humour to

07:00 us and sometimes we'd go, that wasn't even funny. It was to them and they'd be rolling around laughing and we'd be telling them Australian jokes and they'd be going, what?

How did you identify the difference between the senses of humour of Americans and Australians?

Just upset them, very easily done. But never mind. I suppose everyone's on their path. It's almost a different culture.

But I mean there is quite a difference between what an American will find funny

07:30 **and what an Australian will be finding funny.**

Yeah, yeah, we got them back at it. We used to tell them there was drop bears and hooped snakes and we used to pull their legs something awful but it was in jokes amongst us. You know, go to buggery when you get there. Oh, yeah write that down now.

Do you think at the time the American sense of humour was a little bit more basic?

Yeah, yeah.

Can you extrapolate on that?

They got upset easily if you, and I'm outspoken and I'd upset a few people on the way around but I didn't mean

08:00 to, just I didn't know they were so thin skinned. Better not say anymore because Mr Bush [US President] might have me checked out. Oh, dear road managing, you just had to lift a lot of equipment, had to go in the van, every afternoon, out of the road, out of the van, in to one place, pull it down again, another club, pull it down again, take it home and put it back in the villa, you know there was a lot of lifting to be done. So, if you had a lot of girls in there, a lot of them didn't want to

08:30 lift nothing. The boys used to complain and I'd say, "Oh, shut up. I'll get in there and work with you." Sometimes the boys would fight amongst themselves and I remember getting flattened one day.

What would they fight about?

Oh, everybody's on edge and I think, it was a, the Vietnamese didn't like the Filipinos and the feeling was mutual and there was a big punch up and I got in the middle just as somebody swung, a microphone stand, stopped the fight though when I went down

09:00 and they was all, they was all you know like worried because I got on good with all of them the best I could.

Would you describe your job as somewhere in between road managing and performing?

Performing and road managing was a bi-product of it, yeah. But the main thing was to be a full time muso and because I'd been there so long and knew the country inside out, upside down.

When you said

09:30 **before people that were, when they were new and they were freaking out, in what way would they freaking out?**

You'd be homesick, there was one lass who had a cry a lot, they missed their family, they'd want to go home. Shall I tell you about the lass that was committing suicide? Well, she tried. She never spoke to me since. That was the night we got back from down the Delta after we'd had a bad truck and got cancelled and we came back and I had to go to the office to put my paperwork

10:00 in and she was in there washing a whole packet of Valium [sedatives] down with a beer. So, I rushed over to the other girl who was a nurse and said to her, "How much does a hundred tablets of Valium and beer, is, how lethal's that?" She said, "Oh, let the silly bitch die!" and I went, "Can't do that." Ran back, stuck my finger down her throat. She bit me. I smacked her. She ran and locked herself in my bedroom and so I got the road manager and him and I

10:30 kicked the door in and we wrestled her to the hospital and had her pumped out. She possibly would have lived but I wasn't taking any chances. She never spoke to me after that. Can't say her name, might run in to her.

You saved her life and she's never spoken to you?

Oh, I don't know that I saved her life but she was just going through emotional stuff at the time. I think she had a marriage breakdown but everybody's got to kind of find it I suppose.

Well, what's the deal if, you know, you're having, well obviously she was having a really bad time with the whole thing.

11:00 **Could you have shipped her out?**

She was one of our secretaries. They could have but they'd sent her there to get her out of a bad marriage situation in Sydney so it was out of the frying pan in to the fire. But you know that's how it goes. You get that.

Also want to find out a little bit more about the audition

11:30 **process because I mean it seems to me to be slightly ridiculous if you are performers and you've been hired, you know, via...**

We went in via two agencies, Show Group Management sold us to Creative Enterprises. Creative Enterprises had the whole system kind of sold up. They were a bit, kind of dodgy and they would have a certain amount of groups coming through Vietnam that they'd hired. They'd put them before the military board and say, give us a rating. Because they would,

12:00 they wouldn't pay \$500 for a Vietnamese show. They might pay \$250 but for a round eye show, for a Caucasian group, yeah, \$475. I think I read in one of my letters last night how great, we started off the first show at \$300 a show and then we got better at it and the price went up accordingly. But it was done as a block booking that the club system would say okay that group's going to be

12:30 here for three months. We're going to put you 12 days in Long Vanh and we're going to put one week in Pleiku, three weeks in Da Nang and then you're going to go down to the Delta and you're going to do Can Do and all the places like that and get your, your schedule would be all mapped out for you, for the three months. So, you'd look at the calendar and think we've got 4 days off there, great. So, that's when we'd go South and see the Aussies.

Some of the questions I could just ask you

13:00 **then, how many were usually travelling with you at any given point because you, you suggested that, I mean half of your party is round eye and half the party is...**

First of all it was all round eye. Some of the Australian kids didn't handle the long term situation in Vietnam really good and because the Asian people had a, they were absolutely wrapped to have a job, let alone a good

13:30 paying one you know. So, they were more keen to, and they were more accustomed to the climate too which was pretty hot and horrible, rained nearly every day in the rainy season. You could set your watch by it and it was all humid and you sweated a hell of a lot and your clothes rotted so yeah there was, I went in to a Buddhist temple once and somebody had got a right big gong and I thought I'd been shot. Let me think, what else can I say? Eating off the economy.

14:00 Because life was cheap there, five dollars.

How many people were in your group?

In my group. Anything between seven and ten.

So, it's a pretty tight bunch.

Yeah, yeah we were like a little family on the road.

Can you give me an example of how a show would be set out, you know, what's the, how does it start, what happens to the...

Okay, you'd come on with an opener. You might have come on Dennis Knight because he was a well-known, and still is a well-known act in Sydney,

14:30 I think and he'd come on and do a bit of a Las Vegas, something to hit them with, something, you know, to get their attention and then you'd let each person do their party piece type of thing. I've got it on video if you want to view that later. You had the leggy girls, they come out and busty girls and pretty girls just because they wanted to see a bit of leg and a bit of sexuality, I guess.

And what would they do?

The GIs?

Oh, no, no, no the tits and arse girls?

Oh, tits and arse girls. They'd shake their toosh [arse] at

15:00 them and you know get one of them up on stage and get them to dance and also that and they were easy to, easy to entertain and we had a juggler that was a good sight act, fantastic he was.

Where was he from?

Kuala Lumpur and he was, he was absolutely a top class act. I'd love to have got him on the Australian circuit. He would have done so well there.

How did you find him?

Through an agency in Singapore.

15:30 **So the agency just kind of gives you people?**

They, yeah, they say you know, you tell them what you're looking for. I'm looking for a backing band.

"Okay, have a look at this, do you want this?" "I'm looking for a sight act." "Well, we've got these jugglers and these fire dancers and we've got that", that's how showbiz works.

And you would be asking those questions?

The agency would. And they'd just say, "Go and pick up somebody will you?" "Okay." So, you might have to pop out to Singapore and renew your visa and pick up a couple of extra acts.

- 16:00 The people in Vietnam, the GIs changed all the time. So, you could do one show for six months, change the front line, swap it with another group then you've got a different show. Put that back through but by that time the first lot of GIs had gone home so you start back on the front again, you know, because there was a great turnover of troops coming and going at all times. They get really nervous when they're short time, when they're about to go home.

So, literally

- 16:30 **what you're saying is you've this huge line up of acts and songs and regular things that you do and you change them over when the troops are changing over?**

Yeah, yep.

What was your favourite numbers?

Bobby McGee was always good for enlisted men's clubs. You wouldn't do that at the, you might do La Bamba or something more cabaret for officers' club and the NCOs, non-commissioned

- 17:00 officers, the life as they called them, they loved Country and Western so yeah, so a bit of everything. Country and Westerns are really easy to sing because it's three chords and a tune that doesn't go far. Used to sing, what did I used to sing, Angel of the Morning, Harper Valley PTA, Bobby McGee, but we done a lot of back up harmonies too because it was,

Just a bit too, so people can see you ...

- 17:30 Sorry.

That's all right.

It's got a knot in it and that really upsets a musician because you had to do all your own technical work where you went to.

So you were your own roadie [road manager]?

Yeah, well yeah and half the time you'd have to pick up somebody else's because they were either off with the GIs somewhere or too stoned. Whoops, sorry I loved you all. Oh,

- 18:00 dear that was good. A cardboard house went up next to us, on a cardboard house went up next to us in the villa and I've got that on video and one time you come back from out country and there's a cardboard house, quite a big one, made out of all cardboard boxes GIs have discarded. So, I'd go in with them and have a Saigon tea and say, "How were they?" and say, "Oh, I'll buy some corn cobs." and couldn't speak the language, lot of sign language and we few

- 18:30 "did di maus" which means go away and "dang lai" means stop and I've forgotten the rest of it. Uc da loi means Aussie. Yeah, they were really nice people. They were humble people. Pappasan and Mamasan used to do a lot of healing on each other and we had guards on and people to look after the villa like maids who had done our washing and you could buy a meal off of them of an evening if you wanted to

- 19:00 and where was I going with that one?

Oh, we were just talking about the locals.

Yeah, they were, they used to do a lot of healing and I learnt a lot of my healing off of them. They used to do cupping of the spine where they heat little glass jars and put them down the spine to enhance the flow in to the spinal cord and which basically, they can break the skin on the back of your neck and rub in some kind of an ointment and you'd have instant, headache gone.

- 19:30 Don't know what that ointment was. I should have bought some. We always had someone on duty of a night time on, we used to call them the gunny, someone who had to sit on gun watch because people would break in but on top of our high walls in our yard there was always broken glass and rings of wire and things.

What sort of people would break in?

Anybody off the street. Cowboys they used to call them, just the local people trying to,

- 20:00 trying to, you know, make an opportunistic something for themselves because we had all so much and they had so little, seemed a bit unfair really. Yeah, it did.

And who would take over the guard duty?

Our pappasan. But if he was up country and we didn't have a guard, well one of the band would oh and

George Sanharri would sit there. So, "Who'd be gunny tonight?" and he'd be sitting on the veranda snoring. Good on Georgie you're really looking after us. "What, what, what?" He'd be asleep.

20:30 Up north in Da Nang next door there was Quint, Gwen one of our mammasans and she was married to a policeman next door. They used to call her Policeman Whitemuss and they had an opium den but they, dope was a way of life over there. Behind this place was a brothel, I don't know whether they ran it one night, I'm not quite sure because there were a lot of girls worked out of there and one night we woke up to all sorts of gun fire and the Koreans who were really mean people had gone, even the kids.

21:00 Gunned them all down. It's war.

Did you ever meet any of the Koreans?

Yeah, and they were really mean people. They used to say, "Oh, you know, we have Communism, you know Communism. We beat North and South Korea." But we were driving in this truck one day and there's a helicopter and there's all these people falling out of it and I'm going to the driver, "What's happening?." He goes, "That's the Koreans. They're interrogating." Far out.

I

21:30 **know. Scares me too ... how you could see this helicopter and people being flown...?**

Pushed out of it and we were, these Koreans they were all in sandbag bunkers, yes I said that right. And they were mortified that we had short dresses on because they're quite, quite really - same with the Sillers. It was immoral I suppose in Korean terms, the way the Westerners dressed but I've got some pictures of them too. But I was

22:00 mortified to see the way they were interrogating and then we were told, you just had to look away. It was a bit like the September 11 when people were jumping out of windows.

It was awful.

Yeah, but you get that.

Do you get used to this sort of stuff happening around you?

It's always a bit of a shock but yeah you have to build up a little, or not a little, a big wall otherwise you'd go down with it. Yes, some of them did. Some of them had to come back home, they couldn't handle it,

22:30 the more tender souls I suppose.

How did that, how would that develop? Would it be a steady incline of stress to the point of where they couldn't cope or would it be

Both. Some of them, one well known Sydney act come home stoned and drunk and had a gun and been out shooting gooks he said, with the Yanks, just for the fun of it. And he come in with a pistol and threatened everyone, threatened us all, pistol-whipped

23:00 the drummer, threw a bed off the top of the villa. Just went troppo in general. Shot a hole in the roof and we're all jeepers, you know you don't expect one of your own to go off the deep end and...

What did you do under those circumstances?

Well, we ran and hid. But there was a song by an American Negro chap with his own show that was in the villa at the time and he was brought up in the Bronx, really hardline stuff, and it was a good act. He just walked towards this

23:30 bloke and said, "Go on, pull the f-ing trigger." And he just walked straight towards him and he got the gun and snotted him [punched him]. He said, "Don't ever pull a gun on me without using it because I grew up with that crap." And he flattened the bloke which was rather good. But he was stoned and drunk and lost the plot. But you got that, frightened us a bit but never mind, you go on.

How much drugs were actually going on? Because I mean excuse me for being confused

24:00 **but is there a lot of opium as well as dope?**

Don't know if there, I guess, there was downtown. Because one of my dancers that used to do, after the show, they were done legally, she would do a strip show to the GIs if they'd pay her two hundred dollars and they would, no problems. So, she could make two hundred a night extra.

How did you feel about her doing that?

Oh, okay. Fine. She was fit and she was feeding her family. She

24:30 had, I didn't care, you know, some of the other girls used to get the shits with her but that's - I mean in a bunch and so. She was absolutely beautiful, a stunning lady.

That doesn't sound like a very safe thing to be doing under the circumstances.

Well, we done it. No, not me, I haven't got tits remember.

Would there be anybody on guard?

Oh, yeah. It was in a club. It was all done properly and you'd

25:00 negotiate with the, with the band manager

How raunchy would it get?

Yes, she'd take it all off. But she wasn't, she wasn't un-classy. She was quite a classy stripper. Her mother had been a Thai dancer and she was so graceful and beautiful with it. Think she had French in her too. She took me down to Saigon once, to her mentor who was an old Chinese man that run on opium den and he just sat there like a big

25:30 Buddha, on his, and they chatted. But generals and important Vietnamese, always used to come to the village to see her when she was with us. She wasn't just a pretty face. I often wondered if she was VC, maybe running information, I wasn't sure, didn't care, wasn't my business, I loved her. She was all right.

What does the inside of an opium den look like then?

Well, this chap, it was just a few bottles sitting around and he was just

26:00 puffing, he was like a spiritual adviser almost to a lot of, and he was obviously Chinese, big round Buddha type bloke. It was just sparsely, there's no crap like we got in their houses it's all just table, chair. You know we kind of hang on to little trinkets and things like that, not much over there.

How much of a problem do you think there was with the drugs?

Fair bit. Yeah, it was, it was coming in to its,

26:30 it wasn't full on blown at that stage but basically the, the younger GIs that were there, the average age was only 19. So, you can't put a gun in a 19 year old's hand and just say just go kill people. Because they're going to screw up aren't they? It's not their fault is it? See, I always, I always think of the other person's side of it, point of view, got too many planets in Libra.

27:00 See both sides to a story and hell if I see something, somebody else might see it totally different but that's their right anyway.

Obviously there was an enormous access to drugs but was there something going on apart from the access that made the drug problem so rife within the Americans?

No, I guess they were just all homesick and spun out and they didn't want to be there. Who wants to go to war? Who wants to?

27:30 Only about five per cent of the people I think want to, ninety five per cent are peace loving people and I suppose they couldn't handle a lot of what they went through. Lost their mates, some of them it was adventure I guess, it was, it was just, it turned out to be an adventure but it was a hard one, take you a hell of a long time to readjust if you ever do but you've got to get on with it.

Did you manage to connect with any Australian soldiers?

28:00 Yeah, well we were down at Vung Tau and Phan Ran, I won the Phan Ran guzzlers competition.

Do tell.

We were having barbecues and booze ups and playing footy and things like that. They were closing the base at the time and there was a piece of wood in the shape of a plaque and it had a beer can of Reschs, XXXX, Tooheys, I think,

28:30 Forsters and Vic Bitter and they'd undone them and they'd put them on this plaque and it was called the Phan Rang guzzler's competition. Somehow I ended up with that.

Are you suggesting that you were doing some guzzling?

Well, we all done some guzzling but I don't think I was the biggest guzzler. I don't think I won. I think somebody gave it to me. It's my story and I'm sticking to it.

Well, it sounds like there would have been quite a bit of alcohol available.

29:00 Yeah, yeah there was, they had to, you had to keep fluid in to you. But I'm trying to think of something different to tell you now. Just about all told out on the war stories.

No, you haven't. Would like to actually know, this is a bit of a re-wind to something I didn't ask you before, when you left Australia and you were on the plane, what sort of plane were you originally flying to Singapore on? On the way to Vietnam?

An EC

29:30 10, I've got a picture of that one too somewhere. It was a Qantas flight.

Who else was on board?

The whole band, my husband, the drummer, Ray Harris, Ingrid Hart. There was a couple of groups all went at once, we stayed at Singapore, the night we got detained at the airport because they had trouble with the musicians, the blokes' long hair and our

30:00 short skirts and we got changed at the airport. They're very, very puritanical like ways over there, very strict, morality rules.

What was the atmosphere like between all of you entertainers?

Pretty good. Well, I think it was very good. I'm a hard one to fight with. But I can start up and fight you in to a corner. Had to do that a couple of times.

Just wondering if you're there being slightly fearful or if you're there just being naïve and excited.

Bit of both.

30:30 Slightly fearful when you hear the bombs walking in 'cause they put one in and you'd get a sighting after that and then they'd put the next one in and they used to say they're walking them in, you could hear them getting closer.

What's that?

Mortars and rockets. They'd launch them from mortar and rocket launches maybe out at, off the base and they'd start walking them in like they'd let off one and say that landed this side, outside the perimeter fence. They'd want to get in their with their bombs so they'd adjust the

31:00 height of where they were blasting from and you could hear them drop, they were walking them in until they'd get in to the target they wanted to get.

Well, what do you do when you're stuck in that circumstance?

Well, they generally to give you a flak jacket and helmet and you get in the bunker as quick as you can and the read alert siren goes as red alert, orange alert and green alert and green's all clear so you'd have to wait until you heard the green alert

31:30 go before you can, orange was, they wasn't sure which way it was going, yeah. So, yeah but it was, it was excitement as well as fear, adrenalin.

What about a bunker, what does that look like?

Sandbags, sandbags on sandbags on sandbags. Sometimes two or three. Two or three wide and if you took like, if you took shelter in there and you got a

32:00 direct hit, nine times out of ten you, the only thing that would damage you would be concussion from the blast but it would, it would absorb in to you the shrapnel and things like that in the sandbags if the thing was wide enough and most of them were. I don't recall anybody getting hurt in a bunker unless the GIs were punching each other up or something.

How close did it get for you while you were in a bunker?

Do you mean

32:30 sexually? Oh, God if we're going to go we may as well go that way. Oh, rotter. Oh, jeez don't put that on. You had a few close encounters with people you meet along the way but I wasn't one for screwing off as it were because it just wasn't on, safe, you never knew where they'd been. And yeah. But now and again you got carried away, well I did. I'm sure the others did too.

Who did you get carried away with?

I'm not telling.

**This section of transcript is embargoed
until 1 January 2034.**

39:52 **Because the thing is, it's like, there's all this talk with, you know, men that we talk to about mateship and how**

40:00 **important your mates are.**

Oh, yes. The camaraderie is most important. Forgive the bloke if he screws up because you're all likely to screw up in those circumstances. You just kind of, "Oh, come on. Get your act together." You know, "get off your grass", we'd say to one another if someone was being stupid. Everybody got their turn. Some, one girl was a manic depressant. She came there in that state. I don't know how she ended up. She was on all these tablets. She

40:30 was an exotic dancer. I said, "What are you taking those tablets for?" "I'm a manic depressant." "Do you think you should be in Vietnam?", "Well, here I am and they're paying me well." "Okay."

How did she fare?

Forget. But I don't think she was there for long. I don't know what happened there. I can see her face, I've got pictures of her but I can't remember her name.

Do you think that the camaraderie was any stronger or weaker

41:00 **in the performing field in Vietnam?**

As opposed to what?

As opposed to blokes who were out on operations together over a long period of time?

Yeah, because ours was a real freer way. They were militarised. We were free. We were free spirited people and a musician and a soldier are two different, it was a different kind of camaraderie I guess. You know, a soldier might see a mate really fantastic if he killed somebody

41:30 saving his life, that type of thing you know. Where we'd say, "Oh, gee that wasn't nice. But okay, he had to kill him." But you're still mates, type of thing. You're still, if one of you had food and the other one didn't, you just shared what you had. It was all one and all. We used to come home with dozens of eggs and cartons of beers and ciggie rations, combat rations, great to have on one side for when there was no food. Sometimes up North you might get stuck in a

42:00 villa on red alert and you couldn't get out to shop.

Tape 6

00:31 **I was just going to ask you if there were any other really interesting stories you had about interacting with the American GIs?**

Yes but I am not going to tell you about those. Oh yeah, we still keep in contact with a fair few of the people that were important to our path through, like the people who helped us to book the shows through the military. I rang one last night in America and he was a sergeant,

01:00 one below a sergeant major, he done a lot of bookings for the club system and he was a friend to all of us. We used to call him Poppa San, he was like a dad to all of us, he was a lovely soul, rang him up last night and he said, "You just got me into trouble." and I said, "Why?" he said, "My wife hates women calling me." I went 'oops not me'. But in America I believe they put a lot of the Vietnamese veterans into the desert where it is warmer for their conditions of stress and whatever it is they are suffering with.

01:30 Another friend who works in Washington in military intelligence, rang him last night too. Told him that all this was going on today, so I will tell you what website to go to, you might get a good mention you know. But they all, he used to play chess, and we used to play chess by mail. And he was a soul brother a black man. A lovely hearted Aquarian man, you know responsible

02:00 position and every time he used to beat me at chess he would say, "Black king mates white queen." And I would go, "Do you want to go black or white?" and he'd go, "I will go black and you go white." You know we had this fun thing happening like - 'cause there was a lot of prejudice over there.

I asked you earlier if you saw the Black Panther movement.

Yeah what made you ask that question?

We were just talking about the racial prejudice.

02:30 A lot of a lot of yeah. I was unaware of prejudice because my family were never prejudiced I didn't think. But we did have prejudice in Australia, but we had a White Australia policy hello. We had prejudice and possibly we still have but not to such a hard degree here in Australia now, yeah but there was a lot of prejudice between the whites and blacks over there. Not

03:00 all of them not all of them, but yeah it was another lesson that you looked at that and thought, 'Oh dear.' Sometimes we would all go down with the soul brothers to the 'chitlin kitchen' where they would make chitlins and soul food. They say, "Come on down with us and have soul food with us." "Ok." we'd all go

down and have soul food with them, that type of thing. And one time a whole group of us were seen coming out of the Soul Kitchen and a bunch of whiteys come along and attacked us all because we were whiteys with

03:30 black people it wasn't heard of. Not all of them were like that but you would get the redneck southern people and they were very...

Where was the Soul Kitchen?

In Saigon. Just around from where we used to live in Cholon.

We didn't really talk much about the time when you were in Saigon when you weren't on tour.

We had a villa, we had two villas in Saigon, we had one and we moved to a bigger one because the

04:00 numbers, excuse me smoking, I'm not a good advert [advertisement], but I am because I survived this long and Vietnam didn't kill me and cigarettes haven't killed me yet, and being a Pommy [English] migrant hasn't killed me and I just don't know why. I thought I would just throw that one in. Cheers. Yeah in Saigon there were a lot of French incliments[?] over there because as I said the French had an occupation over there, some of the girls were absolutely immaculate,

04:30 they were beautiful people, in such a dirty environment, they kept themselves spotless in their national dresses in their little black pants and the white ao dai [national dress of Vietnam] over the top. And after a while once you calmed down and got a feel for the place, you would make some wonderful relationships with the Vietnamese people, never got food poisoning once. Never knocked the economy, never. We paid them well, they knew they had a regular plant, it was good money

05:00 for them because we paid them our prices for the food - I did anyway. Uc da loi are sometimes 'cheap charlies' but I never short-changed any of the Vietnamese, I don't think, although they did try and short change us. A lot of the boys would go down town and try to put the MPC on the black market and they'd have to be very careful how they done it and it opened it up and it was

05:30 full of newspaper with one piastre wrapped around it.

Who did you have close relationships with in the local Vietnamese community?

Rosie. Rosie was a little, short, even dumpy, little round Asian with a personality that shone. Everybody adored, she wasn't even pretty but she had a personality

06:00 plus, she was a bit of a dancer and she would just come on stage and she was as graceful as a cow. She would just go out there and stand and look at the GIs and say, "You want to see it?" And they'd go, "Yeah, yeah, yeah we want to see it!" So, she'd just stand there and jump up and down like this until one of her breasts popped out and she'd go, "Oh, damn." And she'd put it back in. She used to make comedy out of strip, out of dancing and they adored her. "When are you going to bring Rosie back?" We've got pictures of Rosie. I'd go out the back and she'd be posing naked for the club manager, in

06:30 his club out the back for a few dollars extra. "Rosie, get your gear on. God, the ..." you know you never knew when you were going to have an inspection so you had to kind of look over your shoulder a bit because you didn't want to get the club management in to trouble, you know it was, you know the rules? There weren't any.

I'm just going to pause there for a moment.

I wasn't really aware of ... and it's funny you should ask

07:00 that. I wasn't really aware of the organisation but when I got back to civil society you go in to a withdrawal and I can remember just sitting in the room and there was a tarantula. I used to lay on my bed with my hand on the wall like that and slowly over a couple of weeks he started to trust me and he'd get closer and closer to my hand and I

07:30 used to think, 'I've got to let, I can't...' I'm arachnophobic but I'm testing myself. I've got to try and overcome my fear of spiders. 'He's only a tarantula; he's not going to kill you, is he?' And after a while he would walk on to the back of my hand and I'd sit there with my hand on the wall and that was about the only mate I had for ages. Because you just couldn't relate. Everybody was in the system doing a big spin out and you just sit in your own stew having a spin out. You've got to take time to get back in and then there was the malaria

08:00 and all that. I got this job at the Civic Hotel, perhaps I shouldn't mention names and it was frequented by all sorts of, I think there was one rougher pub in Sydney and that was at the Rocks, down at the Rocks. Keeping in mind we lived with in the underworld. We took shelter with them because they had accommodation and for free rent I would look after the rents and the linen for all the people in a place called Glen Ascham which was in

08:30 Darling Point overlooking Double Bay, beautiful spot, beautiful part of Sydney. You couldn't afford the rent there but it was \$12 a week unless you looked after the... the linen which I done and I bought myself mini car and I went and put dual controls in it. If you can drive in Vietnam you can drive anyway. Got a job at the Civic Hotel playing bass guitar and singing. That's my little birdie on the, that's my little

birdie.

- 09:00 Isn't he beautiful? Okay, lots of people come through this hotel. Other musos you knew from Melbourne came in and he was a black man. I don't know if he was full blood Aboriginal or maybe, excuse me, Torres Strait Islander, maybe Aboriginal I'm not sure, and he was a dark man and he was a muso and he had, he used to play guitar
- 09:30 and when we, it was in Melbourne before the war, we'd bump in to each other. He had his band. We had ours. We used to do folk gigs and things like that and all of a sudden he comes, Brian and his girlfriend. "Hey, Brian how are you doing?", "Hey where's Noel?" I said I'd lost him in Vietnam. He said, "Shit did they kill him?" I went no, "He just ran off with a Vietnamese girl." "Oh, fair enough", "How are you doing?" "Oh, well, you know, just trying to get back in to things." He said, "Look, I do speeches at Hyde Park on Sundays, come and see me. I'm trying to do something for my people
- 10:00 because the government are stealing all our babies." And he said, "And I've got to get something done for my people." And I went, "Fair enough." So, Sunday come. I went down and watched him and his girlfriend. Well, his girlfriend didn't speak but Brian did and he was doing this and all he done was blaspheme and swear, F and C and this. He had so much anger in him which I understood immediately. That's anger. He's been done, you know, 'cause we all dealt with anger in Vietnam and he come
- 10:30 back and he said, "What did you think of my speech?" I said, "It was bloody awful, all you done was say Fs and Cs. Why didn't you get a speech and say something, what are you trying to do for your people man?" He said "They're still - women, kids. They're misplacing every..." They were too. He said, "No, I've joined the Black Panther Party and I'm going to have a meeting with Bobby Seale [black American activist]." I didn't even know what that meant. Who the hell was Bobby Seale? He was going to go to China or
- 11:00 something because he'd turned Communist or something and he was drunk. I said, "Look you've got to, if you, try and do something for your people by all means but cut the swearing out. You're not even impressing anybody. You're just angry, Brian. So, you better get something to say. What do you want to say?" So, I helped him write a speech to say that, you know, why should their people be misplaced, their children stolen from them blah, blah, blah and he got up on his, I went down the park and he got up and said that. Seems fair to me because it was
- 11:30 unjust, well one Aboriginal lassie in the pub asked me to adopt her child because the government was going to take him. The government wouldn't let me because I wasn't married. I would have loved to have had that child. But anyway one thing lead to another and I was seen by the Commonwealth police associating with a so called, what did they call him? Some names I couldn't even repeat and I got interrogated for being seen with a known Communist and I was just a
- 12:00 'fucking Vietnam veteran'. That's what I was told, 'who was fucking black people'. I was not. Only fucking myself. Oops sorry, but the things that you know they really, the lights and everything, déjà vu, hello. You're not from that party are you? And I used to, Brian would come by the hotel and say, "Look my girl's working at the Cross." I don't know what she was doing working at the Cross. I never asked him.
- 12:30 Because I had to go past Kings Cross to get to Darling Point and I'd say, "Yeah, okay, well you put the amplifier in the car, Brian." and we was on microfilm walking down holding hands like this because I had an amplifier and he had an amplifier and we were trying to get out of the place, put the stuff in the car and they, they read all, different things in to it. So I was interrogated. They couldn't make, they put,
- 13:00 they put a couple of black Papua New Guinean people on my trail and the Aboriginals said, "Be careful because they're cops." I said, "I know. I know they're cops but I've got nothing to hide. Why should I hide anything?"

So, they had New Guinea cops on your trail?

One bloke's name he was here training to be, they were here learning Commonwealth rules to apply in Papua New Guinea.

- 13:30 And they must have just thought that I was just into black people or something. I'm just a humanitarian. I don't care what colour, you know, and people are really different (UNCLEAR) - doesn't mean you go to bed with people but they, kind of, I got interrogated and I just went along with what they were doing. I didn't care because I didn't, I got to the stage, I'd say, "How would you feel, the black ones?" I'd say, "How would you feel if the government was stealing your babies? He's got every right to get upset, that man." He even gave me
- 14:00 Mao's Little Red Book with the Black Panther party written in it. Never read it because I can't understand it but that was his, that was his path you know. He was trying to do something and the government was going, oh, anyway and because I was a Vietnam veteran I was an absolute arsehole anyway.

And what happened to your relationship?

With who?

With your friend.

Brian? Don't know. Maybe he's still out there. Maybe they bumped him off. I don't know. But I remember being intimate with one of the cops to get him

14:30 off my back.

Going back to Vietnam Janet. How often or how many occasions did you get to perform for the Aussies?

About half a dozen.

And what lead to those occasions?

One of the boys in the band knew, he used to frequent the Saigon house in, in, sorry, Australia House in, in Saigon where a

15:00 lot of the Aussies gathered. There's was little groups of people, you know, all over the place. The French might meet there. The Aussies might meet here. The Koreans might meet there. Soul brothers here, whiteys there, like that, little bit, pockets all over town and he used to go down there and drink it up with the Aussie boys and he, he got us down to do the free shows, down at Vung Tau, don't know how many we've done. Wasn't a great deal but they were just freebies because we just wanted to be with our own.

15:30 The government sent all the Normie Rowses and the Paddies and the whatever and they all got ordered, you know I've done it all for nothing and I can't get recognised. Doesn't matter. Wasn't on the scales - you've done it out of the love for your fellow man and because the Aussie is an absolute unique lovely person. They are, they've got a camaraderie about them. You never, I've been around the world, well not all round but a lot of places and you never get the feeling

16:00 in any of the other countries for what your average Aussie, Ocker, the average Aussie person. I reckon they're damn good, hard people. They call a spade a spade. They won't go behind your back, they tell you to your face and then you go and have a beer with them, you know, that type of thing and I like to be like that. It's my adopted country, I think when you're, the rest of my raising was in Australia, you actually teach your parents how to be

16:30 Aussie because you come up through the school, you learn the Aussie Rules [Australian football], Aussie rules yeah. My Dad hated Aussie Rules. He wanted soccer because he was a Pommy you see. Little things like that, cheers.

Cheers. What was the inside of Australia House like?

It was a club, just a club. It was just a place for everybody to gather. I'm not sure it was called Australia House. It was,

17:00 it was called something like yeah, Vung Tau, it was just a club where all the Aussies congregated if they were on R& R [rest and recreation] and they'd come to town to spread some wild oats or whatever they were coming for but basically you know, humanity's fine. It's just a bloody shame they all had to kill each other over there. I saw a funeral once, must have been a well loved Vietnamese

17:30 old lady and the funeral procession was immaculate. There was dragons and there was all these finely carved things and her cask was carried on people's shoulders on, on poles. On things that were all carved, oh it was fantastic. There were firecrackers going off. They were just celebrating the passing of an old well respected lady I guess, don't know.

What was your reaction?

Ooh, wow.

18:00 This is, it's just all a lesson you know hey, this is how they are. Sometimes they used to chew betel nuts and you've heard of betel nuts. They used to get stoned by chewing it and some of the old women and men but the women were funnier because they'd chewed betel nuts all their life and their whole mouth would go black and - including their teeth and they'd be so stoned on it and you'd look at them and you'd look eye to eye and you'd smile at each other and they'd go -

18:30 And it was all black and you'd go ahhh! Betel nut, ooh wow. If you flew on Air Vietnam, Han Cong Vietnam, we used to call it Hang on Vietnam because you had to hang on because the, you know the tropical stuff to fly through was really bumpy. It was like they'd be WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s [fowls] and wildlife and people with stuff on their back. It was like being on a Middle Eastern bus where everything and everybody

19:00 gets on and they'd be these old dears smiling away with these big, black mouths. It was, it was a trip. It was just a trip to just experience the people, the culture, yeah culture shock. But after a while you learnt to kind of mellow with it and think, 'Well hell, how would we feel if somebody come in and bastardised our land like it appeared to me that we were doing to that?' They could call it ethnic

19:30 cleansing, they could call it. I believe it was a religiously inspired war, Ngo [Dinh] Diem [South Vietnamese leader] was highly Catholic and the North was highly Communist so it was like the Vatican doing a bit of a cleanse to get the people to be Catholics and Christians and not Buddhists whatever

they were.

Did you ever discuss the politics of the war with any of the troops that you met?

Yeah, they, a lot of them were pretty tuned in to what was happening, that was not healthy. I've

20:00 got a picture of one GI, he had a poster on his head, 'War is not healthy for humans and every other living thing.' Which is true.

Just about says it all really.

You have to negotiate. If you've got a problem with you, we've got to sit here and talk about it. What's the good of us shooting each other? We used to say, 'We'd rather be Red than dead'. Makes you wonder, who's got the biggest guns. It's fire power, it's money, it's a power

20:30 struggle for capitalism I guess. I say that without, that's just how it is. It's like the soul versus the money and a lot of people sell their soul for the money, in life. I suppose we've all done that a bit I don't know. We're in the system, we try to survive.

Would you say a portion of the troops were totally ignorant of the politics and the cause they were fighting for?

Oh, yes especially the lifers. Especially the lifers. They were programmed by the government

21:00 and we are that and that's how we are and we are the best and everybody else is, you know they're just gooks, stuff these gooks, gooks [American slang for Vietnamese] they called them. We used to think it was so cruel. They were people, hell and why put them down? But they did. That's human nature isn't it? I'll bad mouth you and put you down because I'm better than you. That's war. And if you don't do as I say, I'll shoot you. Hello, that's not negotiation.

I asked you earlier

21:30 **about performing for the Aussie troops. Do you remember your first visit to Vung Tau?**

Yep, that was the time I bought the, I got someone to buy this camera for me and I give them the, the money. We weren't ever, there was a military payment script. The military used to print their own money and you could go to the office and you could get a draw against your wages so that you had money on you, but I used to hustle, like play cards, I used to play cards and I learned how to

22:00 play all the games that they, the GIs played and after a while I got quite good and I won quite a lot, because having a woman play cards with them intimidated them a bit and they used to lose and you'd psych them and thanks, and so you'd have you know money for - buying the band food and yourself and buy a few trinkets and send them home heavy. Some of the mail didn't get through once because one chap lost the plot and burnt all the mail. One of the people - that's what we were told.

22:30 Is my green showing?

No, no, no these are just notes for...

You used to be able to get a manicure but since they've all fallen off with stress.

When did you meet to play cards?

Oh, it used to be on base and you'd ask around, "Anybody got a card game going?" "Yes, there's a card game." One time we was up in Da Nang and we were playing a card game in a double story hooch at the airport and the next minute

23:00 hooch right next door to us took a rocket or mortar, I'm not quite sure what it was but it blew a bloody great hole in the place and you know concussion knocks you around a bit and everybody runs outside and there was people running out of that building on fire and one of the GIs got a camera and was just filming them while they were... just filming. I don't know he could have been a journalist, I don't know. The GIs flattened him and stamped on his camera because he had the, he had the ability to

23:30 to throw something on that person that was running on fire and put him out but he was the first one there with his camera filming him running on fire and that was a kind of humanitarian no, no. If you're there you've got to try and help and you know that's a bit rough isn't it. Don't know who ran the card game that night. I'm sure it wasn't me. We all got blown right away.

Did you have much to do with the press or see the press up there much?

There was, there was quite a few war

24:00 correspondents there, not and I said nothing. Wasn't game to say anything especially after they started shooting at me. When they give you a body bag and say, "How do you want to go?" I'm leaving. But you know they changed all the time so, I had a pen friend since the age I was eight. An American pen friend. Her name's Maryanne Beam, she married a man called Lowry. And when I wrote to her and said, I'm going

- 24:30 to Vietnam. She said, "Oh, Janet, my husband is in the military. He's in the air force and he's at a place called Phuket." Phuket or Bia Kap, one or the other. "And if you go by there his name is Sergeant Daniel Lowry and this is his APO number. Please go by and see him because we've been writing for so long together, love to make personal contact." And I looks up and on our thing, oh we're going to Phuket. I better ring through and tell this Daniel Lowry that I'm
- 25:00 coming. He'd left the day before I got there. He went back to, he'd been there a year and I'd been there maybe a year, maybe six months and the very day that I'd got to that base he'd gone state side the day before. "Oh, ma'am we're terribly sorry. He just went back to the States yesterday." Missed him by that much. But, yeah we're all right. We email each other now. She's a Mormon, very strict Mormon lass with polio and we have written to
- 25:30 each other since we were eight and when I go to Canada and down to the States I've got to meet these people before we die. That's like fifty two years.

Were you writing home?

Oh, yeah I've got all my letters. Would I find some and read them?

That might be a nice idea actually. Perhaps we could read a few.

Okay, this is the mail that my Mum saved. Every time I wrote home she'd save my letters because I saved all hers

- 26:00 and we've got quite a bit of correspondence here. Excuse my double glasses. I don't see real well these days but perhaps we should pull something and read them. My Mum and Dad used to send some letters to the local paper in Yarram and this one says, 'An all girl pop group has a local flavour. Former local girl Janet Fry has joined the all girl pop group, The Pussycats.'
- 26:30 This is before I went to Vietnam, 'Which made headlines recently when it was reported missing during a tour of allied bases in South Vietnam. Janet who sings under her maiden name is married to Mr Noel Simmerman[?] of Jack River, who's been living in the Melbourne suburb of Altona for the past two years where they've established a group called The Manx. Now Janet,...'sorry pass, 'While I've left the Manx to join The Pussycats at least I'm still a cat.'
- 27:00 Janet said, when she spoke with The News briefly at her recent visit to her parents' home, Mr and Mrs Al Fry of Mann's Beach. Shortly after the original members of The Pussycats returned to Melbourne, two of the girls left and the groups' manager contacted Janet asking if she would audition. This tour The Pussycats after first spending three weeks rehearsing in Sydney will take in Noumea, Singapore and Tahiti.
- 27:30 They will spend three months in each of these places, the agent told me. I'm told Singapore is where the majority of service personnel take their leave possibly next year we may go to Vietnam", said Janet. Janet said her parents were not too happy about their daughter going on tour at first but had become used the idea.' Poor Mum and Dad.

Did you ever go to Noumea and Tahiti?

Pipe dreams to get you in. 'Present plans allow for the group to return to Australian for two weeks, every three months.

- 28:00 Janet said, if all goes well on her tour, her husband will fly to join her at a later date. Local people who remember Janet when she first started singing with the dance band organised by Mr Bob Macmasters and O'Callaghan's Orchestra and later with the Four Saints', that was our own band, Four Saints, that was our guitar band, 'Will no doubt wish her well on her new venture. With Janet in the group are original members Suzanne
- 28:30 Lusic, organ, Marilyn Ocral, drums and Joy Carole, bass.' The next one is, there's another letter that my Mum and Dad obviously sent to the paper and it says, "Jan Simmerman", I'm obviously using my married name now, 'Mann's Beach girl entertaining in Vietnam with her husband Noel and a musical group have finally seen action. In previous letters to her parents, Mr and Mrs S Fry, she said they hadn't seen any action.' Took about four months
- 29:00 'This week we got to see a bit of action', she writes. 'David, Noel, Gayle, we were out at a mountain village when a Viet Cong mortar bombed the gas storage area. They blew up about fifty thousand gallons of petrol. We all had to go to the bunkers until the all clear was given. Rod the drummer was in the shower and lost his towel on the way back to the shelter which caused a laugh. The next night we played two shows and had just finished when someone yelled, 'incoming rounds'. People ran everywhere. We went to the floor and we covered our heads. The blast got
- 29:30 within twenty feet of the club and you could hear the shrapnel hitting the walls. Anyway, after a while we got up and we went back to where we were staying, where all hell opened up again as the North army tried to run the gate at the perimeter. Our side brought in planes and helicopters and we sat and watched a big fire fight for about two hours. Flares made the night as bright as day. Really it was quite an experience. Funnily enough I wasn't a bit scared. You seem to think of everybody else in those
- 30:00 conditions, I think the only thing that goes through your mind is adrenalin.' It is and that's how you

react to your adrenalin.

From which position were you watching the fire fight?

Within the base and the fire fight was going on outside. I've got pictures of that. But it's just a mass of bullets coming down because they had to send the back up to another base to over, because we were getting overrun by North Vietnamese Army. They were highly respected no holds barred personnel, they would have just wiped the whole lot out.

With that

30:30 **level of fire did you feel safe?**

No, I just felt sad. There's all those people out there dying - no safety. I knew somehow I was going to be safe. I don't know, I don't know that this sounds silly. I mean my number wasn't up. I was there getting a lashing I guess. In my mind Dad's war games, that Dad told me so much about the First and Second World Wars that perhaps I was just re-doing their karmic stuff, I'm not sure. "Funnily enough it wasn't, I wasn't a bit scared. I seemed to think of everyone under these

31:00 circumstances. Over a hundred and fifty rounds that Charlie put in there was only one killed and 12 wounded which wasn't too bad when you consider how many were in the compound. It seems four months today since we left Sydney, it's been four months. We just finished doing ten shows in one week. This week we had the best two days since we came here. We went to an aircraft carrier called the USS Coral Sea and as you come to land on it you have to be caught on a trip

31:30 cable which brings you to a sudden stop. You should have seen the welcome party, 4000 sailors, they had a schedule worked out and we had beaut 24 hours on board." I thought we were on there for a week. It felt like a week anyway. "With not a minute to spare. We also did a TV show and a radio show. Toured the ship, visited the sick bay, David and I took the opportunity to get some teeth filled. We did two shows and next morning they cleared the hanger back and we played to a crowd of 2000 people. They were

32:00 terrific. I had the admiral's quarters as he was not on board. Gee that was something else. The boys took a photo of me in the admirals' bed.' I wonder what happened to that photograph, I never got one ...'wonderful time and when it was time to go home we were catapulted in to the air in just three seconds from zero to 125 miles an hour and it felt like you were blasting off to the moon. They used a big sling shot.'

Can you explain to me what was happening with the sling shot?

It's a the,

32:30 the deck of the aircraft carrier is off centre, they're always off on centre. They have a big sling catapult type cable and its run off steam, I'm not quite sure how but it's pulled back mechanically and the plane sits in behind that and the plane sits there and it revs and revs and they must communicate and say, all systems go type of blast off and they just let the catapult go and it just flings you in to the air and it feels

33:00 like you're going out, the G force is fantastically harsh, you know it pulls on your face like this. You pull all ugly faces. But you know what? It feels like you stop. You're not. You've still got to go maybe 150 kilometres an hour to keep airborne. It was only a little C10 plane and it felt like you took off so bloody fast and then the plane done its own flying but it felt like you'd stopped and they told us before us they catapulted us,

33:30 sometimes if the plane goes in to the water like that, we just run over the top of you because we can't stop the boat. We're going, oh. They were only scaring us. Never happened but we thought it might.

Janet would you like to take a lucky dip in to those bags and then maybe put the bags down and read us...

We used to, when we were used to get mail out of Vietnam we bought these envelopes at the USO and this is where the GIs would put their, what they called their APO number so we could get

34:00 our mail out for free if we could get someone just to write their APO, their APO number here. "Can we borrow your APO to get some mail out?" "Yeah, no sure ma'am." This was from a Captain AJ Goldstein and he was with the 38th Medical Detachment so this is obviously when we were billeting with the medical people. It might be where I played chess and other games, I'm not sure.

You liked those medical people?

Yeah. Oh, if you're a medic,

34:30 you're a medic and we'd send all our mail home. I'll do a lucky dip in here.

Then just plonk those plastic bags down because they rustle.

I'll just put that one down there, rest it. What's this one? The Yarram News.

35:00 Possibly another, I don't know what these are. These are things my Mummy saved for me. Perhaps I've never, ever been in here.

How often did you write to your mum?

Oh, every week but sometimes ...

What times did you choose to write?

Sometimes in the afternoon when we weren't working or sometimes late at a night, you came home from, couldn't sleep and

35:30 I'm have to put my two pair of glasses back on because...

That's fine.

Alright, this was July 17. Janet Fry care of the Australian Embassy Saigon, 'Dear Mum and Dad, just a few lines to send this special signature through. Glad to hear all's going well and that the money is getting through all right. I've had laryngitis and I'm not supposed to talk for a couple of days, but being a woman that's pretty hard to accomplish. Not now, perfect woman right now

36:00 but I'm coming good now. Well, I'm in the usual rush and will send this with the secretary to get posted. I'll close now. Give my love to Rolf, your loving daughter Janet.'

How often did you send money home?

Oh, that was done through our accountant in Sydney and our money went to America through the Chase Manhattan Bank because our Australian dollar was stronger than the American dollar at the time. You got a dollar twenty American bought one

36:30 dollar Australian, so that wasn't bad. 'The Network, care of Randy Crean Enterprises, Hotel Majestic Saigon.' I've just there obviously. 'Dear Mum and Dad, I hope you heard from Jim.' Who's Jim? 'We were going to ring you from Sydney and he was going there on R& R. He also took some mail to post for us and I hope you got it. We're all over our colds and coughs.' We had reactions from our injections. We had to have all sort of

37:00 inoculations before you went. 'We're all over our colds and coughs and we're enjoying ourselves again. I've had some clothes made and they turned out terrific. I got four shirts for \$5 each and two dresses at \$18 each.'

That would be the phone.

That would be the phone. I have to answer that. Just talking about getting things made, shirts for \$5 and dresses for

37:30 \$18 and also some little sun suits at \$6 each. 'The material is beaut. I'll send some dress lengths home', because my Mum was a tailorist, 'When we get to Saigon. Today we spent all afternoon in a market and it was a good fun bargaining for what you wanted to buy.' They couldn't speak English; you couldn't speak Vietnamese but...

What market was that?

It'd be in Saigon somewhere I think.

38:00 'We have three maids at the villa and they are all very good so we brought them a little bottle of scent each. Gee they were pleased. In Vietnam a woman is called a mamma san and a man is called a pappa san and a young baby is called a baby san and if they like something they call it, 'number one', if they don't like something they call it 'number ten'. We're trying to learn a few words so we can speak with them. It's a very hard language made up of

38:30 Chinese, French and English and it's not what you say but how you say it as there are only 8 syllables in the whole language.' I never knew that. 'We have met an all-girl group from America and they are real good fun. There are two Negro girls in this group and you should hear them sing. They are terrific.'

Did you party a lot with other groups on the road?

Yeah. 'Last night we didn't have a show and we were taken

39:00 out by the Marines and they put on a movie show for us and we had a barbecue. It was real good too. Well, I'm out of news again so I'll close now. Give my love to all, by now, lots of love from your loving daughter, Janet, Noel and the Network.' That was like early days by the sound of it because it says the Majestic Hotel and that was early days, early days of our show.

I wonder if the tone of your letters changed at all. Did you ever talk about the letters you wrote home with your mum?

No, we never, she just because, I

39:30 haven't even opened this bag of letters until now. It's like a lucky dip. If I'm writing this book and I

want, I feel like I need to get something on this out there. I don't know blokes that were there for four years and you do go quite off the air but hell, I've survived it so I've got to tell about it. Okay, I've got this one out. We'll have a look and we'll see if I can keep you a little more entertained. Oh, there's nothing in that one, bugger.

- 40:00 Double glasses again. This is the 25th July. 'Dear Mum and Dad, well we are here at last.' Oh, this must have been really one of the first ones. "We flew from Singapore to Saigon this morning with Pan Am [airline] and we flew out at 8.am and arrived in Saigon at 10. We were met at the airport by Randy,' Isn't that a funny name I've got? 'He is the chap
- 40:30 that sponsored us over here and is a real card. We were then all taken to the Majestic Hotel and issued with a whole set of brand new amplifiers and drums as we had to leave our in Sydney. It's too dear [expensive] to freight over here. All we had to bring was guitars. So, that's real beaut.' Everything was real beaut and real good. 'We have been to get our identity cards and have been issued with badges that read 'combat entertainers', that's on my jacket over there. 'Tomorrow we do an audition
- 41:00 which will be our first show. It's a good military hospital. It should be good. The Australians have a very good image here with the Americans and the Europeans and they are really friendly and want to know all about Australia. Last night we had about 3 hours sleep and we're all pretty tired. It's really hot here, 81 degrees Fahrenheit and the humidity is so high it makes your hair go awful. I guess it'll take a few days to get used to the heat
- 41:30 again as it was only 45 degrees Fahrenheit when we left Sydney which was freezing. Okay, the traffic is a real riot. Can't stop laughing at it. It's all rush all over the place and it goes here and there, everything, cars, trucks, pushbikes, motorbikes, pedal taxis and wheelbarrows and every day again some guy gets knocked off his bike or the scooter and they just get up and start driving again. It's left hand drive too. Curfew's at
- 42:00 9.30 so we are all in bed.'

Tape 7

- 00:36 We'd been writing letters home and curfew was 9.30 and so that's when we all start writing home because basically all missing you a bit, "Well, I'll add to this tomorrow so goodnight, Saturday night. Gee, what a day, we got up at 8 and we were told to practise at 9. Well, it took up until 11.30 to get all the equipment working as the amps and the volts are all so different here. Anyway,
- 01:00 we were picked up at 12.30 and taken to a hospital for an audition," sorry about the glasses, "And this is where the USO puts a price on your head." Sounds awful doesn't it? In other words, a rating. It went through eventually, we got a good, a highest rating we've ever been to one of Randy's shows by the USO. Randy was so pleased with us that he said that if we stick to it and get a little more coordinated, in other words we were lacking,
- 01:30 he can book us in Bangkok, Thailand, Las Vegas and the money there would be so wowee, terrific. So, we will keep our noses to the grindstone. Our dancers went over terrific. Gee, we are that proud of ourselves. Tomorrow we get to lay in, isn't that good, hey? Well, don't worry about us. We're really being looked after. So, bye for now and give my love to all, Janet, Noel, David, Ray and Gayle."

**This section of transcript is embargoed
until 1 January 2034.**

- 04:11 **Were there a lot of gay people that travelled with you?**

I don't know that the night that one of the boys dressed up as a girl he said he got more propositions than she ever got from GIs so.

And that's a bit surprising

I suppose when there's men in a group you'll always have that type of thing, who's turn in the barrel is it? I don't know.

But I mean that's,

- 04:30 **that's kind of surprising in itself, you know, the way Vietnam is professed within the movies, it's all very, very testosterone, all very blokey, blokey, blokey, so what you're saying there was...**

I believe and maybe I'm wrong. I'm not saying there was a bunch of gay people over there fighting the

war but I suppose there's always, excuse the smoke, putting up a smoke screen right now. I've just had incoming and the smoke's billowing, okay. It's not dope by the way.

05:00 Do you want me to read another letter or is that it?

Yeah, go for another letter.

I was supposed to answer your question about gay people.

No, you did. It was going on but you didn't see a lot of it.

I'm told to love everybody and take nobody to judgement so yeah, to each his own. Just leave me out of it. I wrote to, "Dear Mum and Dad, I wrote you a letter last night and I received one this morning so I'll answer it now. The mail does take about three weeks to get home. The letter I received today took about 16 days which is pretty good so don't worry if the mail's

05:30 delayed. Yes, we're all on good terms but we also have our arguments. But when there are any disputes, we all get together, talk it out and so far we have all managed to all get along pretty good. We feel that the show is improving as we keep adding and subtracting from it to try and better it. This is how it goes. The opener is Ain't That Good News, by me with a vocal backing, Something You've Got

06:00 by Ray, Creek Alley by all in close harmony. I'm Satisfied by Noel, it's a comedy, then Gail dances the Mumbo Jumbo, sings C'est Si Bon, Cancan And A Go-Go, Dancing In The Street, she go-goes to Dancing In The Street. Gail then takes a bow and goes back to the dressing room to dress for her comedy sketch while we do Give Me Some Kind of

06:30 Sign by Ray, Not Unusual by Ray, then David sings With A Little Help From My Friends and then David and I swap guitars and I sing, You Don't Have to Say You Love Me, The Midnight Hour which takes a good duration and then we do a bracket of homesick numbers starting with Detroit City, I Want To Go Home, "I want to go home", that one, Lonesome Road, can't remember how that one goes and The Green, Green Grass of Home. Then you take a bow and while

07:00 Ray announces I clear the stage of the mike stands and get the tape recorder going and Gail comes back on and does a 15 minutes pantomime, after that we start again with The Letter, "Give me a ticket for an aeroplane", that one, because they all want to go out, for the troops who are going home and, We've Got To Get Out of This Place, which we all sing along with them because all the GIs would sing it with you. Gail comes back on stage and we have a competition where I bet

07:30 her that my half of the audience can outclap her half of the audience while Noel sings Simon Says, then Gail introduces the group and we take a bow, one at a time and we finish up with The Land of a Thousand Dances. The encores are Tie Me Kangaroo Down Sport and Waltzing Matilda and that's the show. Once a week we all take a malaria pill which cleans you out, well I had my one yesterday and I'm sitting here on the toilet

08:00 right now and I coughed and shit myself." Sorry, oh well this is ... "I hope you like the footy finals. Who played? You said, Mum, you were thinking of looking for gem stones. It's funny you mentioned that as we were only talking about gems last night, opals in Australia are very cheap", where have I gone now? "Compared to anywhere in the world

08:30 as they're mined there. When we go to Bangkok we're going to get some jade and sell it when we get back." Bloody capitalist dogs we were, "And sell it when we get back. They say that you triple your outlay as jade is quite cheap here. One GI told us that he'd bought his wife a jade bracelet for \$140 and it was valued at \$4000 so we will have a bit of a gamble. Also star sapphires sell for

09:00 \$30 to \$40 and they sell for \$150-200 in US," that was in Thailand by the way, "So, we will keep our eyes open, well we'll leave you, we leave Da Nang for Saigon next Monday so I will write to you from there. Bye now, lots of love from Jan, Noel and the Network." I don't know, these are ones I'm just picking out from random.

How important is mail to you while you were there?

Oh, very important yeah. It was fantastic when the road manager would come up - bag and, "Mail's in!" and we'd all go down

09:30 and we'd all read each other's letters.

How did the mail find you because you were all over the place?

Well, on different addresses, some when to Australia House in Saigon, some when to Australia House in Da Nang but one lot went missing because somebody lost the plot and burned it all.

Can you tell me about that?

That was only what we were told. That's all we were told. The mail's gone missing because the sergeant lost the plot at the mail office and burnt everybody's mail that was incoming and outgoing I think. I'm not sure.

10:00 So we were without mail for a little while he was doing rehab I suppose. I don't know. I don't know, that

was just what we were told. There's no mail because it's been burnt. Makes you wonder doesn't it? Really makes you wonder.

What's that song that you mentioned that you said, Ain't That Good News?

\n[Verse follows]\n My baby's coming home tomorrow,\n Aint that news, ain't that good news.\n My baby's coming home tomorrow.\n

10:30 It's about people going back and the short time of it all. I forget how the rest of that song, that was the major line in it, back to glasses, four eyes they call me. Okay, here's the next letter. Show Group Management, Propriety Limited, starts on page three, page one, oh here's one.

Is this the letter to Show Group?

This is - for the care of the embassy in Saigon.

What date is it Janet?

First of August, doesn't say a

11:00 year, telephone, PTT 40935, don't know what that means, "Dear Mum and Dad, I make a lot of attempts to write to you but never seem to get them finished or lose them or something. I received two letters from you yesterday and one today and I'm glad to hear that all is well with you and that the money is getting through." I think I've done this one.

**This section of transcript is embargoed
until 1 January 2034.**

16:11 **You're pretty candid with writing to your mother.**

Yeah.

Was that the sort of relationship that you had?

Yeah, it just, we was pretty open. We was always brought up openly and you told your truth and just got on with it and if you sounded like you were wrong or going the wrong way they'd just say, "No, well you've got to see it that way, that way." Yeah, there was a

16:30 good relationship. We had a loving family, very blessed.

Because it sounds like you were going through some pretty intense sort of things so she would have been getting some letters with some intense emotions.

Yeah, but it goes like that after a while, it's a war zone but yeah the Yanks were hard to work with and for, not all of them but people like that were. Why? Why, why were they kind of picking on us? That's how it all got out of control and

17:00 why should we be kicked out of country and why should our agency be, be de-registered. Didn't make sense. Cheers.

How good was the agency to deal with? Because I mean they were representing you and you needed something to fall back on.

Yeah, they, they were okay. They were just our mates too. Just all people just working on the job. I've got to contact our agent.

17:30 His name was Steve Neil and when I rang America last night to speak to that sergeant he said, "You've got to contact Steve, he's not well. He's a bit paralysed." I don't know if he's had a stroke or what but yeah Old Mama's, I'm Mamma san, I'll ring him up and say, "Come on Steve, get your arse into gear." "Oh, God", he'll say. Yeah, see the camaraderie is still there. Doesn't matter whether you liked them, didn't like them. You went all went through it together. You all come out the other end and hey,

18:00 wasn't it good. It was exciting.

What happened to you Janet, you went over there completely naïve, innocent little thing and you ended up being the mamma san? What happened?

Don't know. I think basically I'm a motherly person. I like comforting people. I like to be comforted if I'm down and vice versa, our family was just like that. If one was down you all cared for each other. You'd scratch each other's backs and

18:30 plaited each other's hair and things like that. It was just a way of being; besides I've got a load of four

houses astrologically so it makes me a very eccentric mother. I married twice in my life. How far are we? Are we not on to the future yet?

No, not on to the future yet. But were there any moments for you during Vietnam that was just this incredible moment of clarity where you just thought, oh my God, what have I got myself

19:00 **into?**

Oh, hell yeah but you'd signed a contract. You didn't want to have to pay more back and break your contract.

Can you remember something about those moments of clarity?

I wasn't really, I was homesick in a way, yeah and times like that when they're all being absolute arseholes to you for no damn reason. Should be allowed to stand up for your mates without getting kicked out of country. But yeah you get, that person had possibly been in country too long and they were losing the plot and wanted to kicked somebody's arse. Perhaps

19:30 they hadn't been out and shot enough people, I don't know. But they're people with issues and that was, there was a lot of black marketing going on over there. Perhaps they had something to hide you see and I think that's how that situation came out of context because somebody was accusing somebody unjustly and somebody went, "Oh, well we've got friends in the CIA so bugger you." and one thing lead to another and knee jerks, everybody done knee jerks.

Did you mention earlier, this is a couple of tapes ago, did you mention a black market song?

20:00 'Sold my son to the black market mean.' Black market was in the Chu-Khe san area. Sold my soul to, the cigarettes to the black market man. Remember the words?

Yes.

Yes, Cold Chisel [Australian rock band].

I thought that there was a song that you used to sing that was the black market song; you were just referring to Jimmy Barnes?

There was a lot of black marketing that went on over there. You could buy and sell anything. I think my .38 gun clip with bullets cost

20:30 about \$20 MPC, military payment script. You either dealt with that or piastres and like I said one of the boys went down, he was going to change his military script and, or if you had greenbacks and you put them, you weren't allowed to have greenbacks, you were not allowed to have it because they were black marketable and the, the other side would get the money and they could buy, with greenbacks could buy ammunition to fire at the Yanks. So, their own money would kill them.

21:00 That make sense?

Sure.

They couldn't buy ammunition with military payment script or piastres from, you know, the big arm dealers throughout the world but if you had American greenback dollars that'll buy anything, anywhere so if greenback dollars got on to the black market you got a hell of a good price for, I've never done that but some of them did and that money got in to, the North Vietnamese hands then they could go on to the world market and buy

21:30 ammunition because they had the right currency. So, then those bullets and those bombs would be used against the very person that put the money up in the first place.

Was there a like a really strict penalty that would happen if you were caught using greenbacks?

You were black marketing, yeah, hell yeah. I remember one of our boys going in to town with military payment script, I think and he came back with a great big wad like this and he goes, "Look what I just got a whole big bunch more of it." "How much did you get?"

22:00 And he undone it at the table and a whole just, a wad of newspaper with one five hundred piastre note or one hundred piastre note wrapped around it. The rest of all was, it was sleight of hand, he had to be quick and it was all done like this, downtown and he'd been down to black market his money and got done. He was at it again. Never mind, you live and learn.

You mentioned also you

22:30 **had quite a bit of leave time, where did you go when you wanted to just get away from...?**

I had a room on my own and I'd just go and sit in my room and listen to some music. When we went out to Thailand we come back with a, some, what do you call them, recording stuff, you know. I had the camera. He had a CD player, not a CD player because CDs weren't out then. A record player

- 23:00 tape recorder, radio, that type of thing. Went out to Vietnam, went out to Thailand, come back and the whole bloody room had been cleaned out so, but they knew. It was inside job. Mamma san, Pappa san knew who was where and when they could, they used to eat dogs in Tet. Tet was the first, it's like the Chinese New Year and we always used to go on red alert because that was generally, it's like Ramadan with what's happening over there in Iraq, dangerous
- 23:30 religious time of the year. Now what was I saying?
- We were talking about Tet.**
- Yeah, that was the first new moon in February. That's the beginning of their year which makes more sense than ours really because that's where it's about at the moment.
- What's sort of things did you do when you were on leave? Did you actually go with other girlfriends from?**
- Yeah, we went, sometimes we'd pop over
- 24:00 to, we would pop over to Singapore and hire some condominiums there, like alongside a pool or something just, do a bit of shopping. I can remember paying one papa san in a pedal jeep, pedal cyclo all day, how much all day? And make a good price with them and he just pedalled me everywhere at one stage I got out and made him sit in there and I pedalled him. And
- 24:30 he took me home to meet his family on a bridge that was right over the water and they were beautiful people. They really were. I used to have a ball. Just meeting the locals, "tell me stories", you know. Do a bit of buying down town and barter really hard for it. A lot of Indian people in business in Singapore and Tiger Balm ointment was a useful to always have with you, good for aches and pains, killed brown dog, good for everything it was.
- 25:00 **I'm just whispering to my partner over here, technical check. It's all right. You're fine.**
- How's it doing?
- There's nothing wrong with you.**
- Oh, yeah? Do you know when you come back from Vietnam they de-brief you and you go to a doctor who gives you a psychological check to see if you're fine and I've got an actual piece of paper that says I'm sane but not one person in Australia would believe that but they haven't got the
- 25:30 piece of paper I have, oh dear, does that make sense?
- Yeah. Can we just pause for a second?**
- I'm not mad but everyone else is.
- \n[Verse follows]\n Across the precipice I was watching the moon rise,\n Felt a chill of truth go through me\n No matter how far I fall\n
- 26:00 I'm still in the lap of God\n
- And all good things are coming to me\n And it's all right, there's no black and white\n And it's all right, do the best you can\n And let it go\n But it's comforting to know\n Everything goes back to light.\n
- 26:30 Oh, boy there's things I'd change\n
- If I could go back in time\n There's hearts set and door aren't open\n Because every step I make that lead me to this place\n With the twisted paths and the words unspoken.\n
- 27:00 But it's all right even in my soul's dark night\n
- And it's all right, just goes on and on and on\n But it's comforting to know\n Everything goes back to light.\n
- 27:30 Now imagine a million words and they're all borne of the one light\n
- They're each with galaxies and emotions\n The souls that are emerging forward\n And these souls that are surging back\n And they're like rivers to the ocean\n And it's all right, birth and death\n
- 28:00 Death and light\n
- And it's all right\n Just goes on and on and on\n But it's comforting to know\n Everything goes back to light\n Because there's one light burning in you, in me,\n
- 28:30 I'm forever trying, the best I can\n
- Wherever I am, with the light I see you.\n
- There you go. Is that all right?

29:00 **Wonderful. Thank you very much.**

That one I wrote myself, if you want another. Did you want another one? Or am I just hogging too much tape here?

Bring it on.

This one I wrote when I was rounding up sheep, my first husband Noel's farm, we bought some cattle we put up in the hills, in Gippsland, Madanger [?]. A place called Madanger. Used to borrow the next door neighbour's horse and go round them up and count and see if, okay, see everybody had water. And

29:30 the view up there was absolutely magnificent and I was moved to write these words, how do they? I'm having a senior moment, forgot the first line. \n[Verse follows]\n You created all the stars in the universe\n You suggested that we mortals for love\n All the truth that's in a kiss\n

30:00 Little pleasures such as this\n

I want to thank you, my friend\n For the wind that blows so gently through the trees\n For the flowers that attract the tiny bees\n And the sun after a storm sends us light and keeps us warm\n I want to thank you my friend.\n

30:30 And most of all,\n

I want to thank you for this life you've sent to me\n Just to know I have this time makes me feel fine\n I hope I live it just the way you planned it to be\n And I'm so proud to know this time is mine\n For the laughter of the children as they play\n

31:00 And the sunset at the closing of a day\n

For these treasures great and small\n For life's pleasures one and all\n I want to thank you, my friend\n

Yeah!

Yeah, more, more practice, I'm sorry.

31:30 **Just need a bit of adjustment here.**

Sorry, was I clunking that on the thing? Are we still going?

Something from Vietnam?

I've got find to a key to do it in.

\n[Verse follows]\n And it's one, two three,\n What are we fighting for?\n Don't ask me because I don't give a damn,\n

32:00 Next stop is Vietnam.\n

And it's five, six, seven, eight,\n Open up the pearly gates\n And I forgot the next line but it says,\n We're going to die\n

So, something like that. It was of a, there was lots of heavy metal stuff that was, [Jimmie] Hendrix and All Along The Watch Tower, that was a really popular one over there. So, you had these certain that you

32:30 played to the different kinds of people that were there.

How did those different sections present themselves?

Well, like I said unless the men were the really young ones, the kids that were doing it hard on the front line, they were enlisted people. They didn't want to be here. They were just a bunch of young kids that had been given a gun. The next group were the lifers, the NCOs, the non commissioned officers who made a life of being in the military and the next ones were the officers. You know there's

33:00 different levels of intellect and different levels of what we do in life. They're all as good as one another but the army grades the people in to different sections, the military.

What sort of shows did you enjoy doing the most?

The ones that were most appreciative were the kids, way out in the boonies where they never saw nothing and they would just be so rapt to make some kind of contact with the Western world other than the military. They really appreciated you being there.

33:30 You could make good or bad, whatever, whatever it was, like a few times we got prejudiced riots in the clubs but yeah you survived, bombed out, things like that. I didn't think the show was that bad.

How can you bomb out in one of those shows?

Well, when they through bombs in. I meant literally bombed out of the club. Like somebody would throw a grenade in but then there was a lot of maybe unrest of some kind on that particular base,

34:00 like a war within a war. But yeah.

Were you fearful of that happening on a regular basis?

Yeah, more frightened of the GIs than I was the VC. Yes, they had a different culture to us Australians do so that's probably why we like getting with the Aussies from time to time just trying to stay sane.

What sort of shows did you do for the Aussies?

Tie Me Kangaroo Down Sport and Waltzing Matilda just, just made it up, you just winged it, winged it, made it up as you went along because it didn't really matter. We'd done a few

34:30 of the songs. We used to do the others but we'd put a more Australian flavour to it or tell you know, back home jokes and...

What's a back home joke that you can remember?

Well, we've got a different language to say the Americans. The Americans, if we spoke an Australian slang they wouldn't know what you were on about. So we used to really bung it on to them. Tell them there were drop bears and there the hoop snakes and yeah,, go to buggery, I think we've crossed that one.

What would you tell the Australians?

35:00 How stupid the Americans were and they'd agree. Sorry Yanks but you know, Septic Tanks they called them. It was all rhyming slang in Australia and it was a rhyming slang that the Americans would say, "What are you on about? What is about the sewerage around here?" And we'd go, "Oh, get lost Septic." you know. Oh, dear but they really thought we were talking about sewerage but they didn't realise that you know, petrol trousers and petrol bowlers were your trousers and a sheila was a woman and yeah, we used to go through all that.

35:30 It was fun.

With the Aussies what sort of a response did you get from them when you took the piss out of the Americans?

Oh, good. Yeah, really good. Yeah, fantastic. But I don't want to get political. But I suppose we do. I do have political leanings. I vote for the underdog. Doesn't make me Communist though. I can be a capitalist dog as the next bloke but I care about them. I like fairness, fairness and humanity. It's just my nature, nurse,

36:00 nurse by nature, I just found out that my great grandmother was Elizabeth Gurney Fry, the prison reformer. We're all Quakers and I suppose that, we were chocolate factory people. I met my relatives down in Donnybrook, didn't even know they lived there, my daughter rang up, she said, "Have we got relatives in Donnybrook?" I said, "I don't think so, hon." Our family's nearly all passed over. Mum and Dad gone, my sisters and brothers gone, sister and cousin he was like a brother. There's only sister

36:30 that rang me before and me and another cousin that's come out. She said, "Look I've met a Rebecca from up here and she's a dead ringer for us Frys." I said, "Oh, poor kid." you know. I was going to Nannup one day, called in, left my mud map home and I called in to Donnybrook tourist bureau to find out where Nannup was, they asked me to sign something and I did. She said, "Are you a Fry?" and I went, "Yeah." She said, "Oh, we've got a lot of Frys in town." And they ended up being like second cousins and their grandfather and my grandfather were brothers

37:00 and we all look the bloody same. And they've got the family tree and they showed me this book. This is Joseph Fry married Elizabeth Gurney Fry; they were already third cousins or something. They kept on marrying in to themselves, perhaps that's why I'm so daft now. I don't know.

It's amazing what you can discover.

Yeah.

Did you have any major discoveries being in Vietnam? How did you that change your perception of people?

Got a bit harder

37:30 which I could have done with that because I was a soft, silly old sausage. Still am a bit but yeah, yeah no I got very untrusting of people, backed off a lot. I'm a bit of a loner, bit of a hermit. That's the only way I survived because I always seemed to, don't know, not fit anywhere. Perhaps, perhaps I'm not loving myself enough. I don't do that. I believe in myself but you've got to have a bit of self-worth too. I can't give it away all the time. Right now at this stage of my life I'm

38:00 pulling the reins to me, selling, liquefying my assets that I've got, see my kids are fine and then maybe get a little unit somewhere, go around the world and die peacefully at the age of 98 or something making love to somebody I don't know. Hell it's all a lifetime.

Seems to be a bit of a common thing though, people who've had the Vietnam experience end

up being in some sort of a hermit type of existence.

Yeah, heaps of us.

Why?

Don't know. Don't know what it is. I know

38:30 that, I mean we weren't given any heroes welcome when we got back home. We were spat on and, and bastardized again by our own but, yeah, it wasn't their fault they were over there. Wasn't my fault I went voluntarily but it didn't worry me. I just thought, I don't care what you think. I done all right. But a lot of those people took it to heart. And I suppose a lot of them, you know they might have gone down town and relieved themselves with a woman or something and then felt guilty about it

39:00 and all that kind of thing encroaches on you, their partners and that. So, they'd have a drink to try and forget it and one of them would lose the plot because there was always those ones but makes you wonder why. Everybody handled the situation differently. Some of them playing, some pretended it never happened, Oh never thought about it, you know. Everybody handled the same situation in a different way, it's how we come at it. We, astrology wise at the time.

39:30 **When you see that kind of carnage that you were witness to, how does that change you as a person when you come back in to the normal world?**

Is there a normal world? Yeah, you try and fit back in to the system and you do your best because you've got to survive and survive honestly and I've done that. I've done all sorts of jobs. It is a really hard road to

40:00 rehabilitating. I was that daft even when I came back. I'm still daft. I have that kind of in built kind of naivety about me that seems to save me from a lot of the real truth. I don't believe it. I don't want to believe people are horrible but they are. Went to a doctor in Kings Cross who went over to America, to Kings Cross to be debriefed and see if I was medically fit to carry on blah, blah, blah and

40:30 these beautiful looking women used to come in and they had the most beautiful accents and darling this and darling that and I went to them, "Are you a singer?", "Oh, why do you say that darling?", you know and I've got nodes on my vocal cords you know, "Do you sing?" "I do work at the clubs." And this doctor had been doing all the nip and tucks to all the lady girls/boys and they were all nip and tuck, beautiful looking women honestly, spotless but I didn't know they existed and here I was in the middle of Kings Cross just come out of the war and I'm still ignorant.

41:00 And they'd say, "Oh, darling do you come down to the club and see our shows." So, I did you know, Carlotta [famous female impersonator in Sydney] was down there and all that, used to you know it was, life experiences. Some people have never been to Kings Cross.

\n[Verse follows]\n Have you ever been to see Kings Cross?\n Where Sydney people meet\n There's a million faces, going places\n Walking up and down the street.\n And there's f-ing everywhere\n Da da da da da\n

Oh, jeepers I've fucked up the last line. There's something about I bet you

41:30 dollar ...

If you haven't been to see Kings Cross

We used to sing that one and especially to the Australians and Tie Me Kangaroo Down and My Boomerang Won't Come Back and Charlie Drake, do you remember that? Haven't you heard that?

No.

Are we out of time?

Pretty much. We can swap tapes though.

Tape 8

00:30 **I was talking to you earlier Janet about performing with the Aussies in Vung Tau.**

Four of them.

With four? Whereabouts did you perform in Vung Tau?

I can't remember. It possibly would be the club, you know the, there'd be an on base club. Every base had their own clubs and I don't really know much about Vung Tau other than we went there and

01:00 enjoyed the fellowship of our fellow men and it used to be an R&R centre, In country R&R centre, there was quite a nice beach there. I've got that on the video too, people with their surfboards, pretty nice place.

Did you visit the beach much?

Yeah. I've got a fair bit of the footage on the beaches. They were quite pretty. First of all we were working for the navy, you sometimes had pontoons just out in the water where they had a little community and you'd go out there and set up shows

- 01:30 and like I said to the, USS Coral Sea. But it was just good to get with the Aussies; it was our Aussie mateship thing, yeah. Fantastic.

Apart from the obvious how were they different as an audience to the Yanks?

Well, because you were Australian yourself you just didn't, just happened. You were all in tune with each other. They really appreciated you being there. I've thought

- 02:00 of volunteering to go to Timor but I think I'm too old and they wouldn't let me anymore. Pensioned me off the buggers. Got Generation X.

Did you ever go to the Badcoe Club [Australian Army club in Vung Tau]?

That rings a bell. Is that where it was, in Vungers [slang for Vung Tau].

It was a popular jaunt that place.

In Vung Tau? The Badcoe, that must have been it. Because that really rings a bell because I don't remember that because I don't remember that but I can remember hearing that name, yeah. Perhaps that's where we've done no shows for them.

- 02:30 Yeah. There's a few well known Australian artists that went over there. Old Normie [Rowe] was over there fighting. He had a punch up on television didn't he? When somebody called him a - you get like that, he gets like that, eh? That's him having a vent. Do you remember seeing that footage?

Yeah, I was watching it live that day.

Were you? Normie having a punch up with somebody that was giving us another hard time, as they did, a bureaucrap.

- 03:00 Sorry, yeah you're never quite the same once you come home but you've still got this great camaraderie for those that were there and there's a lot of people that pretend they were there, they weren't.

Why do you think that is?

I don't know, don't know whether they think there's glory in war or whether it was a macho thing to be or, don't know, anywhere there's men and testosterone you're going to have a war. Honestly you don't see women going around making wars. You see them going through hell and the ones that get belted round but that's, men and women are different. I

- 03:30 never had brothers so I had to get used to it.

Did being in that male environment change you as a person?

No, just wanted to be one of the blokes, wanted to be one of the boys. Didn't want to be their lover or anything like that, just wanted to be accepted and be one of the mates. You just wanted to be accepted for being a good Aussie sheila you know, have a few beers. Phone rang, did we get

- 04:00 this before? I got a plaque that says Phang Rang Guzzlers Club competition. It was a piece of wood with five beer cans, Australian beer cans opened out and tacked on the board and there was XXXX and Reschs, Victoria Bitter, Forster's Lager, I said XXXX didn't I? And some other Australian beer and under the bottom it's got, Phang Rang Guzzler's club competition, 19

- 04:30 some year, I don't know what year '71, '72 or something. They were just closing that base down. It was all playing footy and just having barbecues and just went for the mateship, really it's good. There was Nui Dat, don't think I went there. Think some of the other guys went. Think I just went to Vungers, Vung Tau and Phang Rang.

Did you have a favourite place to perform?

- 05:00 The easiest one to perform was Long Binh just outside of Saigon because you just left at four o'clock. You done your shows, you come back home and you was all pat as it were to get pretty close to everything and it wasn't too distant, you see sometimes you got out of, the telephone rang, sometimes you'd have to try and use a field phone an old wind up field phone to try and get through the office and say, "Send my money." or "Where's our mail?" or
- 05:30 "So and so's not well. Send whatever you can..." and type of thing but Da Nang was okay I guess. It was a bit hairy up there. The Delta was hairy, mid Country, Quin Yong we got in a cyclone once at Ran Din base and it rained so hard and heavy. It blew like a, it blew so hard the rain, we couldn't get out or in and it was just water everywhere outside.
- 06:00 We just, we all stripped off, we all got under the eaves with our soap and all have a shower in the rain.

All rub each other's back, turn around, all stand there with our knickers on, the whole day, didn't really matter. Okay, let's go for a shower, okay. "Put your tea down and have to go for a shower now." "Okay." So, out under the eaves you'd go, because it was sheeting down off the roof. Maybe like one of those cyclones you get up north. I don't know what category it was.

06:30 But yeah you get that.

It rained a lot up there didn't it?

Yeah. Especially in the rainy season. Oh, yes it did. Every afternoon. You could set your watch by it. The street would be dry one minute, the next it would be that deep in water. But it just ran away just as quickly. Because it fell down so heavily and so suddenly and yeah.

Did playing in some of the more hairy places affect your performance?

07:00 Yeah, because it was, the power supply was all different. You had, one ten direct current over there. You didn't have two forty [volt] AC [alternating current] and very often you'd get a surge on the generators and you'd get a hell of a boot off a microphone but you only took one twelve, it wasn't enough to kill you but it gave you a nasty blow, put you down you'd go, Ah! Microphones are shorting out, Might have had a power surge, so matter of fact when, Yeah won't go there, it's okay.

07:30 **In fact what?**

No, doesn't matter. Yeah, we got bolted over a couple of times from the microphones shorting out with power surges. Most places had generators and things like that. There was a hospital with medics on nearly every base to cater for the wounded and the disabled.

You mentioned that you went through quite a few different

08:00 **line ups. Was there a favourite line up that you had, Janet?**

Yeah, there was favourite, of course you had favourite people. I like the ones that got a good feedback from the audience because that's what you're there to do, it's to entertain. I think The Network was our best sounding group. We had four part harmonies and four musicians. So, if I was on base and there was a drummer and there was two guitarists, one was a lead guitarist who'd played with The Strangers. So, he was a really good guitarist. He could play, he could make the thing

08:30 talk and we could all sing harmony. We used to do like Hair [musical of the time], all the songs from Hair, Aquarius, Let The Sunshine In, which had a really good base riff [melodic pattern], I loved playing that. But four part harmony yeah it sounded good. It did. But there's different acts you had on the front line. I think Frankie the Malaysian juggler; he's on that tape if you want to watch him. He was the most,

09:00 cleverest front line act I think we had. We had comedians, we had people that went out there and just thanked the audience and got them up on stage. I used to do a pregnant skit, I used to stick a pillow up my dress and come out all stupid and upset. The boys in the band would say, "Who's done that to you?" I'd say, "He's down there." And we'd get the bloke; we'd accuse some bloke in the audience of putting me up, getting me

09:30 pregnant and I said, "He's, he's left me", you know, "Left me like this." As luck would have it, that would happen later on in life, you can draw these things to yourself you know, you can go off people. And get them up on stage and sing, What You Get When You Fall In Love. \n[Verse follows]\n A guy with a pin to burst your bubble\n That's what you'll get for all your trouble\n I'll never fall in love again\n

That one, always used to make a joke, when we were told there was going to be a full boot colonel in the audience tonight you will

10:00 not get him up on stage. So, what do I do? Get him up on stage. And there was a big picture in the USO and the Stars and Stripes magazine, it's there and he's standing on the stage with this bloke and he's got his arm around me and I'm all pregnant. Don't know, because we got that back handed, the Yanks might take that really seriously but in Australia it would just be jest. But you get that.

Did they

10:30 **make many attempts to censor your performances?**

Only if there important brass in the audience, there was places you weren't allowed to go. There was like, I said, this full boot colonel and you weren't supposed to go within cooe of him but I got him up on the stage anyway. What can they do to me? Send me to Vietnam what did you say? We're already here. Oh, dear.

Was there any kind of material in your performance that they tried to censor?

No.

11:00 No. None. Although when Big Joey was playing in his band he'd say, "I've been playing that bloody fight music and every time we play in the clubs fights break out." Because he used to do the really hard, heavy bassy stuff and they used to do a lot in the men's clubs. He'd come in, "How did your show go, Joey?", "Oh, we've been playing the bloody fight music again." "Again?" Just one of those things. Yes,

one of those things. What else can I say?

Well, you mentioned earlier that

11:30 **the music started to change, the psychedelic drugs started to influence music, the psychedelic rock and you were mostly pop influenced?**

Yeah, well Janice, Janice Joplin [singer] and Jimmy Hendrix had just o-deed [overdosed] on dope and yeah that culture was really getting a belting and it was starting to take off because I suppose it was people's way of saying, blow the establishment you. I protest.

12:00 I don't know but you had to be careful of that crap. There was some, it was close to what they call the golden triangle, I think it's Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, there's a triangle where a lot of the world dope is grown and produced and distributed from so there's quite a big drug culture within Asia. It's been a way for years over there. But betel nut was the funniest. Black mouth, betel nut

12:30 people.

Did you every try the betel nut?

No. Didn't want to get black teeth not that one, one wouldn't, one wouldn't have made you go black totally but when, they'd constantly an old lady or old men would be having it all their life and they'd be smiling away positively stoned out of their tree. But what else can they do? Crikey, they got to detach from the war somehow, so yeah. It's no place for a family to be, Vietnam.

13:00 Saw them gun down some girls one day waiting to go in to be, well they worked on the base and it was pouring rain and Koreans come along, for no reason. Only because they wanted a piece of dry land that the Vietnamese got to stand on. That's how I seen it. Yep there was no big pardons, sometimes you just had to look away otherwise you would have lost the plot. Because you know, if you stood up one time. I stood up against somebody that was doing the wrong thing and they went, "You're next, piss off down there and you're next,

13:30 you go with them." Shutting up now.

And yet you got away with being quite an unspoken identity.

Yeah. Yeah, we got called to task a couple of times but never mind we all get that in life. Sometimes you've got to learn to shut up. Perhaps I've said too much on this. Don't embargo the whole lot of it. Just pick out the nice bits. Yeah, I don't know. Where to from here?

14:00 But I think I done the best I could under harsh conditions and I was really keen to be a famous singer so perhaps with your help you can make me in to that before I die. You've got it all in there now. That book's going to, I think that, I really should have a book in the making with all that, don't you?

Definitely.

And it's all there and I've written all about it. I'm not bullshitting. A lot of people say, oh, you're full of it. They think I'm a wannabe but I'm a have been.

14:30 A have been? Still am. Even some of the Vietnam vets say. "You're full of shit. That didn't happen." I go, "Alright." They go, "Come over and have a look what I got." They go, "Oh, shit!" I said to one of them, "David, got the war archive people coming, do you want to have your say on it?" "Oh, fuck them altogether. I've got nothing to say." That's the attitude of a lot of them but I mean.

Do you think as an entertainer your experiences are possibly broader than...

Yeah,

15:00 definitely because we travelled all over that country. A lot of people just got sent there to one base and that's where they were and they got leave a couple of times a day to go downtown or whatever, a couple of times a month or whatever they did and they were just stuck within that one environment with the same people for the year and yeah, they wouldn't, they would have got a totally different view from the way we got to view it. But then we didn't have to go in

15:30 killing people. We just went round trying to fix it all. See, there's different ways of looking at something and it was, it's just how it was.

It sounds like the war had lots of different faces.

It did. Life's got lots of different faces; it's all according to which one we want to wear today. It is. This cirrhosis that I've got, they say it's the long term stress related thing from shocks in your system. I think Vietnam was a big shock

16:00 and the breakdown of my second marriage was a big shock. Did we go in there? We're not going there. We're not coming up to today?

Well, we can.

No, it doesn't matter.

No, we can go there now if you like.

Okay.

While it's on your mind.

So, you take a long time readjusting when you get back and I wandered around Australia a bit playing in various groups, got back to Melbourne which was, and I was working at Whisky A Go Go [nightclub] there in the band. Got there at Christmas time, couldn't get anywhere to live because everyone had shut down for Christmas

16:30 and one of the boys in the band said, "Oh, the people next door to me have got a little bungalow at the back of their house, they'll rent it to you." So, I moved in there, stayed there for seven years. But I was close enough to see my family and start making a relationship back with my family. I can overhear my Mum saying to my Dad, "What's wrong with her Sid? She never says anything." Didn't think I ever had anything to say that they'd ever understand. I just thought, 'God they'd never understand me.' Having a love affair, being

17:00 divorced and shooting a hole in the roof once and having a punch up, you know, it just wasn't on our agenda at home. They were all loving, good family people and just think I didn't have anything to tell them. So, I never said much but it was good getting back there with them. My sister seemed to envy my freedom. They was all tied down with four children each and they, I envied them for having a family and I didn't, so but you get that in life.

Grass is always greener.

Yeah.

17:30 Yep. But I still love them and there's only me and my sister left. And I say, "Who's next? You or me?" And she says, "You can if you want." I say, "Okay, I'll go next. Oh, no you go next Pat." She goes, "Oh, thanks." My elder sister just, we all cark it [die] with heart attacks. She just fell off the perch [died] about two and a half years, maybe three years ago and yeah I've just moved in here three years next March and she'd gone to deliver a calf and down the paddock with the vet [veterinarian]

18:00 and forever having trouble calving and she sat down on a log and just went pffttt. He maintained her heart beat until the ambulance got there but she still took off. I mean sometimes vets are better than doctors. So, that was a bit of a shock because she just went out of the blue and she had a lot of my other Vietnam stuff that I never found back, like posters. I had all my posters. I've donated a lot to the RSL [Returned and Services League] in Sale. The Vietnam Veterans'

18:30 Association. They've got a war memorial thing and I gave them a whole bunch of stuff for the war memorial and I've done the same here in, in Mandura too because they've got a bit of an archive, each RSL's got a bit of an archive. Donated them one of the videos and sing a few songs to them and

Perhaps before we talk in more detail about the Vietnam Association and the RSL, what was happening in the war before you left?

19:00 It was just all winding down, coming to a close and our agency was pulling back out and just winding down the shows slowly. Think it was the year that the Labor government got in because Time For A Change was the slogan at the time, Gough Whitlam [Prime Minister], I think. Wasn't it? Yeah. But anyway I just got on a bus and took off again. Went to Queensland, sang there. Went

19:30 back down to Victoria, took my cousin Tony to England because he was dying of cancer. He went to a faith healer over there and he come back and there wasn't a sign of cancer in him. He recently died too. Come back and had an affair with a runt of a man for six months, did I say this before?

Don't think so.

He had, I found out six months down the track he had a different name. He was already married with two kids and I was only hearing what I wanted to hear, so

20:00 I said, "That's not fair, go home and be a good hubby to your wife and I'm not into, you know, dating married man and just go away and be a good Dad and a good hubby." and he took off and then I found out I was pregnant, hello. All my mates said, "Oh, get an abortion." I went, "No." So, I went ahead and had the baby but the government tried to adopt it - really bad, they didn't believe in single parenting, talking about in the seventies, '79 and it was a Catholic hospital I booked in

20:30 to. My Dad, my Dad said, "Those Catholics will steal your baby, give you one of their spastic ones." and I was petrified and the doctors said, "Look, you're a single parent, not even that, you're a Vietnam veteran and there's a big chance that you will have, you know, a child that's not all there." And I was worried about that, what'll I do if I have a blob? I'll have to adopt it. But I got the most beautiful, pure daughter out of it.

21:00 She's lovely. She straightened me right out. In the meantime I'd been buying a bit of real estate with what I had. I'd come back, all the money I'd sent to Mum she gave back to me. Had it all saved up and she said, "No, it's not always going to be good money, Jan. You go and buy yourself something with this." So, I bought a couple of old bomb [derelict] houses that were rented and then I sold a block of

land that I bought in Terrigal and bought a couple of flats and painted them all up and rented them all out, well I was working bands of a night time in Melbourne.

- 21:30 So, had the baby, went to live in the bush because I didn't want to raise my child in the city because I was raised in the bush I wanted her to have, so I moved to a little country town called Korumburra where I had this bit of real estate and the health care sister used to send everybody along to my house that was a single parent. She said I was a good example to single parenting and it turned in to another great big halfway house where I'm mothering everybody needed mothering, you know.
- 22:00 And various people come and went and that's where I met my ex-husband. His wife had just been killed and he had five little kids and the poor little kids, he wasn't a bad bloke. He just lived a very, lived in a cloister too long. They were really, really religious, the Dutch Reform church. But he said, "I knew your mum and dad. I used to live next door to them and you're the one that was in Vietnam weren't you?" I went, "Yeah." "Oh, can you take me down to see your mum and dad?" And I went, "Yeah, yeah." His wife had been killed in a car accident. He said the baby was 18 months.
- 22:30 The next one was five; they'd lost one in between there. Another one was three and there was nine, ten, eleven year olds. Anyway, we, we got together and the kids used to come visit me and I'd go stay with them weekends and we, we get along okay. So, we started living together and his father was mortified that we weren't church, said we were living in sin, how dare we just be living together? Because he kept on saying "Do you want to wear a ring?" and I went, "Oh, look. I don't believe in
- 23:00 marriage, don't worry about it." "Shall we have another baby?" I was forty, exactly forty by now. "No, we've got six already", so we had me and the cat and dog spayed [sterilised] all at once. And I loved those kids and I still do. I mean it's just people that come through your life and poor old Cooppy, he couldn't do anything but milk cows so I sold my flats, my little acreages and bought something else. I'd subdivide a postage stamp if I could. I'm good at real estate.
- 23:30 Bought a farm at [UNCLEAR]. It was only a hundred acres with a beautiful old hundred year old home on it, 11 foot ceilings and four open fireplaces and floors to die for. So, I done it all up and done all the kids a bedroom each. There was plenty of energy to go around, six kids and then my Dad passed away and my Mum come to live with us. I built her a granny flat and Mum stayed with us for six years
- 24:00 but towards the end of the six years was when our marriage was breaking down. We'd been together about ten, eleven years by now. Kids had grown, we'd got one through university but we're milking cows on that farm and we just had a little walk through, was only a small farm, and chocka [full]. I used to go to the supermarket to do the shopping Friday night, you never take the kids. They double your food bill and six, there was nine or ten of us at home at all times, six kids for a start, hubby, myself, my Mum
- 24:30 and a hell of a lot of hangers on-a and they were throwing all these bits of fruit and veg [vegetables] away and I said to the kids, "What do you do with that?" And he goes, "We throw it out." I said, "Can I get that and take it home to my WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and things?" "You'll have to see the manager." So, I went and found the manager and he said, "Funny you ask about that," he said. "A bloke picks it up. This week he wasn't picked it up at all. Look I was going to advertise a job in the paper." I said, "What job?" He said, "Do you realise how much waste we've got here?" and I went, "No." "Come out the back." And there was a half a bloody warehouse full of one week's supply of
- 25:00 fruit and veg left overs because they bulk buy. He said, "Pick it up over the weekend and the job's yours." So, I went home and I said to my hubby, "You'll never guess what job I've got. Picking up all the crap from Safeway but it's really good stock fodder. It'll be good as having a crop to feed to the cattle." Well, we picked that up for the whole time just about we were married and it was, it was vegetables. Nothing wrong with them. What they bought on Friday, Monday got thrown out Friday and we used to, I used to feed
- 25:30 the family. It sounds awful, you fed them out of the rubbish bin but there was nothing wrong with it. It was just thrown out in to the big containers; we put it into a trailer. I went and bought a trailer. You had to take all the twiddles and plastic out of it and fork it out to the cattle and they used to go troppo over it. Bags of oranges. If there was one mouldy orange they'd throw the whole jute bag out. So, I used to say to the kids, come on. Perhaps we'd better embargo this because if Safeway ever hear me say this they'll be done. There's a law against that now.
- 26:00 You can't do that. But it saved that company seventeen and a half thousand dollars dumping rights a year so you can guess the amount we had, we brought home, a daily job, seven days a week. Six days because it wasn't always open Sunday.

Must have had a pretty healthy herd of cattle.

Dead right but yeah and we did really well out of it, we really did. We used to say to Colin, "There's lots of oranges out there, Col. Want to make a few dollars at the market?" And he'd go, "Yeah." "Want to do oranges this week?"

- 26:30 "Yes." So, I got all the good oranges, washed them all bagged them up for him and he'd go to the market and sell them for two dollars a bag, great big bag you know, they would go off like hot cakes and kids would make themselves a hundred bucks out of it.

Do you think the experience you had; living in a third world country had opened up your eyes to the waste?

Oh, hell yeah. I used to say to them if we took this to Vietnam we'd get stampeded. We'd get stampeded because people were living on the rubbish tips. Yep, oh yeah it was.

- 27:00 You know I always had lots of fruit and veg to donate to the school store. Put all the kids through Christian school and yeah, what can I say?

What difficulties did you begin to have in your marriage?

Religious. Religious ones and my mother was living with me and his mother, his father. His father was a really hard line, "Vee have vays."

- 27:30 very arrogant man, not a bad man but just arrogant. There was only one way to do it and it was his way and I'd say, "No, I'm not doing that." I was the only one that would stand up against the oppression, religious oppression. I was told I was going to hell with a bar on my face. Get out and meet you down there, hello. Oh, dear.

He was saying this to you under your roof?

Oh, come special to tell me, my marriage broke down because

- 28:00 I wasn't a Christian. Hello, what does, does that mean that he can covert his neighbours, commit adultery and be a false witness against me and blame for his, hello. Never mind. There's no good carrying baggage around with that but that was another shock. It was a big emotional shock. It shocked all the family but hey, that's life. That's when you hit your mantra. I think Venus was conjuncting my first house that time. It was. But you know. Life goes on if you let it and if you're able to
- 28:30 put down the crap and forgive them all and just say, "Well, that was another hell of an experience." Perhaps that's why I've got cirrhosis; the shock's been locked in. Don't know. They started radiating me and wanted me on chemotherapy and then they found out I've osteomyelitis which is, you don't go on chemo or get radiated, it makes it worse and they thought those was warts and they weren't. They were these old bones. They burnt them off and made it all worse. So, they put me in hospital, took bits of, just chopped bone out and they've just come up with
- 29:00 osteomyelitis so Monday and Tuesday next week I'm at the specialists again. Maybe they're going to put me on a drip, I don't know, hopefully. Get the hell over and done with and then I can give up smoking and drinking while I'm purifying my body in hospital. I'll be a new person, second Saturn return.

It's all about renewal.

Yeah. If I want to, I mean some days you think oh what's the bloody good of going on? You do, you get that way, you know because you can always feel sorry for yourself and grovel in your own emotional crap if you want

- 29:30 to and I just smack myself around the face and go, "Come on girl. Get on with it. You've got grandkids to come along yet."

That's that survival instinct.

It is. It is the survival instinct. It really is.

Do you think your experiences in Vietnam perhaps developed that survival instinct?

No, I think that was, that was developed from a very early age; we were getting bombed in the Second World War. I

- 30:00 grew up in a war. Mum said that the roof got blown off and I was splintered with glass and we used to huddle, she said I always huddled you around the fireplace because we noticed that, that was the only part of the house that was left standing and all the soot came down over us and she said we were all black when the bomb went off. And my uncle was burnt with; we'd thrown water on his incendiary bomb. So, I was raised in that, I was, she said, "I remember having you", she said, "the air raid sirens were going, there's bombs going as I was giving delivery to you."
- 30:30 So I was born that way. Must be my path this time round. I don't know. What karma did I have to come in contact - fixed you know, so then we come to Australia and the next thing you're getting pelted by stones for being Pommy bastards and you've got to learn the local rules quick. Now that's another survival instinct and then down the farm and yeah Vietnam. It all builds up over a time the survival. But you
- 31:00 think you just about got the answers and somebody changes all the bloody rules. But hey, if you take it all too seriously, you go down. You can go down the plughole with it so you've got to pretend that you're all right, even if you're not. Does that make sense?

Keep your chin up.

Yeah.

It's interesting that during those heady times you're making some sensible decisions about the money you were earning.

Yeah. Well, Dad was a Taurus, they're very good

31:30 with money, Mum and Dad were. They had nothing so we were, we could get by with nothing. But I said, he who has nothing for he shall not be disappointed. There you go, that's one that my Mum used to say. Expect nothing, so blessed is he that expects nothing because he will not be disappointed. Because that's what you're going to get in life you know. Never mind. That's just how it was. Survival, yeah. But I was lucky I think I have, I had a

32:00 loving family and a very loving, free upbringing and that's how you expect it to be but it's not.

Just getting back to Vietnam again, as the war is coming to an end, what changes are happening around you and what do you sort of, what are you seeing with regards to your future as a performer given that your audience had been troops of Vietnam?

Well, originally I used to be just a singer and a musician but now I could

32:30 do shows, so perhaps I could come back to Australia and do some real shows which I done. Wasn't very good at doing it on my own, I preferred to be one of a group and not an individual instead. But I done it anyway. I got jobs playing bass guitar at a theatre restaurant in Melbourne, they read, I can't read a bloody note but I've got a fantastic ear and I can see where the dots [notes] go up and down, how many you've got to put into a bar but I wouldn't know what notes they told me to play. "Can you read it?" "Oh, yeah I can read it. Put

33:00 it up." Pretend. I'd known the song. I'd take the song home and listen and listen and listen to the bass line and then follow it and then I'd pretend I was reading it when it was up in front of me. Kept that job for two years. Yeah. It was fun. Done lots of different - songs I learnt be- I've worked in a reception centre in Elsternwick, a nice Jewish reception centre where they've done lots of receptions for

33:30 Jewish functions, Italian, Greek, Russian, Channel Ten, Channel Nine all done their stuff there too. So, I learnt phonetically, I learnt some Italian songs off Italian waiters, some Greek songs off the Greek waiters, some Jewish songs of, of our keyboard player because he was a Jewish man, couple of Russian songs just whatever you could so that when you had those things you could sing to them in

34:00 their own language and they'd come up and start talking to you in their language and I wouldn't have a clue what they were saying and go, "mm mm", used to do sign language but oh you've got laugh. One time, after the weddings they'd all have a circle and everybody dances in a circle and they're saying goodbye to the bride and groom and I went to the toilet just before we were about to do the circle. Everybody's waiting out there and old grandma had gone to the toilet and died. And the bride and groom were just about ready to leave

34:30 and we weren't sure whether to tell the bride and groom and upset their holiday but they wanted to know where grandma was so we rushed out and had to call an ambulance and they propped her up in a chair. Grandma had nodded off as they told them so they didn't wake her up, because she was dead. They kissed her on the way out. She was still warm. Oh, dear, and then as soon as they'd gone because we had to get the mother and father to one side and say you know,

35:00 'Nan's passed away at a very inopportune time.' Excitement, she was elderly, so they said, "Do we stop the wedding or do we just let the kids marry and leave?" and they organised it they left, done the thing, propped Nanna up in the chair in the foyer. Carrying her out the door and stuck her in the jeep. It was a bit like that. Bit like one of those movies, you know, where they keep shifting the dead bodies around, what was that movie? You remember that?

35:30 I can't remember the name, it was a funny movie.

Weekend at Bernie's.

That's it Weekend at Bernie's. It was a bit like that, that weekend. But only the once. Only moved her once.

What happened perhaps in your last week in Vietnam?

Oh, I can't even remember but possibly we'd just gone out to Thailand, Philippines, one of these other

36:00 circuits and then just thought, well that's it. Coming home. Used to come back across through Darwin the minute you saw the Australian coastline we all started having a few tears. Couldn't wait to, don't know why, just felt good to be home. And then everybody go in to their shock and try to deal with where they'd been. But yeah, I think most of us, it's going to be fun at this reunion of the, the other musicians and hopefully I'll have this out of the way and

36:30 sold and I'll be cashed up enough to go and see them all.

Where's the reunion being held?

Brisbane. Do you want some paper work on that?

No, love to talk to you about it though now.

Well, I don't know a great deal about it but I have some, some enrolment forms that the drummer of the group sent me.

What's planned for the reunion?

I don't know? Dinner I think? I don't know if they're going to have a concert or what. I am going to contact those people, find out if they are

37:00 having a concert, and if so, who's doing what? And I'll be part of that I guess, if I can. Without interfering because I'd love to get up, have a jam, I know that. But we're not recognised as having been there.

You're not recognised by whom?

Our government. You can't, you know you just can't say it

37:30 but they give a lot of back up support. But who cares, what can you do? Send you back there? It'll be Timor next time. Iraq. Off with Saddam [Hussein] or something.

What kind of recognition do you think is lacking?

Well, jeez it would nice if the government just said thank you. Do those free shows for our boys and thank you for being I don't know,

38:00 being there for the ones we did, the Australian ones. America should possibly do it too. Rather than kick us off base and try and cancel us when one of them's been out of line with one of my girls. Sorry. Oh, dear. But Jeez there's no use getting angry about it. You can voice your opinion and have your differences but you can't, you can't negotiate with Uncle Sam.

38:30 **What opinions have you voiced with regards to your recognition Janet?**

None. You know people go, why don't you apply for this, that and the other. "Yeah, okay who do I see?" you do and they never get back to you. Everybody's a gunner. I say to them, "They were a gunner in Vietnam. They're a gunner here too." Oh, dear. But then that backhand sense of humour I've got doesn't do me very good, when you start getting sarcastic with people.

Are you

39:00 **involved in the Vietnam Vets Association?**

Yeah, no the RSL. Yeah, Vietnam Veterans but I'm not financial because a lot of Vietnam veterans get pissed off because it's a bunch of old Second World War people that are still you know don't really recognise Vietnam. It wasn't a very popular war this Vietnam you know, was it?

No.

Mm, mm.

39:30 Yeah, to each his own but I just go and march with them now and again if I've got, if I've got the energy but I've noticed every time I come back I feel absolutely drained after I've been on that marching, you know, I don't know whether it brings up a lot of old crap that you still haven't dealt with or whether they're still having a whinge and you think, oh they're never going to get it right or perhaps they've got it right for themselves and they've got their pensions and they have a march and they whinge about the next bloke

40:00 and you have a drink together and you have a barbecue and I sang them the penis song and it makes them laugh. That's rude but I'll sing that to you when the camera's off. Have you heard it?

No, are you sure we can't record that?

The penis song?

Oh, we've all heard the word penis before.

You don't think they're going to shoot me do you?

I don't think so.

They're not going to order me off the base again are

40:30 they?

We'll change tapes while we get set up for the penis song.

00:35 **You're on.**

Are we going to do a song about a penis? And this is where the older male is having trouble getting erections so he talks to his best friend down there and he sings a little song that goes like this

\n[Verse follows]\n Dear penis, well I don't think I like you anymore\n You used to watch me shave now\n

01:00 All you do is stare at the floor\n

Dear Penis, I don't like you anymore\n Used to be just you and me\n A paper towel and a dirty magazine\n That's all we needed to get by\n Now it seems that things have changed\n And I think you are the one to blame\n Dear Penis, I don't like you anymore\n Because a man has such a good relationship with his penis,\n

01:30 The penis speaks back to him and it says\n

'Dear Rodney, I don't think I like you any more\n Cause when you get to drinking, you put me places\n that I've never been before.\n Dear Rodney, I don't like you anymore\n Why can't we just get a grip on our man to hand relationship?\n

02:00 Come to terms with truly how we feel?\n

We just plough our oats together\n We just stay home together.\n Dear Penis, I think I like you after all.\n Oh, and Rodney while you're shaving\n Shave my balls.\n

The penis song originally by a Rodney Carrington on the internet.

02:30 Pass, what was next? Janis was it? What did you want next Sir?

Did we want to go to the Janis again?

No, you wanted to talk about the coat.

Oh, no ...

While I'm up here, not while I'm down here. While I'm up here.

There's a song that you just played a few bars of while we were getting our labels and...

Poor Little Angeline? That goes on

03:00 forever and it'll bore the tears out of you. It's off my breast.

She was ... wrong key.

\n[Verse follows]\n She was just sixteen, a village girl,\n Pure and innocent was little Angeline\n Never had a thrill and a virgin still\n Was poor little Angeline\n Now the local squire had a low desire\n

03:30 To shag every virgin in the local shire\n

And had set his heart on the vital part of little Angeline\n So, at the local fair the squire was there\n And he was putting his pudding in the middle of a chair\n When he chose to see the dainty knee of poor little Angeline\n It goes on forever, are you sure you\n

04:00 want to hear this right the way through?\n

So, he dropped his hat and he said your cat\n Has been run over by wagon and you know it's not quite flat\n My carriage in the square, he said I'll take you there\n He said to poor little Angeline\n Well, they had not gone far when he cried, ah, ha\n And he dragged her over to the local bar\n Where he bought her gin just to make her sing\n

04:30 Poor little Angeline\n

So, when he oiled her well he took her to a dell\n And there upon her sweet young frame he fell\n And he saw in the grass, a little dainty arse\n Of poor little Angeline.\n Now a story's told of a blacksmith bold\n Who had loved little Angeline for years untold\n And he was handsome too\n And he's promised to be true to\n

05:00 Poor little Angeline\n

But it's sad to say on that very same day\n They threw him in to prison for the debts he couldn't pay\n And for coming in his pants at the local dance\n With poor little Angeline\n Now the window of his cell overlooked the dell\n Where the squire was giving little Angeline hell\n And he saw in the grass the dainty little\n

05:30 arse of poor little Angeline\n

So he gave a start and a mighty fart\n And he blew the whole fucking jail apart\n And he ran like shit in case the squire should split\n His poor little Angeline\n When he got to the spot and he saw what was

what\n He tied the villains' knickers in a tight reef knot\n And he saw in the grass the dainty little arse of\n Poor little Angeline\n

06:00 And she said, oh blacksmith, blacksmith I love you true\n

And I can tell by your trousers that you love me too\n While I'm undressed come and do your best\n Says poor little Angeline\n Now it won't take long to end this song\n Because the blacksmith's tool was over one foot long\n And his natural charm was as thick as his arm\n Poor little Angeline.\n

06:30 Sorry, I have to apologise for my raucousness and my bad taste. They're a bit of fun aren't they?

Let's hear My Boomerang Won't Come Back. We didn't roll on that one.

Oh, my goodness me, excuse me I'm just going to do, no leave that. I'll be back. I'll be back. I'm back. Sorry. My Boomerang, it's an old Charlie Drake song but I think it's

07:00 it's politically incorrect. We on?

We're on.

Oh, good. I hope this is the right key, guys. My Boomerang Won't Come Back.

\n[Verse follows]\n In the bad, bad lands of Australia\n Many years ago\n The Aboriginal tribes were meeting\n And having a big pow wow\n Ooh chugalay ooh chugalay\n We got a lot of trouble boy\n On account of your son Ray\n

07:30 My boy Mac why what's wrong with him?\n

My boomerang won't come back\n Your boomerang won't come back?\n My boomerang won't come back\n My boomerang won't come back\n I've waved the thing all over the place\n Practised until I was black in the face\n Big disgrace to the Aborigine race\n Boomerang won't come back.\n I can ride a kangaroo yeah, yeah\n Make a witchery stew, yeah, yeah\n I'm a big disgrace to the Aborigine race\n Boomerang won't come back.\n

08:00 I'm trying to remember the words.\n

Don't worry boy I know the truth\n To you I'm going to show it\n If you want your boomerang to come back\n Well first you've got to throw that.\n Oh, yes never thought of that\n Oh, must have a go\n Yes, stand back and throw.\n And he gets the flying doctor and the bloody flying doctor crashes. "Oh, my God", he goes. "I've hit the flying

08:30 doctor."\n

My boomerang won't come back\n My boomerang won't come back\n I've waved the thing all over the place\n Practised until I was black in the face\n Big disgrace to the aboriginal race\n Boomerang won't come back\n

There was a bit I missed in the middle, something about, don't worry boy. Oh, no I've said that bit.

They banished him from the tribe then,\n And sent him on his way.\n He had to practice boomerang so here he could not stay.\n He couldn't stay with the tribe and they banished him and he

09:00 goes,\n

"This is nice isn't it. Being banished at my time of life. Here I am sitting on a rock in the middle of the desert with my boomerang in the air. I might very likely get bushwhacked. Ah! Get of here you bush whacking animals.\n

It's just a really good Aussie song. I'm sure you've heard it. Is it before your time? I don't, I'm that old aren't I?

Is this one of the regular things that you used to play?

Only for the Aussies we'd do something like, you've got to pick your audience. What you'd played one place you wouldn't play

09:30 another. You, you'd read your audience and you'd go oh, okay we're doing cabaret tonight. So, you'd do something like,

\n[Verse follows]\n Summertime and the living is easy\n Fish are jumping and the cotton is high\n And so am I\n Your daddy's rich\n

10:00 and your mamma, she's good looking\n

So, hush little baby, don't you cry\n More cabaret stuff this would be for\n One of these mornings, sorry\n You rise up singing\n

And so that's a cabaret type of song that you would do to a officers' thing because if you'd done that to the

- 10:30 enlisted men they'd beat you off the stage. They wanted hard rock, coarse stuff and now, We've Got to Get Out Of This Place. Always used to end up playing that, get them all up standing up and come and sing
- \n[Verse follows]\n If it's the last thing we ever do\n We've got to get out of this place\n Girl, there's a better life for me and you\n Boom boom boom.\n
- Just pausing for a second.**
- Oh, I keep on messing my...
- No, no it's**
- 11:00 **nothing to do with you.**
- Oh, it's getting a bit personal. I'm only joking, I'm terrible. I'm so terrible.
- It's okay you're allowed to have a sense of humour. Carry on with what you were saying. If you could actually talk to Julian [interviewer], I know I'm here.**
- Yes, Jules, what was I saying?
- You were talking about your audience, I think.**
- Yeah, you had to read your audience but then you looked on the manifest list and you thought, Oh, well I've got the officers' club. So, what are we doing tonight, and oh I'll do Tiko Tiko,
- 11:30 we'll do some jazz numbers. We'll do cabaret type stuff and before we'd go, we'd go, well we're doing that tonight, that, that, that. And, yeah more often than not it worked. Everybody had a good or bad night. I remember getting upset with them all once and telling them all to bugger off, on stage. But you get that and everybody has good and bad days.
- Why would you get upset?**
- Oh, sorry. I got upset because maybe somebody was being a bit...
- 12:00 didn't understand Aussies or might have been having an Aussie, you know, tell them to bugger that. But you got that. They wouldn't have understood what that mean. That was the place they were looking for, Buggery. They were looking for that place, yeah. I had the two pet dogs that somebody gave me and I got one out of the country and when I came back from up country they'd eaten the other one. Shitzu, they were pure bred Shitzu, very
- 12:30 tasty. Wasn't me that eat them. Came home and said, "Where's me dog?" "Oh, well we saw Chu eating it. It was cooked on the table when we went to the kitchen one night." "Oh, God. Oh, well hope it tasted nice." Let me think, a song that... no that's nothing to do with Vietnam. My friend Malcolm, I helped him put, get some therapy by putting some of his poetry to music and
- 13:00 getting him to sing and he's just found a musician in Tasmania and now he's doing it vocally and he went through a real dark patch this young fellow, stayed here for a few days, cried and I did healing and I exorcise them, wish somebody would exorcise me. You know what?
- What?**
- An exorcist. Oh, I have a rotten sense of humour. I often wonder what happened to all those people that, you know, you, you
- 13:30 meet along the way. Like A Bird, don't know why, that's a nice song. What else would you like me to do guys?
- What comes to mind, something from your repertoire in Vietnam?**
- Did you want me to do Bobby McGee.
- Let's hear that one again, yeah?**
- Because I think you got the audio wrong the first time around, because I belt it so I don't know whether you have to turn it down as I start to belt. Okay,
- I think we're just going to ride it.**
- Are
- 14:00 you? You're just pulling my leg. You just want to hear this one again. I know, or is it really audio problems?
- Both.**
- Oh, okay. Janis Joplin, always a good one to sing.
- \n[Verse follows]\n Busted flat in Baton Rouge, waiting for a train\n And I's feeling nearly as faded as my jeans\n Bobby thumbed a diesel down just before it rained\n Rode us all the way to New Orleans\n

14:30 Well, I pulled my harpoon from my dirty red bandana\n

And I was playing soft while Bobby sang the blues\n With those windshield wipers slapping time and Bobby's hand in mine\n We sang every song that driver knew.\n Because freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose\n Nothing it ain't nothing if it ain't free yeah.\n

15:00 I said feeling good was easy, Lord, when he sang the blues\n

Yeah feeling good was good enough for me, mm hm\n Good enough for me and my Bobby McGee\n From the Kentucky coal mine to the California sun\n Bobby shared the secrets of my soul\n He was standing right beside me Lord, through everything I done\n

15:30 Yeah, Bobby baby kept me from the door\n

Well, one day near Salinas, I let him slip away\n He's looking for that home and I hope he finds it,\n But I'd trade all o'my tomorrows for one single yesterday\n To be holding Bobby's body next to mine.\n

16:00 Because freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose\n

Nothing and that's all that Bobby left me\n I said feeling good was easy, Lord when he sang the blues\n Yeah, feeling was good enough for me, ah ha\n Was good enough for me and my Bobby McGee.\n La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la\n

16:30 La, la me and Bobby McGee, yeah\n

La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la\n Hey, hey, hey Bobby McGee,\n You know I called him my lover, I called him my man\n I called him my lover just the best I can\n Come on yeah Bobby now, come on Bobby McGee, yeah\n La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la\n

17:00 Hey, hey, hey Bobby McGee.\n

Oh, dear are we still on?

Yeah.

Oh, I'm coughing, I'm so sorry.

What does that song actually mean to you?

Well, the GIs would come up to you and say to them, one of them come up and said, "Janis I was in love with Janis. She was my lady at one stage and,

17:30 and it brought tears to my eyes to hear her song." I used to think that I was, I felt sad for Janis because she sounded like she was in so much agony when she sang, that kind of singing wasn't kind of cool then. But she had such a beautiful cult following you couldn't help but do that kind of a song to the, to the enlisted men. The ones in same, you know that same age, the young people that were coming through the drug culture and psychedelic crap that was going on and Jimmy Hendrix. All Along The Watch Tower, that type of

18:00 stuff, yeah and it was a song that they could relate to, "It's nothing if it's not free", you know, if you've got sell it it's not worth nothing. If it's free it's everything. I think they were talking about love, that type of thing because you could have made a packet over there if you wanted. I suppose some of them did but I wasn't, wasn't my way of going about life. I just wanted to learn and experience life. I mean I had the option but I

18:30 didn't go there. But I was on good wages, why would I want to be greedy and sell myself? That would be bastardising myself, just loved the people, got on with them and ah, it was good. There was a lot of good stuff that comes out of a bad, it's an ill wind that blows no good my other would say and, as hard as it was, I'm that much richer for having had that experience of being there, meeting all those great people. Whether they liked me or not or whether I liked them, they were all part of my moulding

19:00 of my growth and my soul through this life and but thanks to all them, here I sit today singing Bobby McGee to them. My 15 minutes of fame.

I was just going to say some of the friendships that you

19:30 **made throughout that you were entertaining in Vietnam. Did you keep them up after you came back?**

Oh, heck yeah, got, all over Australia. Even the one I had a punch with, we all still communicate. All is forgiven, because you, you went through so much together and it puts a different context on a relationship, friendship. They're my mates. We look out for each other. Several in Brisbane, there's quite a few of them in Queensland. One in Adelaide,

20:00 several here would be, not musos but other Vietnam veterans, the ones over there. Hopefully when I go back to the reunion in April next year, if I get there and I'm still alive and they've fixed this crap, it'll be good just to, for old time's sake, go there. Perhaps we should all go there to Vietnam and get the

cobwebs, the total cobwebs out of, it'll be kind of quite an experience to go back there and walk down Wai Min Chu and go, "Oh, wow." We possibly might not even recognise it but I don't think a

20:30 great deal of new buildings gone on there.

Why do you think it would be good to go back?

Might get you a different perspective on it, another angle of looking at where you went, why you went there, don't know why, hey, why me? I was only signing up for a tour of the East and you know, Tahiti and all those beautiful places. Sent the other way so I

21:00 suppose agents used things like that to kind of get you to keep hanging in there and strive for something more all the time.

Were the relationships that you formed more important to you at the time or when you actually got back?

Some while I was there and some, other ones when I got back. As life's gone on, yeah they're all important to me now. Each and every one. You know, I'll ring round the whole lot and say, "How are you doing?" And keep this one in contact with that one and see, yeah, like I did last night.

21:30 **How tight is that still so many years later?**

We're good. One will phone up and say, "Get to see so and so because they're not well." So, you ring up and say, "Get your arse in to gear." "Yeah, okay." "Come on, snap out of it." So, I was told about Steve last night so I don't know whether he's had a stroke or what but they say he's half paralysed. I'm not quite sure whether to contact Stevie and find out. I'm not sure where to contact him but I'll contact the other ones in Brisbane and they'll know. It's like a little kind of web and under

22:00 the web I know where half a dozen are. They know where half a dozen other ones are. They, and everybody knows half a dozen other ones that they've kept in contact with. Some of them died of cancer and one died in jail for murdering somebody and I know that person, whoever they murdered must have deserved it. I'm sorry but that's politically not right, is it? Right, but that person that was obviously died in jail.

It's your, it's your

22:30 **opinion.**

Yeah, he was such a tender-hearted bit of a person but like I say everyone can have a bad day. That could happen too. Must have been a passion thing. I don't know. A murderer's passion.

How many of the people that you were with in Vietnam are as eccentric as you?

A lot of them were but I wasn't at the time. I've learnt to be eccentric over the years because, yeah

23:00 suppose I do it for a bit of attention now. Give them the shock treatment. I'm here.

Do you think the Vietnam experience made you a bit more eccentric?

Oh, hell yeah.

Why's that?

Because of where it took you, what you learned. You know the reality of the birth and death and life over, whoo and big boys' toys. Yeah, it give you a great, it give me a lot more humanity

23:30 I think was the other side of the coin but you know you could live a lovely, humble little life on a back bush farm with nothing ever bad happening and maybe you take it all for granted but then you go and you see that and it makes you wake up. Hey, come on there's a world out here and they're all hurting each other and what can you do about it? You know, that type of thing. I tell you who nominated me to save the world. Me, I think. You know, it's none of my business is it if they

24:00 all, I'm only joking.

This section of transcript is embargoed until 1 January 2034.

25:21 **Do you think that your experience in Vietnam actually made you more a violent person?**

Yeah. Although I think there's a little bit of that in all of

25:30 us, if you're pushed. That was a situation, that pushed. I mean I don't, I'm, I don't go around hitting people. I never belted my kids or nothing like that. I loved them more than anything. Their Dad would have given one for the leg but I go up and pretend I was hitting them. I'd say, "Here", I'd get in to bed with a stick and say, "He thinks I'm hitting you." "Ah, ah."

More of a threat.

Yeah. "Just yell and pretend I'm hitting you because your Dad's going to come and biff you, if you don't shut up." And they'd, they'd go, "Ah." And I'd hit the bed with the stick or something. It

26:00 was an in joke with me and the kids. I was like one of the kids. Like I grew up with my own kids, these, both the kids, because I just adore children. They should be protected and loved at all times and have just a happier upbringing and freedom as I did but not everybody's that lucky. Hard work but that never killed anyone I guess.

When you came back from Vietnam and obviously there was quite a lot of tension due to, well the

26:30 **war that people said shouldn't have happened, were you targeted in any particular way because of that?**

No. Oh, yeah when I was in, when I was interviewed by the Commonwealth police, there you go. My own government. I can't tell you what they called me but it wasn't true and I didn't know they were on about. I can't help it if, I don't care what somebody's politics, colour, race, creed are and one of my fellow mate, musicians happened to be in the Black Panther party. He even gave me a little Mao Zedong

27:00 book. Still got that out the back.

So what you're saying is like the 'Reds Under the Beds' policy was still quite effective in the 70s?

Oh, hell yeah. Oh, yeah. I was called a Vietnam veteran S and Cs and, like I was really put down for being one. Yeah, but only by them, only by them. Some people would say, "Oh, Janet's a Vietnam veteran." They'd go. "Ooh." But doesn't matter, that's where they were at. They should be so lucky

27:30 to have the experience I had. I'm luckier than them. I lived it. Saw it. It was there, tasted it.

How were you viewed by other Vietnam veterans who were obviously, well in the middle of combat action. I mean your experience is so different now, do they, how do they view you? I'm interested to know, you're a woman and you're an entertainer.

Yeah, they don't believe it. I'm used to, too far out there. I mean I can't have a relationship with anybody because they, I've been too far. I've been buggered.

28:00 They last about five minutes, they're out the door. They go, "Are you drunk?" and I go, "No, I've got a hyperactive thyroid", because I have. "Oh, I can't stand it when women drink." They're gone. Beg your pardon, I wasn't, my house and I'll pay for my own boots. Wasn't drunk. Take the two pot screamer. Cheers. I'm up to a pot and a half at the minute.

How hard does it make having a relationship, having

28:30 **the experience that you've had.**

Yeah, very hard. You'd have to either, to have a deep and meaningful relationship with, I mean I have a deep meaningful with them because I just love them for how they are. I have no expectations and most relationships seem to rely on expectations, how they think the other person should be. But that's not being yourself. I am eccentric and I know I'm a bit of a dag and I'm very talented but they can't handle me perhaps I

29:00 make them, don't feel very, perhaps I've been too far to make them feel masculine, I don't know. But I try, I'm more one of the boys than, than wife material I suppose. Quite able to, to just saying things if they fall by the wayside like my Dad had a heart attack, I run the farm. It's something that's either in you or was taught to me, how to be. I'd dearly love to have a partner to grow old with. I mean it's getting a bit late in years but

29:30 Dear Penis, I don't think I like you anymore. Sorry.

Just also want to ask you, I know the healing work that you do these days and you're an astrologer, how much did the Vietnam experience impact on you to make that new age decision, was that something that came out of your life experience?

Yeah, I learnt a lot about the healing stuff off Mamma san and Pappa sans, I was telling you they were cupping and the meridians because the

30:00 Asians treat their health system, it's totally different to our Western, they've both got good things to offer each other. There was an operation where a lady had a tumour on her brain and all they'd done was they get a bit of pethidine and they put fifty needles on the acupoint pressures all around this and she was awake the whole time they operated on her. They cut this little thing out here and lifted

30:30 the piece of bone out and they were speaking to her and there was an interpreter there, "Do you know where you are?" "Yes, I am in a hospital." "Do you know what is happening?" "Yes, I'm having a removal of a tumour on my brain." "Are you in pain?" "No, there's no pain." There was no blood because all the little acupuncture needles who had to be precisely put in to various nerves cut off the blood supply and just little beads of white plasma, clear plasma, not red blood just

31:00 beaded around this hole where they took out this little thing and they slipped out a pea sized little growth in there and put that back and very slowly over the next, was it three hours, pulled the needles out. Reckon she's okay.

So, it really affected you?

Yeah, that's, that's, that's a totally different brand new of healing to what our

31:30 Australian ways, oh sorry.

Hang on I can probably help you out here.

It's done, darling it's done.

Hang on.

I just done it behind my back because the house is (UNCLEAR). Yeah, so I learned a lot of that stuff over there but I was a nurse prior to that so, and there was this like, it's in my heart and soul. You're a nurturing, you know ... woops.

Don't touch it.

Okay, okay.

How much did

32:00 **having a bit of a nursing help your, help you with your experience of Vietnam do you think?**

Yeah, good because that's how I got to stay with the medical people instead of the GI. It was like M*A*S*H and the, medics are a totally different people. They just see life as different, they fix it. People break it, they fix it. We're fixers. We're not breakers. Just keep us in a corner and then watch out.

32:30 Yeah, what can I say? I'm so eccentric, like I say it's very hard to have a relationship with ordinary, everyday person. They go, "Are you drunk?" I go, "No." Mightn't have a drink for weeks but they still accuse me of being drunk because I'm so eccentric, in a state where they have to have a drink because they'd be as mad as me. I don't know. Every time I learn the answers they change the questions so I give up.

You mentioned quite a while ago that you've

33:00 **done the odd Anzac march and it gets to be a bit of a comedy of errors.**

It was.

Can you tell us about that?

Yeah, we all lined up and we, I say to them, "Look I'm a bit dizzy guys. I need to walk." you know, "Beside somebody in case I fall over." And one of them's got a sore toe and one of them's got a prosthesis and we, we stagger. They say, we've got to go over the old bridge and down, round to the rotunda round the front and then some of them start like might be hot day. Some of them start, need a

33:30 waterman, need a water boy, get them a chair, sit them down type of thing. Some of them faint and because a lot of them don't go anywhere. They only come out for that one day a year. A lot of them are fortunate enough to have a very loving partner that's stuck with them through thick and thin but a lot of them haven't, a lot of us haven't but never mind I've got beautiful kids though. I'm blessed.

How many of the blokes that were caught up in combat, you know, your so

34:00 **called stereotype Vietnam veteran male are you in contact with?**

Well, down at the RSL here, most of them know me. I don't have a great, I can hardly remember all their names. I know their faces. There's David he was at Phan Rang. He comes over; they're all victims of divorce and nastiness in their families. David's a good hearted soul, looks after his mum and I

34:30 rang him the other day and he says, "Yes, stick it up the arse. Tell them what bastards they were." "Oh, shut up David, stop whinging." He goes, "Okay." "Are you coming down to march with us boss?" they say. "Where? Where're we marching, yeah okay." Get us out. On the back it's got a sign that says, War and it's W-A-R, I just tell them it's spelt wrong. Say, that I'm not really calling myself manager with that on the back. Oh, dear but

35:00 yeah there's a camaraderie, you don't have to be in each other's pockets. We might meet each other a couple of times a year at the, at the Anzac end or Vietnam veterans, Long Tan Day and you just all have

a march, say a few prayers down the street, thinking of all the ones that went before you and then you go to the RSL and everyone has a bit of a drink and a bit of a barbecue and they have pipe bands and there's a little spot of pageantry comes in but everybody does it differently, yeah

- 35:30 and I sing a few dirty ditties like the Penis Song and frighten them all. Sing Janis Joplin they come up and said, "No, we don't like that version, sing the other one", "Well, okay." They want my Country and Western version of the Lifers.

Did you do anything special when you were in Vietnam for Anzac Day?

No. No, never even observed it until I got back and that was only on occasions. For a long time I couldn't even be bothered. I wasn't, none of us went to the RSL or nothing because they didn't,

- 36:00 didn't want to recognise us in any way and yeah people like Normie Rowe they done a lot of good stuff but he goes through, he goes through the emotional stuff. Wouldn't mind catching up with Normie. He used to play at the Orana Ballroom where we used to play in Melbourne and that's when he got sent over, just, same time we came over but, yeah.

What sort of bloke was he?

I don't know him personally but he seems all right. I think he was a bit of a lad, bit of a

- 36:30 character that could sing a good song and had a bit of a following and was going places and then he got drafted but yeah what can you say? Like when they were having a punch up on day time television, do you remember that?

Sure. It was the Don Lane show or something wasn't it? Midday sorry, Midday, Ray Martin

Who did he punch up?

Oh I always forget that bloke's name.

Yeah, yeah he'd given him a big punch

- 37:00 up and he'd been on, we have a bit of, you know, he's on and he has a bit of a laugh about that but he's just coming out of depression just now as we speak, been in hospital and you can get that way.

What's the most positive thing you got out of your experience in Vietnam?

All those beautiful people that come through my life. Yeah. Rich, rich in friendship, camaraderie. That's not mine. Somebody's car alarm. Not yours is

- 37:30 it? No, it's up the road there.

What's the worst experience that you took back?

Well, lost the plot and saw red. That was a personal one. That was a personal of mine, wasn't right to be like that but you are, but it's okay you can be happy, you can angry. They're all natural life given emotions but it takes a lot for me to press, have my buttons press and you learn from those things. Didn't like

- 38:00 seeing people killed and people bastardising people but hey get over it. Get on with it.

If you had you time again would you still make the choice to go to Vietnam?

Yeah, but I'd do it all differently.

What would you do differently?

Yeah, I'd go through a different agent for a start, nothing against you Les if you're watching this, but if you could, I'd go to our government to do our men, that way you'd get recognition within

- 38:30 your country and then possibly see if I could do something properly through the USO where you got the full, good accommodation. You had authority, you didn't abuse it but you would have been treated with a lot more respect. Here's the bottom of the pecking order, with NA written on your card which meant no authority that's why we had to wait days for people's flights and scrounge food and, and do that

- 39:00 but I don't think I'd stay there four years, possibly go through all comfortable and get bombed or shot or something. That's when you do it hard possibly, something looks after you, I'm not quite sure. Am I getting too close to that camera?

Good work.

You like my work?

I do.

But oops. How's yours going Jules?

I'm fine thanks.

Oh, listen there was an embargo on that, you'll just have to

39:30 wrap. Sorry they are really not drinking I promise you. It is Christmas and it's their last day and I'm being a terribly bad influence on them. They're beautiful people, well worth a raise. Give them a raise, give them a good Christmas bonus and re-employ them on this big mission they're doing, fantastic.

Thanks Jan. I think on that incredibly incriminating

40:00 **note.**

No it's Happy Christmas time, God bless you all. Cheers.

Cheers. Janet thank you so much for talking to us today for the Archive, you've been an absolute joy.

But God it's a day isn't it? There's no hope for me and thanks for coming guys, thanks for bearing with me.

We've loved every moment.

Have you?

Yes.

Can you, in the Mully group, no not Mully, Mullion Productions,

40:30 could you please take me under your wing, manage me and help me produce a book out of all this stuff I've got around me and sing a few songs and become world famous and then I can send some money to World Vision and help the kids and lead a nice life and send me someone to love, God please. No I love everybody. I want one that loves me unconditionally. Thank you Denise and Julian [interviewers],

41:00 my unit and the archives, okay God bless.

Tape 10

00:31 Had a scrap book here and started collecting little odds and ends to bring home to show everybody where we'd been and this is a letter I wrote to a pilot, we were in the back travelling from A to B but we had to make it to a place called Tu War which was not on our agenda of put downs so I wrote a pilot that says, "Dear pilot, or whoever when you contact

01:00 Can Ran Bay could you please ask them if there's a flight to Tu War tonight? And if so, what time as we, five of us, are trying to get there to do a show tonight." Lots of love from Jen of The Network. And he answered and sent it back via the road master and it said, "Dear Jen of The Network, we would be so very pleased to go out of our way and stop at Tu War ourselves so that you could make your show tonight." Now this why I asked him in the first place because I was hustling a flight. "That

01:30 you can make our show and come and see us in Can Ran Bay sometimes. It should be about 35 minutes to Tu War", and so yeah we went down through a storm that night and it was oh, so remote. There's odds and end that I, because here we've got an artistry lease. 'For the American forces of Vietnam television, we The Rubber Band, hereafter referred to as the artist, do agree and certify that the audio and the video broadcast materials I participated in on the

02:00 11th May 1970 is released to the American Forces Vietnam Network for in country broadcast use. The artist understand that no payment costs or compensation will be received from AFVN for the release and use of material. The artist further understand and agrees no rights to be above designated broadcast material in the form of ownership or of compensation, for any and all release or subsequent

02:30 use of this material will be resided in the artist, his heirs or his assigns. Artists also understand that this material is for exclusive use in Vietnam on the American Forces, Vietnam Network and is not released to any other agency except as specified here in, artists agree to coordinate this release with recording companies in the case of any difficulties regarding the use of this material, signed

03:00 by me and by them.' Signed by Sergeant Ingleman and staff Sergeant Raffle and me.

There's another interesting column in there that you read a little while ago, Janet can we read, or hear some of that?

It's a bit of a worry but I'll work on this, "Jan loses her togs and got a bra in her, bug in her bra."

That's another one.

That's another one. But wait there's more. There's another one.

03:30 Swings onto Manila. Now where was that? Excuse me. I shall find it. "We're getting our facts distorted", says a local entertainer, not like they're saying, "news dispatches from Vietnam grossly distort the real

facts about the civil war there”, says Mrs Norm Sutherland, formerly Janet Fry. God I wish I’d said these things. I shouldn’t have said them. Politically correct I was trying to be but I wasn’t. “She and her husband had been

- 04:00 in Vietnam for several entertaining the troops. A keen observer of what’s going on, her parents letters, in her letters to her parents Mr and Mrs Fry of Man’s beach contains a great deal of information. In a letter dated the 13th September”, don’t know what year, “She says, ‘you said that you saw on TV that Saigon was hit. Don’t forget that the news exaggerates an awful lot. You see the Viet Cong don’t drop bombs from planes or have air raids or anything like that, the
- 04:30 war is kept going by snipers who shoot once or twice at military targets and then run. They terrorise them but hardly ever civilians’.” I was trying to make my Mum and Dad feel better, you see. You know it was like we were supposed to be safe. The VC use rockets and mortars and they are quite small because it takes only one guy to fire them.” God, I was ignorant, still am. “Like, they’re like a big gun and they can travel five to ten miles according to the target they’re
- 05:00 after and they can walk in their, their artillery. Really that, the propaganda is the worst enemy as it honestly isn’t anything like you say it is in your paper’.” Woops, pass on that one. But there is a kind of a truth in that. Propaganda was and is rife. Here we have a copy here of
- 05:30 flying in country. It’s flying orders. “The following person are authorised to travel within the geographical limits of RVM during the period of the 9th of December ‘68 to 19th January ‘69, Noel, David, Gayle, Rod, Janet, total of five names. But then we had other people on the front there, a couple of Vietnamese dancers and whatever came along with us. This is
- 06:00 just things, somebody’s sketched myself and my husband on stage. Oh, sorry. Here. Sketches sent on. Lots of things got thrown on to the stage as a token gift. Here’s Anita’s Clothery, there’s a, want to see what they talk about this coat in a minute. He was one of our, that was one of our itineraries of where we had to work on the
- 06:30 15th we worked at the Neptune club. This was the Network band, 16th we were at the Rainbow club. 16th we done two shows one which was 8th field, 8th field could have been artillery, 17th on the Sky High club, 18th the Air force, that’s a mouse, Contango club the Netdoon club again, air force officer’s club. The Sky High club. That sounds a bit scary doesn’t it?
- 07:00 Not the Mile High club it’s the Sky club. The Contango and then we had to travel to Da Nang so that’s kind of like you did with, you’d look at the board and you’d go that’s the itinerary. Now, when you’re doing the show they used to throw something on stage for you just as an appreciation or something, most of it was their badges that, you’d get a round of applause and they’d throw out these badges on to, on to the stage
- 07:30 and you picked them up and you put them in a box and one day I realised I had a fair few. So, I’ve tried to make, put them on a jacket because when I march with the Vietnam vets and boys, stick this on cause, well that’s my reminder. This is the best one, look at that. Da da. Come on Aussie come on, come on. That’s a captain, this one’s a sergeant of some kind, Red Cross badge, United States
- 08:00 navy, paratroopers badge, Legacy badge, I think that’s an Aussie one, combat entertainers. Can you see this? Am I holding it up right? Is it coming through okay?

I think so yeah.

Forty Three good guys, I think that was an airborne, yeah that’s an airborne. On the back we’ve got war, what is it good for? Absolutely nothing. And this is all the different companies and battalions

- 08:30 and parties that were in there, oh somebody’s thrown the crucifix on and yeah, that’s it, that’s the Korean one I think and in one of these pockets there’s da da first air cab medics because we stayed with the medics a lot and you sew these things on but a lot of them had fallen off but hey what can you do? People throw their name badges on. That’s Tony’s. This one says US air force
- 09:00 and when I go marching it’s kind of very heavy and makes people laugh.

You’ve even got one there from the mortuary haven’t you?

Yeah. They said, “Don’t like your name tag.” Because people, they go, “Is that your name tag?”, “Yeah, I’m dead. They preserved me though”, I say. Anyway, never mind so that’s it you know I’ve got a pair of army green trousers that I wear and you stagger around on, Long Tan Day.

Just as well they weren’t all conquests Janet.

Yeah.

- 09:30 Oh yes, oh no they’d have been a lot more than that. Only joking, no, no you had to be very careful over there.

I should also ask you now that you’re back.

I don’t think I ever back. I know my body’s here. Spiritually I reckon I’m stuffed, I don’t know where I

am. No, no it's not true.

Just with regards to the 8mm film camera that you bought and the time that you spent using that.

Yeah, until it got swiped off me.

I was going to ask if you ever had any

10:00 **problems, was it ever confiscated or?**

Yes, yes it was once going over a bridge and they ripped a film out and threw it away, give me my camera back, because you weren't allowed to film on a bridge. It was a strategic point, a lot of bridges got done, blown. And yeah we were down South and the next minute phoo, we got pulled up at the Check point Charlie, guns in your face and I'm ignorantly filming away and he just, the Vietnamese just ripped it off, off me,

10:30 opened it up, took the film, threw it over in to the water and "get you, number ten", "oops, sorry." Could have been worse. He could have shot you. He didn't. Anyway, so you had to respect the type of, it's their country you know. How would we feel?

What about with the United States, did they have any restricted areas where you couldn't produce the camera?

Not that I'm aware of. Perhaps

11:00 downtown in a brothel somewhere, I don't know. I don't remember who went in there. Oh, shut up, Jan. Did I say that? Sorry. No, it's just war. What is it good for? Absolutely nothing. That was a good, popular one. Excuse me I have to cough for a moment because I smoke. Oh, yes.

Well, thanks for the encore Janet.

Have we had our 7 minutes already? We are? We've done it? Thank you again. I won't be back this time I don't think. Thank you once again

11:30 for your lovely people. Please find me the space to go from here, where to from here with all this information? I mean there's got to be a book in there somewhere. If you know any publishers let me know. God bless you, have a great Christmas, birthday and take care.

INTERVIEW ENDS