

Australians at War Film Archive

Clem Higgins (Henry) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:37 **Clem can you give me, it's difficult because you have had such a complicated and interesting life, but can you try and give me a 5 minute summary?**

All right, I was born on 7 September 1930, I was born in Catterick in

01:00 Aldershot, which in those days the army headquarters, in the married quarters. Three Lions [symbol of England]. I still remember the name of the bloody place. A Scottish lady used to give us banana sandwiches, I have never eaten one since, when she looked after us. My Dad got posted to India, sorry we went to Malta, and from Malta to India. On our way home, just before war was declared, we called in to Malta and we were there for the rest of our stay. A year before

01:30 war finished we were evacuated home. Liberated to Gibraltar and went home by a convoy. We went to Ireland for 12 months, 6 months with my mother's people and 6 months with me Dad's people in Dublin. We went back to Liverpool where me grandmother was, and I had about 4 or 5 years in Liverpool, I worked for Lewis' [John Lewis Department Store] a

02:00 big department store where I learnt me bakery trade. 21 just before I turned 21 in England, and I joined the Australian Army, they were recruiting in London Road. Came out here, and because I was in the navy for me national service, they put me on a supply boat going up to New Guinea for 12 months. So I wanted to play soccer so me boss said, "You are not getting off the boat." So Major General Secombe, who was the boss cocky [in charge] in Queensland,

02:30 we took him up to Port Moresby for a big do for a fortnight, so I had words with him and he said, "any problems when you come back off your 6 months trip, come and see me." So I filled in my application to go to Wacol, the National Service Camp, and the boss tore it up, Captain Stark, threw it in the waste bin. So I went over his head, which you don't do. I went and saw the sports officer in Vic [Victoria] Barracks,

03:00 he took me into to see Major General Secombe. Next morning there was a Land Rover there and took me out to Wacol. Things progressed from there. Then I went back. I retired from the army in 1957, rejoined 11 months later, played soccer for Australia, Queensland, NSW [New South Wales] and WA [Western Australia]. Coached many a team all over

03:30 Mornington, Stirling City in Perth, Mornington down the Peninsular in Victoria. Even had a soccer team in Vietnam and we done all right, there's the trophy up there. It should be in Canberra, but I didn't tell them about it. When I retired from the army after 23 years, I got a job with weapons research for 10 years in the photographic department. And I used to sit in the

04:00 office and look after the book work because I didn't know anything about making pictures. After that, when I took compulsory retirement, 18 months, I started putting on weight, and so I started looking after old people in rest homes, as a catering caretaker and here I am now tied up finished working and I am at Amber Lodge Rest Home in

04:30 Morphettville.

Thanks for that.

Right you are, well I hope. Well I hope you can sort that lot out.

Easily. Going right back to the beginning what are some of your earliest childhood memories?

Childhood memories. In India, you might think this is all a fairytale, but my brother and I we were up in the hill country during the summer. They always sent the married families away, Dad didn't, he stayed down on the plains. Amber and Kasauli, the names stick in my

05:00 head but I don't know whether Amber was up in the hills or down on the plains but one or the other. We were at Garrison school this day my brother and I, and we were walking through the bush, just the edge

of the jungle, and a huge Bengal tiger, about 200 yards down the track, came out the left hand side of the track, and me brother said, "For God's sake stand still," and we were only about 7 or 8 at the time.

- 05:30 And the tiger looked at us, and he must have had a feed already that morning so he just ambled across and disappeared thank God. Another morning, we heard a hell of a noise, the kitchen, you had an amah, that used to do the cooking and keep the house clean, and we heard a hell of a noise and we were waiting for her to come in with breakfast, and we heard her screaming so we ran out and she must have gone home the night before and left the bloody door open. And it was chockablock with monkeys. And they had taken the lid off
- 06:00 everything they could take the lid off. Flour, there was flour, sugar, rice all over the kitchen it was and we were killing ourselves laughing and the poor old amah, we was crying her eyes out. And then, on our way home we pulled in to Malta, we called in for oil and water, on the Empire Pride, the boat was called, P&O [Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company] liner, and we pulled in, and Italy to come in to the war that night and so the next
- 06:30 morning they came aboard the governor and all them and said, "right, married people can come ashore with their husbands," the army men had been taken off to defend Malta. And you can stay on the boat and carry on England. So Mum decided we were going to come ashore. So it was lovely. We used to swim all day long, because they closed the
- 07:00 schools down because infantile paralysis broke out on the island after a while. Not first up, but 12 months later on so we were not allowed to congregate any more, so we used to swim all day. I had found these dogs in an old fort just up from the married quarters at St George's Bay, where we were living. I took him home, and I said to Mum, "Can I have this dog?" and she said, "We can't even feed ourselves." But being a soft
- 07:30 Irish lady she said, "Aah, all right then we'll look after him." So, we called him Bonzo. Then we had a rabbit as well, my sister had a rabbit. So when the air raid siren. The graves, we used to call them, the slit trenches were alongside your house. Now all houses in Malta are made of huge rock slabs, because the island was made of rock and nothing else. So if there was a direct hit on your house or on the slit trench, that was it they wouldn't worry about you.
- 08:00 So, air raid siren would go off, the rabbit would run in the drain pipe, the air hole, at the far end and we would walk down a few steps and pull a cover over and had sandbags on top of it, and there we would stay while the air raids were going on. So one night, we didn't hear a thing, no air raid siren no nothing, and Bonzo started barking. So me Mum being a superstitious Irish lady said, "come on, down the shelter," "mum the air raid siren,"
- 08:30 she said, "down the shelter." Direct hit on the house. Where me brother and I were sleeping in our room, big concrete rock slabs on our pillows, we would have been dead, dead as a mackerel. So Bonzo was a lovely dog. So he must have known we were starving, so about 12 months later, things were really getting bad. So it's late in the evening and we see this
- 09:00 dog coming up the road, and he had about 300 sausages hangin' out of his mouth and he's draggin' them on the ground. It's Bonzo so we whip him into the house, clean the sausages up so me mum chops them up into parcels and we run round the married quarters issuing the soldiers sausages. So me Dad comes home a couple of days later and he says, "There's hell to pay down there." "What's up?" And me mum says, "What's wrong?" "Somebody's pinched all the sausages."
- 09:30 They had no breakfast that morning. And we are killing ourselves laughing. So she told him and he said, "Oh for God's sake keep it quiet." She said, "It would be a bit hard, it's all round the married quarters they've all been eating them." So then, near the end of the war they decide, no it's not the end of the war, me Dad left, or they took all the soldiers away.

What position did your dad have?

He was a sergeant on coastal defence.

- 10:00 So he decided that - well he didn't decide, the army decided they were going to invade Salerno and Palermo in Italy. And the Americans flew them over, dropped half of them in the ocean, they drowned a hell of a lot of them.

They dropped them in the ocean?

Yeah, normal stuff ups that occur in the armed forces.

What was the stuff up?

Just dropped them out too early.

- 10:30 Whether the artillery fire was too heavy or what we don't know. Me Dad never ever spoke of it. He was a very good swimmer, well he had been an athlete all his life. He was a light heavyweight boxing champion in India, good hockey player, and yes so they got ashore, what was left of them at Palermo and Salerno and carried on through Italy. So we never seen Dad for the rest of , another two years or more.

11:00 **And you stayed on Malta in that time?**

No, no, we were evacuated just before the big push up through Italy and south of Europe. We went out by Liberator. A funny story, they took us out of our houses in the end and we went to that fort where I found Bonzo, and we were living down in the fort. So they had these jerry cans, ones that were painted white on the

11:30 handle, you know the old army jerry can. White had water in them, the others had petrol in them. So I pick up this water one and guzzling away, it's got petrol in it. And I was awfully sick for quite a while. Nothing stayed in me, just straight through. So that was all right we got over that. So a couple of days later we were all lined up. The air force had some of the young lads doing the cooking and the sergeant caterer was standing there all proud this lunch time,

12:00 and me Mum, we were first in the queue, and me Mum said, "and what are we eating today," in her little Irish voice. "Oh, the boys have made you a lovely cottage pie today" and she said, "oh that'll be nice." Herrings in tomato sauce and bully beef mixed together with plastic potato over the top. It looked lovely. Until he broke the skin and the smell come out, and me mother in her Irish humour said, "isn't it bad enough Hitler's trying

12:30 to kill us without you trying to poison us." It didn't go down too well. So we then we got evacuated in the Liberators to Gibraltar, stayed there a fortnight, on a convoy, ended up in Ireland, went to Liverpool first. Stayed with granny and off we went to Ireland, 6 months in Limerick and 6 months in Dublin. Back to Liverpool.

You certainly got around because of your dad's profession.

13:00 **What position did he have when you were in India?**

He was a sergeant in India, he was a physical training instructor, which I have got a certificate too which I got with the SAS [Special Air Service], they recommended I could be a physical training instructor, I had done a course. British marine officers' came out from England and ran the course for us over in Perth with the SAS. And I really enjoyed it. But being in charge of cooking facilities with SAS, they wouldn't release me to go to

13:30 North Head where this physical training school was.

What kind of person was your dad?

Dad was magnificent, you couldn't have wished for a better father. I don't know why I left home for God's sake. Like this program that's on TV at the moment, "If," if only. I was signed on with Everton as a young soccer player, we played the Everton Colts who hadn't been beaten in 4 or 5 years.

14:00 When we left school at 14, I only had 12 months education in Liverpool. Wavertree was the area we lived in, so we left school and me Dad formed the soccer team because we had a good team, St Patrick's, we had a good team in the last 12 months of school, and we stuck together we joined the league and we ended up playing Everton Colts in the cup match, and we beat them, and they had never been beaten before.

14:30 So after the game the coach of the Colts come in and picked 5 of us and said he would like us boys to sign on with one of the junior teams at Everton next year, and so we did. I went through the ranks and I got called up for national service when I was 17 and a quarter, from my 18 months national service in the navy. I was going to go to the West Indies, I was all teed up, I was on a cruiser the HMS Duke of York going to the West Indies, I was real pleased. All of them beautiful

15:00 'dusky maidens' [black women]. And, 2 days later I get the old tannoy [public address] system at Davenport, the bloody loudspeaker system, "report back to the master at arms." I go back and he said, "You are going to Yeoville." I said, "I thought I was going to the West Indies." He said, "No, they scrubbed that. You are going to Yeoville." The naval team lives at Yeoville with the HMAS Heron at the naval air station. So I said, "Fair enough." I was quite pleased about that. So 18 months I stayed there and

15:30 playing soccer all over England and Scotland, it was great. So after I got out of the navy, I couldn't settle down. Probably got some of me Dad rubbed off on me. So I came home, one day from training, and I seen this add, the old slouch had, the recruiting shop in London Road in Liverpool, and I said to me Dad, I got a form and took it home and I said to me Dad, "I want to join the Australian Army." He said, "You are a bloody fool." He said, "You can be anything

16:00 you want as far as soccer's concerned with good coaching." I said, "No I want to be in the army like you Dad." I always wanted to emulate my father, because I was so proud of him. So, he said, "all right I am not going to stand in your way, you'll be 18 in a few months, you can do what you like, all right I'll sign the paper." So I took it back the next day. Then I ended up, they said right, 3 months you'll go home again. We went to London, Australia House, signed on.

16:30 They said, "right we got to get a few more recruits yet, but we'll send for you within the next 3 months, so keep yourself ready."

Why were they recruiting British people?

I think they were recruiting, because Korea was on, yeah. They were getting all organised for Korea. I wanted to go to Korea. Nineteen, national service, they wouldn't let me, because we were looking after when national service started. So, 3 months later

17:00 report to London, Australia House, I get there and there's 120 of us all meeting for the first time. Took us all down to Tilbury to the docks on the boat, the Otranto, beautiful 24,000 ton P&O boat. And it was a pleasure cruiser come migrant ship, and Lazenby, I'll never forget Lazenby, he and I palled up and there was two lovely twins

17:30 on the boat, so we had a great 5 weeks coming out. So we even had, we had a captain in charge of the drafting, he said, "Clem, we are going to stop at Colombo," Sri Lanka now, but Colombo in those days. He said, "We are going to stop there and we are going to put a soccer team together and we are going to play the ship's company." And so we did we went ashore and it was great. Everywhere I went it was soccer. It ruled my life really, and the army ruined my soccer career. But

18:00 I wasn't worried about that, you can only do one thing. Because I couldn't attend training sometimes.

Did you love the army more?

I loved the army yeah I did.

Your whole growing up, so when you were in India, what was your father's role there?

He was a sergeant in the, he was Royal Irish Fusiliers or the Cheshire Regiment, yeah, he was in

18:30 three different units, he had been in the West Kents, the Cheshires and the Royal Irish Fusiliers, I think at the time he was in the Cheshire Regiment, or the Royal Fusiliers. He was just a sergeant in charge of a Platoon in the Regiment and being a physical training instructor he used to keep them on their toes as well.

It must have been quite a quite an exotic existence in India?

It was really, because you know you

19:00 done nothing, you couldn't even wash your face virtually, you would blow your nose and they take the hanky off you and wash it straight away for something to do.

I bet your mother enjoyed the helping hand?

Yeah, my poor old Mum, India wasn't very kind to my mother, because on our first visit to India, my sister Veronica, they were dashing us home to England to Netley, to the army hospital,

19:30 at Southampton, and my mother was pregnant and she was having bother having the baby, so three days out of Gibraltar, the other side of Gibraltar up through the Bay of Biscay, up popped Veronica and she died the poor buggar, three days old. So she was buried at sea. So that knocked my Mum around. Mum ended up in Netley hospital for 6 months.

That would have been very hard on you?

Oh, it was terrible. But

20:00 never ever complained, she just kept on working.

So there was you and your brother...?

And me sister and she has got 6 daughters in Canada.

So how did your mother adapt to the lifestyle in India?

She adapted to it all right, but I think because always being busy and then having to do nothing, she wasn't even allowed to lift her hands. It's was hard to keep her still. A bit like me

20:30 I am supposed to be retired, but I am always working.

And did she have much to do with the other wives of the...?

Yeah, they had a club where they mixed in, but me mother never drank or smoked, me Dad never drank but he smoked, he killed himself smoking the poor sod. But that was another thing, if we ever got a cabbage in Malta, we would take the outside leaves and stick them outside the back door and dry the cabbage leaves and chop it all up, and we would think we were doing him a

21:00 favour. And he would come home from the other side of the island. He was in a fort at Sliema, when he wasn't at St George's Barracks, he was at Sliema at the fort. So we were chopping this up all nice and fine and we said, "Dad we've got you some more tobacco," and he had all his cigarette butts saved in his tin and he would mix it all up. Poor sod, he was 68 when he died. And my brother never ever told me, but what I read between the lines in the letters that my poor Dad died a bad death,

21:30 with stomach problems so I , two and two together it was probably cancer.

So had your mum and dad met in Ireland?

My Dad joined the Boys Service in the British Army, I have got his record there you can have a read of them. When the famine was on in Ireland, his Mum, that was the Granny I was telling you about, they moved to Liverpool, so when me Dad was old enough he joined the Boys Service in the British Army,

22:00 so they got sent, and he ended up back in Limerick, with the British Army, when the trouble was on in the 30's, because he joined in 1922 in the British Army, so he ended up in the '30s in Ireland, and that's when he met me Mum. Now they were both Roman Catholics, this is how stupid it is, both Roman Catholics and both Irish, but because he was in the British Army, they had to be seen not to be seen. So,

22:30 anyway my Mum had to go out, to follow my Dad out to India. He left his regiment, got a posting to the Cheshires, the first time in the Cheshires and went to India. My Mum got on the boat, followed him out, and she got married in the cathedral at Bombay. Then me brother come along, he's two years older than me. So that's how that happened. And it was

23:00 and then my sister, and then we had Michael, he's dead, he's buried in St Georges Military Cemetery.

Michael, that was another brother?

Yes. Michael he was a year younger than me, he died from scarlet fever. Got bitten by a mosquito and died of scarlet fever.

Did that happen in India?

In Malta. He's buried in St George's Military Cemetery. Just up from the barracks, at

23:30 St Georges, where we lived in the married quarters.

So he would have only been a little...?

Oh, yes, he would only have been young when he died he would have been, how old was I, I was 13, 12 or 13 when I got back to Ireland, 14 years of age in the education system, yes so he would have been younger than me.

Hard for your parents to lose two children?

Oh God yes. Especially being such a nice kind

24:00 Irish lady you know. She was family orientated. It was shocking.

So you left India and ended up in Malta, but it sounds like you boys had a bit of a wild time while the war was going on?

Oh yes we did, we had a soccer ball, we used to kick this soccer ball around until we wore it out on the - because - Sliema Stadium, me Dad used to referee soccer matches at Sliema Stadium, at St George's we were playing on rock. The ball

24:30 didn't last too long. And then we had hockey sticks. But we used to swim all day long and Bonzo used come along with us, and I would be swimming backstroke and he would be swimming between me legs, clawing hell out of me bloody legs.

What kind of dog was he?

He was like a skinny Labrador, a Maltese Pointer, they had, they looked like a Labrador but very thin, oh he was a lovely dog. The rabbit died. The rabbit died, so

25:00 me sister's crying our eyes out so me and me brother said, don't worry we'll take the rabbit away and bury it. So we went miles away and buried the rabbit, three days later, the dog's at the door, he'd found the rabbit and brought it home again. Bloody ratbag.

So Bonzo didn't always get it right?

No, no. He was a lovely dog, and he got it right when the air raids were on, you know and the Italian snipers were up there,

25:30 the war heroes, you never knew they were there until the bombs landed and "oh, there's an Italian," you never seen them. So he got it right the night the Italians come over.

And your mum wasn't frightened for you?

Oh no, oh she probably was but we were too young to notice. We spent all day swimming and we'd be swimming, without a word of a lie, swimming in St George's Bay, lying on our backs watching dog fights, amazing, shrapnel flying everywhere.

26:00 **That would be every boy's dream.**

It would be, because we did enjoy it really. We were too young, fear, we didn't have any fear when you are young you didn't have fear. We were doing a school play, and as I told you about the air raid shelters alongside the houses. I forget the little lad's name, but he was a front of a cow in the school play, and a

direct hit on the shelter, the whole family got wiped out,

- 26:30 so teacher is telling us all, the next day, when they got us all together to do the school play. And, none of us were worried about the poor lad getting killed, all we wanted to know “who’s going to be the front end of the cow now teacher.” Bloody terrible, it didn’t affect us.

Children have maybe got a saner way of dealing with it all?

I think so yes, they certainly have.

And when you were on your backs watching the dog fights was that between

- 27:00 **the Italians and...?**

No, the Germans, German Stuka dive bombers, Messerschmitt. In fact I was visiting my Dad one day, down at – this was at the barracks at St Georges Bay, and we were as you can imagine, we were right on the coast. See, three Messerschmitts, we didn’t know they were Messerschmitts at the time, and I was on the roof, all the roofs in Malta are flat, so they can catch water. They have got a drain pipe in the

- 27:30 corner and the wall’s about that high, wall’s up all the way around it’s like a well, and then drain pipe in the corner so when the water comes it runs off because it’s a very, very dry Mediterranean, beautiful country and climate was fabulous. So every bit of rain was precious, so I am up on the roof down at this fort at St George’s

- 28:00 with me Dad and he is showing me the Lewis gun that had the rampanier [long range target sight] on the top of the Lewis gun and I said, “Oh look Dad, three Spitfires [British war plane] coming in,” and he said, “Oh yeah.” Now Spitfires and Messerschmitts when they are coming towards you, they from a distance look the same, their outline. Then just before they got to the coastline they zoomed up. So me Dad started

- 28:30 firing at them. And I wanted to have a fire at them but he wouldn’t let me. They were up and gone inland.

It must have been a very impressive sight for a boy to see?

It was, it was amazing, it was fabulous. A dreadnought, I forget the name of this dreadnought, it is bigger than a battleship. When it fires its guns, it had 26 inch guns on board, two of them, and when it fired it had to fire broadside

- 29:00 the guns would point out over the boat, because it came into St Georges Bay, it nearly filled the bay, it was huge. I thought, “Oh God almighty what’s this,” so me Dad told me that’s a dreadnought. Why is it lying like that, well, the guns are pointing out to sea out the mouth of the bay and the old Germans and the Ities [Italians], used to come in with their motor torpedo boats, and keep picking at the

- 29:30 convoys when they come through. And it did, we were lucky, while it was in there we must have known something was going to happen, well we did, a couple of nights later, just before last light, in they come from Sicily and Italy, and this dreadnought is waiting for them. And when it let go with its salvo it nearly pushed it to the back of the bay. It was amazing. If it had have been

- 30:00 pointy on, the stern [ship rear] as well as the bow [ship front], it would have ended up on the bridge. I realised then why it was that way.

Most of kids when they are growing up play cowboys and indians and you know war games, you were actually right in the middle of it.

Yeah, well we used to play Germans and Allies. It’s funny, no cowboys and indians. Maybe that’s why I like cowboys and Indian pictures

- 30:30 now. You miss all that sort of stuff. But it never worried you, you don’t know why. No fear.

Well it’s just a normal part of growing up isn’t it?

You’d be running down the road while an air raid was going on, you were running home from swimming, it got a bit heavy, and it was concentrated around the army barracks, so you were running home, and the shrapnel was zinging everywhere. And it never entered your head to hide anywhere.

- 31:00 **And your mum never told you off?**

Yes, often, quite often. “Don’t worry Mum we’ll be all right, God will look after us.” And being a religious lady she would say “Oh all right then. But try and hide when it gets too heavy, don’t run home, hide somewhere.” But you could hide somewhere and still get killed. A building could land on your. But you never thought of these things.

Did you have much to do with the Maltese people?

- 31:30 No. Not really. In fact when me Dad was at Sliema, which was over towards Valletta, which was about 4 miles away, I used to run across and see him. My Dad and I were good swimmers, and I used to dive, in Sliema, there’s what they called the chalet, it was like the rock coast and it had railings all along,

32:00 and that's where people would come out and drink their coffee and all the little tables and all the cafés were just across the road and sit and look out to sea, when you could get coffee and tea. And it was about 100 foot into the water, and me and me Dad used to dive of the railing, the fort was here and the railing was here and we would stand on the railing and dive. There was a cave underneath. You had to judge the waves coming in. Well me poor old Dad misjudged it one time

32:30 so he went first and I followed him in and he done a belly flop. Well I panicked straight away, what was a nine year old lad going to do, how was he going to help his Dad out of the water. Dived in anyway, and "you all right Dad," "yeah I am all right," clamoured up the rocks again. That was the hardest part of that diving, climbing up again. And when go to the top his stomach and legs were black and blue. And he was so

33:00 fit, that was the only thing that saved him.

It sounds like you had a good relationship with your dad?

Oh yeah, he was lovely. I wanted to be, I always wanted to be, I never ever made it, I wanted to be better than him, not because I envied him, but because I just wanted to be him to be proud of me. But I only done 23 years in the army. I have got a letter in there, I wrote to the Royal Corps of Commissionaires and they said come home by all means and we will get you a job in the Royal Corps of Commissionaires. And

33:30 but he said in the letter, this lieutenant colonel retired, he said, "Why the hell would you want to come back to England, we are all trying to get out of it," and that made me mind up. That was before I was married and had Catriona and the grandkids.

So, you mentioned earlier to that your mum, you know you were starving, were you starving there?

Well not starving,

34:00 we just had enough to get through, the army, the armed forces, made sure, but sometimes convoys they were wiping out the whole convoy. Even, some of them managed to limp into Valletta. Into the Grand Harbour and they got sunk where they were, or set alight. So you got nothing out of them, and the aerodromes, they had what they called aerodrome defence, but all they were

34:30 was labourers filling in holes. As soon as an air raid finished, they would be out there and fill all the bomb craters up, so as the planes could come down and land that were defending us.

Do you remember how your mum, what your mum cooked, what you got by on?

Aaah, I still love 'em. Even to this day, tinned apricots, I think that just before war was declared, the British Army bought every tinned

35:00 apricot in the world and put them on the island of Malta, tinned bully beef the same thing, ended up in Malta and baked beans. For God's sake, and biscuits, you know the old dog army biscuits. So we still enjoy them to this day, I had baked beans the other night and I love them. Tinned apricots I love tinned apricots and that was our staple

35:30 diet. Bully beef and biscuits, herrings in tomato sauce.

You didn't, it sounds like Malta is a very rocky place?

It is, but - all the soil on Malta, all the orchards there was vineyards, the fruit was lovely pomegranates, peaches and all that, and the only way you could get it and being young and stupid, was to rob the orchards.

36:00 Watermelons. All the soil came out from Europe as ballast in ships. To start these orchards off years and years ago, when the Crusades were on probably. There's a myth going on, they reckon Malta turned over 100's of years ago, it somersaulted, but I don't think so.

What about fishing?

Lovely. The fishing was beautiful.

36:30 **So you had that supply of fish?**

Fresh fish, yeah, yeah. Fresh fish. We didn't fish though. No one in my family fished.

So it was the locals was it?

Oh yeah, it was local fish. In their old what did they call their boats, 'dicers', you know the boats with the plough at the front and the back, and they would go out fishing. They were easy goin' they didn't go out too often, especially when the air raids were on.

37:00 And sometimes they would get caught out at sea, in fact they had a medical supply ship that used to go from Gozo the island of Gozo a couple of miles away, and it used to have to come past St George's Bay

past the rifle range, and over to Gozo and this day it got shot up, and it had Red Crosses written all over it. Germans just come in and blew it out of the water. It ended up getting beached behind the rifle range.

37:30 **What did you think, what did you know of the Germans as a kid on Malta, what did you think about them?**

I don't think we hated them. I don't think children have got hate in them. You know we knew there was a war going on, in fact a Messerschmitt pilot got shot up and he managed to parachute out of his, over the firing range, over the rifle range and

38:00 he was coming down in his parachute, and the Maltese farmers were going to attack him with their pitch forks and the British soldiers had to keep them away, took him into custody and so that was all right. Yeah, so we were quite pleased that they saved him. So I don't think we had any hate in us at that age.

Did you see him?

No, he wasn't far the rifle range was 400 yards at the back of our house. Our

38:30 house was and the house next door, married quarters were normally, you know the normal double storey box, 20 or 30 people, families living in them, upstairs and downstairs, but we were lucky, we had two houses out the back joined together on our own and the road went between us up to St Andrew's Barracks. There was two 16 inch guns in St Andrew's and they used to fire them every now and then, the whole island used to shake. Used to

39:00 blow the wax out of your ears.

And when you dad had been sent off to Italy...?

We'd gone, we didn't see him. We didn't see him until he got home after the war.

It had got too dangerous, to stay in Malta?

Well there was no defence for a start, there was only a token defence, you know, but Germany was finished because they were getting pushed out of Italy and Sicily anyway and they had been finished with the desert campaign, was all over they had

39:30 gone from there into Italy and Sicily, and when the push was on, so me Dad knew we were going and he said you'll be off and gone by the time we move over there. So we didn't know any, never got a letter off him for two years. So we didn't know anything until he walked in the front door one day.

That must have been a big day?

It was a great day. And we had temporary accommodation

40:30 now my Dad had always been very canny with his money, he didn't drink, smoke as I told you, so he saved his money, pennies, and when he got discharged from the army, I think he was on a pension of 1/- [shilling] a day or some ridiculous amount of money, and we were only in - because we had come home from Malta, we were in like refugee status, so they had us in

41:00 temporary accommodation and they had promised me Dad a house and when he got out of the army, and we were quite a while getting our own place. In the end me Mum went down and I think she was one of the first protesters, she went down to the town hall and sat on the steps and protested. We got a house. But me Dad ended up.

41:30 End of tape

Tape 2

00:39 **Clem can you tell me why your dad had been unable to write for those two years?**

Well, he's probably tied up fighting, unless, he be that busy. I don't know, I just don't know.

01:00 He was probably busy looking after the men in his platoon. I never ever got round to asking him. I was just glad to see him come home. It was like all me birthdays come at once when he knocked on the door.

Did he tell you about his time?

No, no he didn't, he never spoke about things that went on in his life when the war was on. We quizzed him but he just didn't want to talk about it.

01:30 Which is like a lot of us don't. Anybody asks us you know what it was like in Vietnam, you just can't be bothered talking about it. I can sympathise with young lads that were over in Vietnam, you know, the young national service lads that didn't want to be there, and you know what they went through, they

weren't bloody trained for it, they just weren't ready for it.

02:00 It wasn't a very nice place to be, it had its good points. I used to come away, they would pick me up to take me into Baria to place soccer on a Wednesday and back you'd go out again. It was a stupid war as far as I was concerned. I was lucky probably, I was one of the lucky ones. I was at the Battle of Coral and Balmoral, that was one of the big stoushes,

02:30 when I was with 3 Battalion.

The fire support bases?

Yes. Coral [fire support base] was supporting Balmoral [fire support base], Charlie [Slang for Viet Cong] and the Tet offensive put in their attack, and the crafty little devils, the telephone lines were just like thrown on the ground between the two fire support bases. So the night it hit the fan,

03:00 I was sharing a dug out with a gunner called Wilkinson, he was an M60 gunner, and our job, we used to take it in turns, we were just inside the perimeter wire, at the gun position. There was an APC [Armoured Personnel Carrier] inside just alongside the track, between our dugout and the fire position. And Wilkinson, he was a big lump of a boy, well to carry a M60, you know when you are on patrol and you out there for days.

03:30 You have to be pretty strong and he was a pretty strong lad. He had a flack jacket on, I forget the time, 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning when it happened. All hell broke lose, and he's coming back to get me out of the dug out, it's my turn, and he never made it the poor bugger. A rocket propelled grenade hit the back of the APC and he must have been running back to me to

04:00 get in the shelter. And a piece of shrapnel went under the back of the flack jacket and killed him in about 30 seconds. And he was lyin' on the path, so we got him over to the RAP [Regimental Aid Post] tent, but he was dead the poor sod. But yeah, it was shocking. Some of the lads were in their slit trenches, inside the wire, so

04:30 up go the flares and there was a Charlies standing in one of the slit trenches, one of the boys. So he reckons he broke the world record jumping backwards out of the slit trench. But because they had followed the wire from Balmoral which is where the first stoush started and they followed the telephone wire and got in through the perimeter wire. Barry Young, he was one of my cooks, he was a good

05:00 lad, when we come home, I wasn't married in those days. So when I come back from Vietnam, Barry said what are you doing, come down to Yankalilla stay with us, I [had] 100 days leave, so yeah, so I went down there and his Mum, I met his Mum before I went to Vietnam, she came up to Woodside to see us off and they own two butcher shops, one at Yanka [Yankalilla] and one at Norm [Normanville], and she

05:30 used to send us a little food parcel every month, a plastic container of Marsala wine the best Myponga cheese, Sao biscuits, so Barry and I used to hide in our tent and tell nobody and scoff it all in one hit. So when I came back with Barry, they were down at the wharf, and we came home on the Melbourne, pulled in here, and we had

06:00 a parade later on, so I went on leave and went down to Yanka and stayed with Barry and his Mum and Dad, for me leave. But Barry came home early, he had, we were at Coral and we were setting up our kitchen area, and there was a dead tree in the way. So I said come on, we seen a rat go into the hollow of a branch of one of the trees.

06:30 I said, "We don't want him in the kitchen," so we poured petrol down the dead hole, and I said to Barry, "Right you go round the other side and keep clear," I threw a match in, it was like a flame thrower goin' off, and it come out the other side and it was that close it ran up his arm, and his arm was on fire and I went up, without thinking I done the wrong thing, without thinking I pulled everything

07:00 off his arm and took the top layer of skin right off. We got a chopper in and whipped him off to Saigon and then he, I never seen him again, he went from Saigon back home again. He was lucky, it never disfigured his hand or nothing. He was great, but stupid bloody things like that.

That's war. Clem why had you decided to join the Australian Armed Services?

I don't know, because I wanted to travel, see

07:30 me Dad was all over the world as you know, and I don't know why to this day why I joined it. I just wanted to travel and I wanted to be in the forces and I think I fell in love with the bush hat didn't I.

So the old slouch hat got you?

Yes, it was in the window then and I thought, oh that would be nice. All me decent photos that had been taken of me in the army I sent home.

08:00 So Clem can you tell me about your first experiences of army life?

First experience, 19 national service. We arrived in Perth. 120 of us. So the army's there with buses and they took us back to barracks, to headquarters in Perth proper. Nice big lunch. Then we were foot loose and fancy

- 08:30 free. I forgot to tell you, when we came out from England, we all as I said to you, we all arrived at Aussie House in London, and taken down to the boat, we are out in the English Channel the next morning and the captain announced over the loudspeaker system, "all report to the purser's office."
- 09:00 So we all get up there. We got 3 months back pay. Well we were richer than the people coming out on holiday. So every night we used to be up on A deck playing cards, drinking pink gins, oh it was a great life. And the old night watchman, the first couple of nights he ignored us and the third night he come round and he said, "you boys hungry," this is about 2 o'clock in the morning, we said
- 09:30 "yeah, wouldn't mind a feed." Sandwiches, love 'em. So we all dipped in and give him a few bob. So every night he would come up with a few big plates of sandwiches. We had a great bloody tour. 5 weeks. We get to Perth anyway, went into barracks, had lunch, they said, "Righto you are on your own, be back at Fremantle, the ship sails at 10, we want you back there at 8 o'clock." We all had to parade outside the purser's office
- 10:00 before we sailed, no worries. 10 blokes missing, 10 had shot through. The same happened in Adelaide, another 10 went missing. We get to Melbourne and the provos [Provosts. Military Police] are waiting for us, everybody on the bus out to Royal Park, issued us with our uniforms, and we done a fortnight's familiarisation with the Australian parade grounds, and we all went our merry way. I ended up at Holsworthy, out the
- 10:30 back of Liverpool. In England they had promised us nice cabins, two men to a room, partitioned, carpet alongside your bed, wardrobes, you know the whole, bedside light. We get off the back of this 3 ton truck, and there was quite a few trucks there, there was about 40 of us
- 11:00 ended up at Holsworthy, we get there, we are out in the bush from Liverpool, it used to be a horse artillery, for the light horse regiment during the 1918 war, and it had never been used since. So we get there through the gate, which you had to lift up and pull aside, right up the back. We got off, Gerry Rock, he was a
- 11:30 fabulous chef, he had been a chef on the Queen Mary, not the top chef, but one of the chef's on the Queen Mary. He was the same, he got sick of the Merchant Navy, he joined the Aussie Army, so Gerry and I get put together, Jock Wilkinson, he was another one that was in B company, one of the cooks. So we get of the back of the truck,
- 12:00 this lovely Scottish voice says, "off the back of the bus you blokes," so we thought God what, it was Ronny the one, the Sergeant Major. Sergeant Major McDonald, he was out here on a 2 year loan from the Scottish Regiment. So Gerry said, "where's our billet sir" and he said, "see that tent over there
- 12:30 Corporal Rock, it's Corporal Rock isn't it, yeah, he said, right, you and your cooks, B company's over there." And that was the introduction to the Australian Army living quarters, your own tent. So we had to put the tent up. They were still building the kitchen around us when we were cooking, when national service started about a fortnight later. And one of the young Nashos [National Service Soldiers], he must have got a bit sick
- 13:00 a few months later, and the second intake we had about a 500 gallon tank of water land on the ground about 200 yards up from the kitchen. And we hear this shooting this night. Didn't think anything of it. Anzac Rifle Range wasn't far away down the road. So, myself and Jock we are on duty, we were breakfast cooks the next morning, we go up to turn the taps on to make the coffee,
- 13:30 no water. That noise we heard was this lad shooting holes in the water tank. Young national service lad. So that's the end of that.

How did you become a chef?

I was, when I started before I went at 14, when I left school at 14, I got an apprenticeship, with Lewis'

- 14:00 the big Department store, but before that, when I was 13 and a bit, Harrison's Bakery, was a little baker's shop, little, around your local streets, so I used to go down there and light the fires of a morning. I don't know in those days everybody trusted everybody, the lane, your little backyard and their backyard and your doors were opposite
- 14:30 each other, and nobody locked them. So I would go in, clean the bakery out the back, light the fires, get the fires going, off I would go to school, after school come back and wash all the greasy pots and pans up and I would make the bread dough for the baker at night. 240 pound flour in this huge big bloody bowl and I would make the bread dough, pounding it, punching it, wait till it rose again and then you'd pound it again.
- 15:00 That's how I got really interested in it, and he got me an apprenticeship he wasn't big enough to employ me as an apprentice. So he said when you finish school, I will get you an apprenticeship with somebody, so he got me in with Lewis'. So when I got called up for national service, there was no, they didn't have bakers in the navy. They had pastry cooks but no bakers.
- 15:30 And no vacancies for national servicemen. They had regular sailors. So they said, how would you like to be a cook. So that's where I first learned to cook. So when I joined the Aussie army, I come out as a

cook.

Did you have to, once you arrived at the base, did you have to learn any specific army cooking, I can just imagine it would be?

No. It's all the same. It's,

16:00 I enjoyed cooking. So when I went to Maralinga, the baker up there hadn't been off the range for 18 months. So, the Lieutenant said, "how would you like to go into the bakery." I had been cooking in the officer's mess for a while. He said, "Gordon hasn't gone off the range for 18 months and he's dying to get off, he wants to go back to Puckapunyal" and I thought, "Why would anybody want to go to Puckapunyal."

16:30 So I said, "Yeah all right, I'll do that. Are there any extra wages." He said, "We'll see about that." So he applied to catering corps and they said, "Yeah, we'll pay him baker's wages." So I got a rise in me army pay, for the time I done it, and eventually they got a qualified baker from somewhere and he come in and took over. So I went back to the officer's mess.

17:00 I quite enjoyed it.

So in those early days they didn't even have a proper kitchen there?

There was a cooker outside, 19 national service wooden hut and the wall just lifted up one side on a pulley, and you had your bain marie there, that was your serving point. Stove was in the middle, oven this side and oven the other side, big wooden stoves and they used to get stinking hot.

17:30 And outside concrete ramp outside the front entrance of the kitchen, and we had the old 'willies' cookers, steam operated, had an oven in there to keep things warm, but it had these huge square containers where you boiled your cabbage and all your vegies up in, which was good, just like

18:00 pressure cookers. So that was that. That was the cooking facilities, they were still building the kitchen round us, had no roof on when we started cooking. It was lovely, yeah. They should have had them all done before national service started.

Were you cooking for officers as well?

I cooked at Staff College at Queenscliff, in the officer's mess, there was diggers there, but I cooked in the

18:30 officer's mess. It was funny you had all ranks go in there for the majority, lieutenant colonels go in for the next rank up, come from Canada, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, they were all of a different religion weren't they. So we could have sausages, they could be pork sausages, they could be beef sausages, so the waitress would come in and say "one

19:00 Indonesian lunch" or it could be one Indonesian breakfast. "One Indonesian lunch coming up." We'd make a big noise and the old beef sausages would go on the plate with the eggs and bacon. Somebody else would come in, Indian, "one Indian breakfast." One lamb sausages. Oh it was bloody stupid. And it was just the one type of sausage in the tray. They dint' know they ate them. Enjoyed them I think.

19:30 Paddy, Paddy Buckley he was about 18 stone, he was like Friar Tuck, he was the head, he was the only drink man in the officer's mess, he was in charge of the bar. Now the fort at Queenscliff down near Glenelg at the Office at Portsea, had tunnels everywhere, now Paddy had all the grog

20:00 champagne and different wines, he had it all over these tunnels behind doors. He knew where everything was, at the drop of a hat, if they a threw a party in an hour's time, he would go down and he could have all the grog up there for the brigadiers' and whatever. So, he turned 65, so he resigns I say farewell to him. Three weeks later there's a big party coming up,

20:30 some visiting hierarchy, we had to re-hire him as a civilian. They couldn't find nothing. It was hopeless. He was great, he was an identity at Queenscliff. His relations had, they priests and nuns, his relations. You can remember back to when they

21:00 extended the Hume Highway, made dual carriageways coming and going between Melbourne and Sydney. Well his relations of priests and nuns owned half of that land, they made a fortune. I said, "I thought priests and nuns weren't allowed to make money?" He said, "Who told you that?" He was a nice bloke.

21:30 **I was just going to ask you about your weapons training at this time and other elements of your life?**

Weapons training? Well as you know in SAS you go out in 5 member patrol and everybody has got to help each other, you have got to be compatible with your mates.

So you were straight away into the SAS?

No. I was at staff college, not staff college, this is going back 1962, 1961 or

- 22:00 1962, I was at Middlehead at the Intelligence School at Middlehead, the Intelligence mob at Middlehead. And Major Isles who started the SAS, and Roy Weir who would be the best living off the land, eating anything, he was fabulous Roy Weir, he wrote a book about it. He was in the Second World War, he was
- 22:30 in the Malaya campaign and he started, he was the one of the top Sergeants with Major Isles who started the SAS company, we were only 120 of us when SAS was formed. Now I used to go out on the soccer oval every day, every afternoon, because I was playing with Australia at the time, I used to practice every afternoon when I had a spare chance, kicking the soccer ball around juggling, things you do with the soccer and round the
- 23:00 oval for hours. So Major Isles said to me one day, "You are pretty fit how would you like to come to SAS," I said, "I would love it," he said, "All right, leave it to me," a couple of months later I got me letter. So I went over. I was there for two years and I went to Maralinga. On me way through to staff college.
- 23:30 **So when you first got to Australia, you rank was?**
- Private.
- Private? And you were cooking but you must have also had some training and duties when you first arrived?**
- No just cooking. Yeah, just cooking for the national service.
- What did you know about the national service at that time, what did you know about..?**
- Nothing, nothing,
- 24:00 we didn't even know we were going to come over here to cook for national service. It's like you know the carpets and everything else we were getting and they never turned up. I didn't mind, I was quite happy being in the army.
- How long were you there?**
- 19 national service, I was there for 12 months, then I went over to 13 national service, I was only there for in the sergeants mess for a couple of months, and that's when I got transferred to
- 24:30 water transport and I was on the boat for 12 months, I went up to Bulimba workshop in Brisbane.
- So what were you doing on the boat, sorry?**
- Cooking on the boat. There was only 16 of us.
- Water transport for the army.**
- What it used to do was take supplies yeah, to Port Moresby and in those days they didn't have aeroplanes in the 50s. 1952/53. We used to take a company of
- 25:00 Port Moresby the New Guinea Regiment, from Moresby up to Wanamo on the Dutch, New Guinea border, and then we would bring the other company out. And then for the rest of the 6 months we would go round the islands picking up the war scrap, you know old jeeps, old, any old type of metal, anything and bring it back to Brisbane. Any equipment that had broken down. All equipment that had broken down. And we would take up,
- 25:30 drag a harbour, we even took a little tractor up for one of the missions up there, and they had a lakatoi [local canoe], the old outriggers on them, the native canoe, it's got an outrigger on them just like Hawaii. So they had 2 of them, with a raft in the centre of them. And, we dropped the tractor overboard down slow, slow,
- 26:00 slow, right unhook it. Unhooked it, disappeared. The poor old priest is tearing his hair out. Anyway we had a couple of the Pacific island lads, natives that lived on the coast that were very good swimmers, which a lot of them are, they earned their living before they joined the army, they managed to take a rope down and hook it up,
- 26:30 and dragged it out again, and we had to bring it back to Australia. He was not too pleased the old father, he liked his whiskey though. He was a glad lad. Game of cards and whisky.
- So you still had no arms training at this time?**
- No.
- But you were an army man, now you were**
- 27:00 **being paid by the army?**
- Yes, being paid by the army. We used to have rifle practice at Anzac Rifle range, but that was all. Just the old 303s in those days. But when you went to SAS it was a different story, you had to be conversant with all different types of...

Did you have your own 303?

Yeah, you are all issued with your rifles, but they were all locked away in the armoury, unless

27:30 you were going out to do rifle practice, or you were doin', now again we would do a bit of rifle drill on the parade ground. But,

And what was your ship called that you...?

Vass.

Vass.

No, no Vass was the sister ship, Tara.

Tara.

Did you have weapons on Tara?

No, we could have thrown Spanish mackerel at them. We used to trawl up

28:00 we used to anchor every night, it used to take us a week to get to Port Moresby from Bulimba workshop in Brisbane. Every night we would anchor and the boys would fish, and we had a big deep freeze on the back of the boat. We, once we got further up the coast just past Cairns, we would throw a rope over with a butcher's hook on it and we used to catch Spanish mackerel about that big. And we just chopped the head off and hang them over the back of the boat and bleed them, and then put them in the deep, I had a special

28:30 lock in the deep freeze compartment for the fish, it was lovely. We used to eat big cutlets of Spanish mackerel for breakfast every morning. We got on the grog one night at Port Moresby, and we'd been feeding this, we were taking a dog up for the police commissioner at Port Moresby, a beautiful Australian sheep dog and a pup, lovely little thing, and it had the run of the ship. So

29:00 we get to Port Moresby, and we're not allowed to land it, the skipper Norm Stark he forgot to get a bloody permit, we picked it up in Cairns but didn't get a veterinary clearance or anything, so we couldn't land it at Port Moresby, and the old police commissioner is jumping up and down, so he said, "hang on to it and we'll pick it up when you come back in a fortnight." All right, no worries when you bring the other mob back

29:30 down from Wanamo, I'll get the dog then, and I'll have all the paper work sorted out. So we are going up the coast to Wanamo, and we feed this poor dog the old bung rice, you know, the brown rice, half cooked ended up the dog went mad one day and started running round biting people. So they had to shoot it. So, he went in the deep freeze, get back to [Port] Moresby, the police commissioner is

30:00 there, waiting for his pup. So they give him the good news. So he wants an autopsy on why this dog went like that. So fair enough, so we tied up, squared the boat away and we go up to the local hotel in Moresby, come home that night sick as dogs. Next morning I am cooking breakfast, and in walks the bloody vet with this dog and hangs it over the

30:30 sink in me galley and opens it up, I didn't stay in the galley, I said, "hey I am cooking breakfast here," he said, "I am sorry I have got to do this in a hurry." He was removing its entrails, and there was a big knot of rice like that, a big ball of rice in its intestine, no wonder the poor little sod went mad. Lovely, very nice.

So how

31:00 **long were you on the boat for?**

Only 12 months.

And then where did the winds take you?

As I told you, I had trouble with Norm, he wouldn't release me, so we took Major General Secombe up to Moresby at that time, on that trip. He said any problems come and see me, I was just coming into prominence I had played for Queensland and there was South Africa were coming

31:30 out, South China, who was the other one, Austrian Rapids, there were 3 teams the following season, I thought, "Geez I would like to be in that one. Try me." I hadn't played for Australia then, I had just played for Queensland. And I thought, "I want to be in this," so I told Major General Secombe all this and he said, "Right, Clem come and see me when you get back and any problems," and we were

32:00 lucky we used to go up to New Guinea in the cricket season, so I never, that first season I was in Queensland I didn't miss me soccer, played for Queensland, I thought, "Right I am in here." But he came back, old Norm tears up my application for a transfer threw it in the bin. I thought, "Right that's it," went in to barracks, seen the sports officer, told him what was going on, he said, "Right come with me," so he took me up

- 32:30 toddled off, and came back and said, "Right he'll see you," so I went in, he said, "Problems," I said, "Yes sir, he's tore up me application." He said, "All right, be ready at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning, down at Bulimba workshop," he said, "I'll have a vehicle down there to take you out to Wacol." So, I went to do national service at Wacol, ended up playing for Australia. It was great. And mother McCarthy the warrant officer, the caterer, he was a funny fella.
- 33:00 Every WO [Warrant Officer] I ever struck in my army career hated me playing soccer, I don't, mind you I wasn't there half the time, they had to go over and run the kitchen while I was away and didn't like it. He said, "You don't play sport Higgins, do you?" I said, "Yes sir, I do." "What do you play?" I said, "Soccer." He said, "Why, is that why they have sent you here?" I said, "I think so." "We'll see about that." So I had to ring the sports officer up again. He
- 33:30 said, "Oh leave with me I'll fix it up." I said, "I am playing for Australia on Saturday." He said, "I will have a vehicle to bring you in to the Woolloongabba, to the Gabba [Brisbane Cricket Ground]." He said, "Be ready at 8 o'clock you can come in early, come out to barracks and settle down have a cup of coffee and a talk and then I will take you out to the Gabba." He said, "What time do you have to be there?" I said, "I think it's 11 o'clock." The Harlem Globetrotters were the other attraction. So we were all out there, they put a wooden
- 34:00 floor down on the soccer field, and we were all watching, oh it was fabulous and watching them playing basketball, what they could do with a basketball was nobody's business. Yes, so it was great, then back to, after Wacol, back to the Water Transport Depot at Clifton Gardens in Sydney, and took me discharge from there, so I was going to go back to Queensland and play for,
- 34:30 play for me team up there, Thistles of all things. Thistles. I went back up there and I couldn't get a decent job, so after 11 months I said bugger this, so I went back to Sydney and rejoined. I went from there to Adamstown in
- 35:00 yeah I went to Adamstown, to Ramey Workshops, the corporal cook there he had gone to hospital with some problems, so I was only there for a week and the OC [Officer Commanding] said, "How would you like to stay here?" I said, "You got a cook. He's in hospital." He said, "No, we want to get rid of him." He said, "We want you." I said, "I will stay on one condition." He said, "What's that?" "I can play soccer." He said, "No
- 35:30 worries." He said, "Nobody here, they're all cut lunch commandos." They all used to go home at night, and all you had there of a weekend was the guard duty, so he said, "They can look after themselves, they have been doing it now." So he said, "You are off every weekend." I said, "Great." So he contacted the catering corps and they said, "All right." So I went down and signed on. Adamstown Soccer Club was only about 200 yards down the road, I played for them for a season. And
- 36:00 that's when I went over from Adamstown to Perth to join the company, again.

When did you first hear about that, you were going to be joining the company?

Again, they wanted somebody to go to Vietnam with them.

- 36:30 1967/68. So I was, no I am getting ahead of meself here, that's when I went to, the company in the 60s. 1962/63. That's when I first went over.
- 37:00 I am all at sea here, I have lost meself, where did I go, from Adamstown I went where, 3 Battalion,
- 37:30 3 Battalion and when I came back from Vietnam with 3 Battalion 11 months later I, they came over and got me and I went back to Perth and went over with 1 Squadron.

So you joined 3 Battalion at some stage, did you have much time with them before you left?

- 38:00 I had enough time to go to Canungra for 9 weeks. Lovely place. It rained every day. I think they do that on purpose, because you are thing to climb up hills in Canungra. And you are slipping backwards. One up and two back. Hopeless.

Were you having to train quite hard at that point?

I was always fit, I was playing soccer, I was still playing soccer at 46 years of age. And won a medal. With Elizabeth Downs, we won the first division of the Sunday league. Yeah, I was always fit.

- 38:30 It's funny I was smoking like a train, but I was fitter than 18 year old boys. I think it was all me grounding in Malta, swimming, and I never took up smoking, what helped me I never took up smoking until I was 24. And that's when I met a lady in Queensland, on a supply boat. "Have a cigarette Clem," I said, "I don't smoke," she said, "One won't hurt you." So I had to go
- 39:00 out and buy a packet the next morning didn't I. Terrible, that's the control you women have got over us. No, it was a stupid thing to do.

So what was the training with the 3rd Battalion involving at that point, they were ready to send you over...?

Yeah, we went up to Canungra and done patrol you know patrol routines,

- 39:30 co-ordinate search, because with 3 Battalion, which you didn't do with SAS, 3 Battalion we went out done a co-ordinate search, laid off a village, down the Delta and we seen these charlies coming up this night, on one of their boats, they were coming in - they got of the boat, got into the village, we immediately cordoned the village off,
- 40:00 the next morning, we started searching the village, hut by hut, we couldn't find them, they were that clever hiding, they had trap doors and man holes everywhere, and dug out bloody tunnels, and it was amazing, we never even found them. Remember the picture they used to
- 40:30 have where that police officer in Saigon where he had this bloke on his knees, and he shot him in the head. He came to the village, we knew those North Vietnamese soldiers were in there, there was no way they could escape, but they were hiding, but we couldn't find them.
- 41:00 He came and he took, he had them all lined up, separated the men from the boys
- 41:07 End of tape

Tape 3

- 00:38 **Clem you were just talking about the man that was in that famous photograph, and that he had come to your company, did he?**
- VC [Victoria Cross] winner old 'Chuda' Simpson, he was lovely.
- 01:00 His wife was a karate expert or a judo expert from Japan, old Chuda the VC winner. Chuda, he was up in the highlands with the Montagnards, they are the real native Vietnamese soldiers and he was on a fire support base
- 01:30 and some big wig from the American forces went looking for him. And he's roaming round the fire support base and he couldn't find him anywhere. He said, "Where the bloody hell is this bloke Simpson." And this corrugated iron the ground moved and a voice said, "Who's lookin' for me." And this piece of corrugated iron moved, he had dug a hole just big enough for him to get in. Just in case the flack came in,
- 02:00 in case they got attacked in the night because they were up in the nasty end of the place at the time. And he come to 4 Battalion, 4 Battalion were up in the task force headquarters with us but they were in their own perimeter. I had to go down there and sing for them, I used to have a good voice, years ago until the cigarettes got to me. So we went down there into the diggers bar, and was
- 02:30 singing our heads off, and then he came back up the hill with us, and you couldn't wish to meet a nicer bloke, he was fabulous.
- What songs did he ask for?**
- Oh, all sorts, bloody, I liked singing. I'll take you home again Kathleen. All the show songs you know, 'Climb every mountain' all them type of songs. I had a good strong voice. I still sing. Where we are going tomorrow night to the Director of Care, Ruth Higgins, same name and when we
- 03:00 introduce ourselves, when people used to come here, we used to introduce ourselves as husband and wife and she says, "No he's not my husband, I wouldn't marry that bastard." But she, yes she's lovely woman. She's the one I was telling you she came here under false pretences. Wouldn't let her make a decision. She has a rowing machine, a bike all exercise equipment, the old walker,
- 03:30 he brought her down from Brome House, with her 20 residents most of them are still here, with the promise, because she had to close her place, that big, you know Paramount Brown the old scrap yard junk bloke, he owned this 8 storey block next door to Brome House. The girls' school was on the other side, they wanted more accommodation so they got on to Paramount Brown
- 04:00 he just threw he out, he said you've got a fortnight to get out and vacate the premises. She put in a fire alarm system, big panel and everything, air conditioning in all the rooms, he kept the lot, he didn't even pay her back for the fire alarm system in. So, anyway, old Mr Wonderful got track of it, and he went up and said, "Yeah, bring your residents down, and bring all your equipment and stuff."
- 04:30 So she brought her exercise equipment and put it on the back verandah here, and the next day he had Tony and Ivor, the bloody odd job man, we put it all on Tony's truck and took it up to Dr Starr's house, International House, he's got another house he's got up there. No beg your pardons.
- He took her equipment? What did she have to say about that?**
- Nothing, because he give her a job with

05:00 all her residents. He's a nice bloke.

What's his name again?

Starrs. Charming fellow.

Dr Christopher Starrs?

Yeah, he's hopeless. It suits me being here, he leaves me alone. Mind you I used to spend bloody 8 hours a day helping the cook.

We'll just go back a bit in time Clem, because you've got such a varied life, it's hard to keep track of where you

05:30 **were. Can we go back to, you were in Maralinga, in the early 60s?**

Yeah, 1964, I left SAS and I was in Maralinga for the whole of 1964. And I went from Maralinga now did I go to Staff College or did I go across to Balcombe, to the Army Apprentice School. I was over in them two places.

And at Maralinga can you

06:00 **tell me what did you see while you were there?**

Seen all the above ground bomb dispersements, where they exploded the above ground, then we went out and had a look at the holes in the ground where they done the underground, yeah, it's stupid, stupid bloody things. Then we went round the compound and looked at all the equipment at all the aeroplanes, and touching all the tanks and trucks that had been in the actual ground

06:30 zero.

Where were the service people, where would the service people be during the bomb blasts?

They would be standing so far away and then at the last minute, you know after the explosion they would all turn round and look at the explosions and look at the thing that's going up. But a hell of a lot of them were definitely affected.

Did you ever see the blasts?

No, no.

07:00 I was lucky, I got there, and touched all the equipment that was in the blast, but I never actually there when the blasts went off. But after the, after they closed the camp down, we left just before they closed the camp down. They brought two natives in, they found them down one of the holes playing with the nice shiny pebbles.

07:30 So they brought them and done a, put them through the old meter and they were bloody buzzing. So they just give them a nice shower, give them a nice sack of food and Commonwealth fella took them out hundreds of miles and left them there, they would probably be dead in a fortnight. But Abos [Aboriginal people] are different to white people, if they're crook they'll sit down and just die. They don't worry about it.

08:00 Yeah, it was a shame.

What stories did you hear from the service people that were up there while you were there?

They used to change them, they would be the same as me, they used to change them every 12 months. You know they used to bring out a new mob of engineers. The engineers from England, the engineer regiment, they used to go round the fences and bring them in.

08:30 move the fences so many meters, down the West Australian coast, then the NSW, Victoria and they just keep closing them in, until eventually they ended up with that 14 foot of concrete over the blast hole where they buried everything. And that's all they done.

What other service people were up there?

Well, I captained the British navy soccer team up there, there was me and

09:00 14 Royal Navy chaps up there, they were in charge of the power station, they used to work the desalinisation plant for fresh water. And, steam, the steam boilers for all the cooking vessels up in the galleys. Air force, they used to look after the aerodrome,

09:30 and what did we have, we had a couple of small platoons that worked in with the British Engineers. The navy and that was it.

What were the navy doing in the middle of a desert?

They definitely weren't rowing were they? No, they looked after the power station. They were good. Jock, I forget his name, Scots [Scottish] lad,

- 10:00 he was in the Australian Army Catering Corps, two racing pigeons flew in, no everybody had a hobby up there. I had a beautiful golden Labrador bloody dingo cross and he was magnificent. And when I got of the train at Watson, on the Trans Continental Line, I got off at Watson
- 10:30 Police Station there, and there was all these beautiful little pups running around, I was just going to join Maralinga, and I said to the copper [policeman], "Can I have one of them?" and he said, "Yeah, help yourself." So I grabbed Goldie as I called him, picked him up, the driver come down to pick me up Maralinga was about 3 mile down the track, so I arrive with Goldie, and everybody in the camp had a hobby of
- 11:00 some description. So old Jock has got this little cage out there and he's got these two racing pigeons, and he used to let them out and fly. They stuck round the place, once they got used him and he used to feed them, and he let them out and they would go for a fly, and they used to go and roost in the power station. And evil Evans, what a name, he was one of my
- 11:30 pals in the Royal Navy, a funny lad, but a good soccer player. Every Tuesday night we used to have bingo in the diggers Mess, in the Corporals Mess, and the diggers Mess we used to have bingo every Tuesday night and everybody used to turn up with something. Now we used to always have pies and pasties, we made fresh pies and pasties every day and they were there for them to help themselves in the hot press.
- 12:00 And we would always make sandwiches and the lads would always pick up whatever they wanted to take to bingo that night, evil turns up with this beautiful pie. He come up to the bakery and got some pastry and I said, "What do you want that for," he said, "Don't worry about just give me some rough pastry." He turns up with this pie, so half time in bingo we stop, cup of coffee or a drink or whatever and
- 12:30 eat what you like and then we carried on with bingo again. So, evil cuts the pie up, "Want a bit Clem?" "No thanks I am all right." I said, "I have had a couple of sandwiches." Jock's sitting at the table, "Want a piece of pie Jock," "Oh yeah I wouldn't mind, oh that's lovely, what is it," he said, "Pigeon." "Whaaat?"

And that's why he was called evil?

Oh, he was a

- 13:00 swine. Goldie used to go, and I said Goldie's got a lovely coat on him, and evil said, "Yeah I was opening the fridge over there when I was on night duty, and an egg fell out the door and Goldie happened to be there and he lapped it up, he has one every night," he comes over he said and nudges the bloody door of the fridge and "I have gotta give him an egg when I am on night duty." Fair enough, but he was lovely.

What were the conditions like up there?

Conditions were beautiful, we had

- 13:30 a swimming pool, we had a swimming competition. We had a cricket oval, lovely cricket oval. Task Force Commander, came to Vietnam, Brigadier Henderson. So the boss in SAS at the time, him and I didn't see eye to eye, Major Tieg and he was called Trade Tieg . When he was at Portsea, he
- 14:00 used to be an instructor on patrols and all that, and he said to these chaps, young lieutenants that were just going through the school, he said, "Right, I want you all at such and such a place in your camouflage gear." Now these lads had just joined. "I want yas all with your camouflage gear on." And one of the young lieutenants said, "Excuse me sir I haven't got any camouflage gear," and he said, "Oh, come up to my room and
- 14:30 I will fix you up." So he was selling them camouflage gear. That's how he got the name Trade. Well, we had been in the country for a while and the Task Force Command has changed hands, so it is Brigadier Henderson. So when we were playing cricket up there, he used to be wicket-keeper at Maralinga, and he was only a colonel then, and I used to be the fast bowler, and
- 15:00 I bowled one a bit wide this day and he dived and broke one of his fingers. Never forgave me. "You rotten swine you done that on purpose." No I wouldn't do that. He used to drink in the digger's mess at Maralinga, he would knock on the door and ask permission to come in. He was a gentleman, he was great.

So you were up in the middle of the desert but you had quite luxurious conditions?

The living quarters

- 15:30 after the war, oh well after the war, they started to grow peanuts in South Africa. Now these billets cabins, were made of aluminium, fly proofed, they were beautiful. Two men rooms, you would walk in the door and there was a partition down the middle of the room, you were on one side and you had your privacy and your mate was on the other
- 16:00 side. At the end of the building, there was about 8 units, and at the end there were communal showers, hot and cold showers, hand basins and the lot. The buildings were all made out of aluminium. They were portable, and so the peanut thingo, it was made in Sweden, the peanut thing fell on its backside,

16:30 so Maralinga got, or the Australian government got this for next to nothing and put them up in Maralinga, and they were beautiful.

So when you were there were there any bomb tests take place?

No, no. When I was there it was just for clean up.

You were in the clean up?

The clean up yeah. They were starting to clean up. They were for 2 or 3 years after me, because the ground was rotten with plutonium, as well as

17:00 the other stuff.

What were they doing with the soil?

They were just digging it and turning it over, and what plutonium they find, that's what they were putting under the concrete. 14 foot of solid concrete, and it was a hell of a, it would be a lot wider than this room, in coverage.

And were there any British scientists up there when you were up there?

We had a symposium once when I was there, and they flew in fresh oysters

17:30 from Hawkesbury, 100 dozen oysters in a Hercules, barramundi from the NT, crayfish that big for this symposium, they came from all over. I made custard in a, you know the old milk cans, 10 gallons of custard. For the trifles, when it was cool and after I set trifles in the trays, and decorated them

18:00 all up with piping bag later on after the custard had set. Yeah, 10 gallon of custard in a big milk can. But it was good because we had a steam stick up, we had steam sticks on rubber tubes, with a steel tube, stick it in the milk can and just let it boil away and just adding your custard you had knocked down with a bit of milk. Yeah, 10 gallon custard and just let it cool down and add it to the trifle. And the

18:30 diggers of a Saturday, the cold larder was outside the serving point, and all the cold stuff was there and you never served lunch on a Saturday in the kitchen, in the dining room, they used to just come over, because they even had one of the chaps, that Gordon I was telling you about he was the bookie, and he was even licensed by Colonel Henderson, because 10% of his profits

19:00 went to Legacy, so he give him permission to run a book. So Saturday they were all in the diggers mess, having a pie, pastie, sandwiches, crayfish whatever they wanted. Magnificent. Cold sausage rolls.

And how did you cope with the heat up there?

It was good, it never worried you. Never worried, it was a dry heat, it was good. We drover over, we had a Land Rover, oh, we went to Coober Pedy for 5 days

19:30 we took this flight lieutenant in the Australian air force, he went over to Coober Pedy talked to a bloke called Rudy and Rudy had an old miner friend with him, and Rudy and his wife, lived had a mattress in the back of the old Holden station wagon, and they slept in the back there, and all day they were fossicking around, and they had a little dugout in the side of a hill, and their offsider, he was

20:00 of British nationality, I don't know whether he was Scots, Irish or whatever he was, he was a nice bloke, but he and a little room dug in the side where he lived. So when we went over, 5 of us, 5 trucks and there, we took quite a few of the English navy blokes and the air force blokes with us and they reckoned it was great. So Rudy let us go down his old pits, his old

20:30 mine shafts he had dug and let us fossick around in there. We had a great time, 5 nights we were there, and the first night we were there, round the camp fire having a drink, telling lies to each other, we hear this terrible noise, I said to Rudy, "What's that bloody awful noise" and he said, "It's a Holden utility," I said, "You gotta be jokin'," he said, "No, it'll be here shortly." And round the corner it come,

21:00 it was a Holden station wagon and there was about 40 Abos in the back of it. No tyres on the bloody rims. I said, "What do they do?" and he said, "They are earning more money fossicking around these and I am down a hole digging," he said, "They, every rock or stone they pick up and break it open," he said, "They find an opal and they just take it up to the store in the little village."

21:30 So the last morning we were there, got cleaned up and put on our uniforms we went up to the local, the one hotel at the time, for a drink before we set off back for Maralinga, and the ladies of the night, their eyes open up, "Hello boys how long are you here." We said, "We are going, we been, you rotten swines."

What kind of, what nationalities were those women?

22:00 All kinds, but there was no Vietnamese there at that time. We weren't at war with them were we. There was all kinds, new Australians, Australians.

Aboriginal women?

No, I never seen one. They were bitterly disappointed. There was plenty of ladies in the back of the

utility going round

22:30 fossicking. They had a name 'noodling' I think it was called around the top of all these mine shafts. Yeah, they were making a great living. It's amazing.

Not enough to put tyres on though?

Yeah. It sounded like 14 tanks coming round the corner, this one little bloody Holden bloody utility, and there they were hanging off the back of it.

And back at Maralinga Clem, did you ever have to take

23:00 **any special precautions for living in that or working in that area, were you ever tested, was your health ever tested?**

No. No.

Did you hear any stories of whether it was or was not a dangerous place to be?

No, nobody seemed to talk about it, you just got on like you were at Wacol, you were at Perth, Swanbourne you know, up in Sydney, it's just like a posting, you never worried about it and when they

23:30 told me I was going to Maralinga, it never entered my head I was going to a dangerous bloody atomic blast area. You never worried.

You didn't know.

No. Well ignorance is bliss.

How big were the holes you saw in the ground?

Quite big, quite big. They were down there fossicking around, yeah, ground blasts. You see most of them were air blasts.

24:00 Had them on the tower. I am not sure, I think they might have dropped one out of a plane once and it exploded so far down before it reached the ground. Well they cleared that camp, they dug great big dozer pits, and all the equipment anything that was used up there was buried, and really buried, so as nobody could get to it.

24:30 **And what kind of clothing were the people wearing who had to do the gathering of the material and the people did they have any protective clothing?**

Well, I am not sure, I was that busy in the kitchen, or I would be up in the swimming pool with Goldie. I was up in the swimming pool with Goldie one night, and this voice said, "Watch out the camp doctor don't find you in there with that dog." I said he's a friend of mine, swimming along with Goldie, he was over in the back of the

25:00 pool and here's the bloody camp doctor. He said, "Shouldn't be in there Clem," "All right sir, I'll get him out now." He said, "Don't worry about it I am going away."

I would have thought a dog in a pool was the least of your worries up there.

Up there, yeah. He was a beautiful dog old Goldie, I used to have him under the table in the bakery and the commonwealth copper would be going round doing his rounds, "Haven't got that bloody dog in there have you." Not me.

25:30 **So after the clean up at Maralinga, where did you go then?**

Maralinga, no I either went to Staff College or Mornington to the Apprentices School. I have got that wrong haven't I,

One or the other.

One or the other. Hang on, I think I went to Mornington, because I was going to take Goldie. No Mornington Peninsular,

26:00 is a sheep place, yeah, the Army Apprentices School, and I wrote to the CO and I asked him if I could bring Goldie, and he said, "No mate." I told him what type and he said, "No not on your life, I am very sorry, but no dog."

So it was an apprentice school?

Now that apprentice school is combined with the army and the navy up at, is it Cowra or Nowra, it's all combined.

26:30 That's closed now.

So what were you going to specifically be learning at that place?

Where? Balcombe. I was just cooking there, cooking for the apprentices, and I used to coach the

apprentices soccer up in the gym. So cooking and soccer... Has sort of controlled my life.

27:00 Which I don't think is a bad thing really.

So tell us the story of how you had worked with the SAS, how did you first become involved with the SAS, why didn't you stay where you were?

Well the catering corps is funny, they do funny things, like when I was in SAS the

27:30 second time, after coming back from Vietnam, they were having problems up at the School of Survey Military, at Bandiana, Albury. They were up there. Now I couldn't understand this because the catering corps had a catering school just across the road from the School of Military Survey, but they sent me up there as a sergeant

28:00 to straighten the place out for God's sake. That's when I came back from Vietnam with the SAS, I said the Colonel McFarlane, "Why would I have to go up there?" "Well, it appears they want you up there." So, I was thinking of getting out anyhow, because Christopher and Catriona were just about ready to, Christopher was just about ready to start school, so 4 or 5 months

28:30 later I resigned from the army. But I have coached Albury up there for a few months. Albury soccer team. Then I got out. We went down to Melbourne, I left my wife and the two kids at the airport and there was a Land Rover, or car of some

29:00 description to take me to Royal Park to sign off. Major Bird at the time, he was in charge of movements, anywhere you like in the Australian Army, and he had a magnificent memory, he knew where everybody was. So I went in to say goodbye to him. And, because that was my last inter services soccer season

29:30 with the Victorian army soccer team and we won the competition at the naval depot. On the other side of the peninsular. And I tore my leg, tore that muscle there, still got a hole in it. And the chief petty officer of the navy up at the hospital, his name was Higginson

30:00 and we had played against each other when he was at Middle Head, at the submarine depot up there, and we played against each other, and we got to know each other quite well in our travels in the forces, so I went up. I tore that muscle about a fortnight before the Inter Services Competition started at the naval depot, so you went in for 4 days. So I went in, when we arrived there,

30:30 I went up to see him, and he said, "What's wrong with you?" I said, "Look I have torn this muscle in me leg and I have got to play," he said, "That's good, I don't think I can do anything for you." I said, "Come on don't be a rotten sod." He said, "Oh all right," so he strapped me leg that way, "When are you playing?" "Our first game is in a couple of days," such and such a time before lunch and "I'll strap your leg," so he did, he strapped me leg this way and that way.

31:00 He had it going all the ways. I got on the field, it was like I hadn't done any damage to me leg. And the team we were playing was the navy team and we beat them. He never forgave me. I said, "Well you done the right thing by me." He said, "Yeah, but you didn't do the right thing by me." I said, "All right let's go over to the pub." Now their goal keeper he played for one of the civilian teams in Melbourne

31:30 during a Saturday on the weekend, and he was very temperamental, and I used to coach the Mornington side, so we played him. And I had shoved him in the back of the net a couple of times, and he used to do his block and forget about where the ball was and he would be looking over his shoulder. So I said to the Centre Forward on the day we played, "Now this bloke," I said, "Hit him, and we've won the game," I said, "He's a good goalkeeper, but he's got one bad habit, very temperamental,

32:00 but he's a good goal keeper. Just give him a nudge, a good shoulder charge a couple of times," which you are not allowed to do, I said, "You'll get a yellow card but don't worry about it." He nudged him all right, nearly put him through the back of the net. We won the game. He went right off his game. He was looking over his shoulder, he was waiting for somebody to hit him again. He come up to us when we were having our drinks at the end of the competition and he said, "You rotten

32:30 swine," he said, "What are you talking about, I wouldn't do that I am too much of a sportsman." The chief petty officer, "You did didn't ya, you swine, you told him to rough him up." I said, "He never roughed him up he only hit him once." He said, "Yeah, and that was enough wasn't it."

So you managed to play soccer in almost place you went to?

Yeah, even New Guinea. Now, I forgot to tell you about that. 1 Squadron. we are up in

33:00 Vietnam, we are up getting our warm up 9 weeks in Lae in New Guinea for Vietnam, so they sent us up there to get used to the heat and humidity. So, old Tieg says, "Right" he said, "We are going up to Bulolo to the gold fields, next weekend you have got to pick a rugby team and a soccer team." I said, "How in hell can I do that."

33:30 He said, "You have got your soccer team, and most of the lads play rugby down at the unit," which they did, most of they would play anything. Played sport of a Wednesday afternoon. So I said, "All right," so I picked a team, going up in Land Rovers, and going up them hills, where that gold mine is in Bulolo where the gold fields are, you are going round mountains like that,

- 34:00 and you get to the top and you look down like that, it was like the mountains were round a crater of a volcano, but it wasn't, it was just the way it occurred. But going up, Father Jackson the signal sergeant, Jacko, him and I were in the athletic team, he could run like a hairy goat. But Jacko, jumped out of aeroplanes, mad as a cut snake, hated heights. Laid
- 34:30 in the bottom of the Land Rover, wouldn't sit up like everybody else, laid down, mind you when you looked down that side of it, it was 3 or 400 yards down there and it was terrible, but you would be coming round the corner and there would be a truck there, now you had to reverse and there would be holes cut in the side of the mountain where you, whoever people coming down had the right of way, so you had to reverse out get in the
- 35:00 cutting and the truck would go past and you would start again. Well we got there we beat them at rugby and we beat them at soccer, but what a fabulous weekend.

Who were you beating?

The Miners. The Miners and all the Police, they had a mob of New Guinea police keeping control around the mines because of looting and all things.

So who were the miners;

- 35:30 **were they locals or were they?**

Yeah, they were all natives, New Guinea natives. So they had to have the police there, because they are like Abos, two drinks and they go mad. And they think nothing of hitting each other with their native tomahawks.

I would have been a bit worried to have won against them.

Well I played fullback in me soccer team and then I played fullback in me rugby team. Because

- 36:00 all the fullback does mainly is kick the ball, and I had no. 1 on me back in the soccer and no. 1 in rugby and all the natives, "Oh No. 1." All shouting out, because I was getting rid of that ball rather quickly, because they would have cut you in half when they come running at you, they were mad. Good rugby players.

Big men?

Oh yes, strapping big men and a big, some of them

- 36:30 I had a bloke on the bus old 'Cuss Cuss', he was a cannibal, and he had a choice of joining the Pacific Island Regiment, the New Guinea Regiment or going to jail for 20 years. So that was in the 50s, so they were sort of clearing it all out then.

Was the cannibalism, was that do with war?

No, just villages, the women are called

- 37:00 'Mary's' right. So one village is a bit short of a couple of ladies for blokes to marry, so they would go and raid another village. And pinch a couple of the girls and bring them back, and they would have a marriage ceremony, and you would think that was all over, but no, where those girls disappeared from would get a raiding party together and raid that village. Oh, yeah they were mad.

And cannibalise the...?

- 37:30 Oh yes, and whatever was killed they'd eat them. Then take them back to their village, grab a couple and cut them up and take them back and have a ceremony, and have a nice feed. They used to call it 'long pig'. They reckon the human being tasted like a pig. Oh no. One Kai Kai long pig, me like. Get lost. I was feeling a bit seedy and old Cuss Cuss,
- 38:00 we pulled into Madang, now it's a small world. Pulled into Madang, and there's an old jeep down on the wharf and there's a bloke sitting in it, so we tied up, got ready and Norm Stark said, "There's your taxi up to the pub lads." I said, "Where?" He said, "Well that's the owner of the hotel." Well he looked like a right dero [derelict/vagrant]. Well we go over and introduce
- 38:30 ourselves. "Hop in lads." I said, "Where are you from?" He said, "Liverpool." I said, "When were you in Liverpool last?" He said, "1930 something." I don't know if you remember outside Madang there is a little island, it is only about 1 mile off shore, and it had a full coconut plantation. He gave it to his daughter for a wedding present. So we go up to the hotel, the booze is free and the food is
- 39:00 free, and I said, "Are you married?" And that's when he told me about his daughter getting married. His wife had just gone down to the mainland with his daughter. Seeing her off, so she went with her to do a bit of shopping. He said, "She will be back this weekend." The next minute, we are having a nice dinner and a few drinks and laughing our heads off and one of the natives run in and, "Missus come quick,
- 39:30 she come." I said, "What's that all about?" He said, "Me wife's just landed on the bloody plane." And there was blokes going out the window. I said, "What's wrong?" He said, "You haven't met my wife yet. You are one of the new ones." She come in about 18 stone and he was a skinny little bloke. But it was

good.

So he was from Liverpool, was his wife from Liverpool as well?

Yeah, and they had come out to the middle of nowhere, but they had this beautiful hotel at Madang and he built a golf course through the coconut plantation, oh he was worth a fortune. I said, "Why don't you give it away and go back to England?" He said, "I like the lifestyle here." Yes it was great

Tape 4

00:44 **So Clem you went to Woodside to train with the 3rd RAR, what year was that?**

1968.

Do you remember what your training was like?

We went

01:00 up to Canungra for 9 weeks. I had already done 9 weeks at Canungra, so I get back to army apprentices school, and they say, "Congratulations Clem, you are going to Vietnam, but you have to go and join 3 Battalion." And I was real pleased about that. Go to 3 Battalion and the RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] said, "You are going up to Canungra tomorrow." So I went back up there for 9, I said, "I have just come

01:30 from there." "You are going for another 9 weeks, you have to work with B Company, the company you are going with." So I said fair enough, so who do I meet up there but me old mate Barry Young, from SAS. Everywhere we went we ran into him, we were great pals. So we done 9 weeks, come back, hung round for a while and went off to Vietnam.

Do you remember what you took to Vietnam, other than army stuff, did you have any personal things?

No, nothing. Just army gear. We

02:00 went up in the advanced party, and the plane stopped in Singapore, and we had to look like we weren't soldiers, so we all had khaki polyester trousers on, spit polished shoes and a white shirt and short hair, so we stopped there while we refuelled the plane before we went on to Saigon. So we were standing in the bar

02:30 having a few drinks, and a cigarette, trying not to look like soldiers, which was a bit stupid. And two lads stayed on the plane and looked after the rifles. Ammunition on board and off we went.

Was that a civilian plane?

Yes. Qantas.

What were your first impressions of Vietnam?

The first time, well we landed at

03:00 Saigon and we were hanging round Saigon waiting for helicopters to take us to the SAS hill outside task force headquarters. We were just hanging lying, on the tarmac and from there straight out to our unit, and we worked for a fortnight before the picking up what was going on from the unit that was going home. So we didn't see much of Vietnam for the first couple of

03:30 weeks.

What were they telling you the lads who were going home?

Not much. Just telling us stuff that we have been trained to do with SAS, like 5 man patrol, and what the countryside was like. We went up in the advanced party again, and we landed at

04:00 Saigon and came down the main highway. Yeah, we didn't, we didn't see much there either. We came in through Vung Tau you know the, which was classed as the Australian holiday resort, which it wasn't really because you were still getting fired on, and in between Vung Tau and

04:30 Nui Dat was a town called Baria, a fortnight after we arrived with 3 Battalion, B company, my company we were the standby company so Baria got attacked in the Tet offensive, so we had to zoom in there and give them a hand, and that's when we lost our first casualties. Lieutenant Robinson, he was going to get married in Singas, [Singapore] his girl was coming up, when we got our first R&R [Rest and Recreation] break, and

05:00 Youngie and I were going to go to officiate at his wedding, and the poor bugger was killed a fortnight or so after we got into the country.

So when you were in country, how long before the Tet offensive started?

Tet offensive started 5 or 6 weeks.

And prior to that you had been spending your time

Cooking.

Cooking?

But whenever anything happened I always went out with Youngie's platoon, because had a I

05:30 standing thingie with Youngie and myself, if his platoon went anywhere I would go with him.

Was that by choice from you?

Yes, because him and I were good mates. We were walking down the road when we were going into Baria, and we had an American film crew with us, and a shot rang out and they threw themselves into the rice paddy full of dirty filthy water, and we are still walking down the road laughing.

06:00 And they came up and said, "Didn't you hear that?" And Youngie said, "Well once you have heard it you are all right, it's the ones you don't hear that get you." By the time the bullet travels up and hits you and then you hear the bullet, the noise travels up. And I meant to ask them, because they filmed us all the way through the platoon, Youngie's platoon, and we were deployed in the paddy field and across the road, and we went right in. But that shot just came from a little house

06:30 down on the right hand side, and whoever was there when we got there had long gone. And that's when we went round through Baria we were doing a cordoned search of this village and that's when Lieutenant Robinson, and we lost a couple of signallers with their radios on their backs, they got killed yeah, we lost 3 or 4 blokes in that first contact.

Do you know how they were lost was it mines,

They were shot.

no shot?

Yeah,

07:00 Shot.

Did you use your weapon during that first contact?

No, by the time we got to where the action had happened it was all over, so all we could do was a cordoned search after that. They had gone, as I told you before they disappear into the thin air. Then we done a cordon

07:30 on the long high hills, there was a hospital camp there, dug into the mountain on the high hills, so we had the American and Australian navy on the sea side during the cut off, and we were putting the support bases in, cutting out anybody trying to sneak away, and the helicopters were going up and down, all day long with the Vietnamese interpreter,

08:00 and the loudspeakers, telling them to come out of the hospital, and only one person came out, so the Americans came in with the B42 bombers from Guam and just went up and down the long high hills and made them small high hills. And then while we were in there with the fire support base,

08:30 Youngie and his platoon, we went out and put an ambush position in, because the cheeky buggers came out and pinched the detonators out of our mines we put outside our perimeter wire. So they found out where they were coming of a night, so we put an ambush position in there, and three blokes moved in to the, 3 Charlies moved into the ambush position, we called for some light so they set up some flares

09:00 from back at fire support base and all hell broke loose. And all that was left when we were finished when was finished because we had two M60s with us Claymore mines and we all had our weapons, M16s and the rocket launchers underneath the M16s. And bloody, all we found of them 3 chaps was their Ho Chi Minh sandals, you know, the old sandals made out of rubber tyres. And that's

09:30 but once the lights went out we just stayed there till morning. You don't move in the dark. So when first light came we moved over to where the ambush was initiated and there was nothing, just flesh and blood hanging off the trees and everything, just blew them to smithereens. So we moved back to the fire support base.

Who's hospital had that been?

It was North Vietnamese staging

10:00 hospital, and it was built into the side of the mountain. Because the mountains over there are like, what would you say, like compressed sea shells, because we built ourselves a little hootchie to get in of a night time, and it only took us, it would be half the size of this room, the roof would be about that high, and we got some poles from an old temple that had been bombed and so we got all the temple for the roof.

- 10:30 We just cut steps, it only took us 8 hours to build this whole place, down under the ground, we had air vents in the little, air vents round the wall in the roof, and we could eat down there, sleep down there and you could have lights down there. So that was where the lads slept of a night. And the radio shack was in there as well for communication. And we were all down there one night, just before last light, and bang, bang, bang. So we all grab our weapons and run up
- 11:00 and we ran up towards the noise and it's old Gazza Martin, poor bugger's dead now, he died horribly with cancer, the poor sod. "What the hell's going on?" He'd seen a snake, he'd had his own little trench dug, and he'd seen a snake in there, so he shot hell out of it. The only thing he killed was his blow up mattress.
- 11:30 He felt a bit foolish for a while old Gazza, so he come over and slept with us in the big place. And he had a lovely wife old Gazza, and two kids. When I was at Woodside, I was playing soccer on the Sunday, for Elizabeth Downs, but I volunteered to cook, they had a camp going for the kids, down at 'Cuddly Creek' or somewhere where some Lutheran mission
- 12:00 had a camp, so I said I would go and cook for them on the weekend. So I cooked lunch on the Sunday, and they whipped me down to Elizabeth to play me soccer match and brought me back in time to cook tea. And I got to know his wife and his two little kids who were beautiful. Then he moved up to Cairns, no Charters Towers and became the Lord Mayor, when he got out of the army, he become the Lord Mayor, I could not believe it. Lord Mayor of Charters
- 12:30 Towers, and his marriage folded up and he ended up marrying a Malaysian or Filipino girl and he had a nursery down in the Hunter Valley somewhere the other side of Newcastle. And Vince that old army mate of mind who comes down every second Tuesday, he knew Gary very well, because I think Gary was in Korea as well. And Vince knew him very
- 13:00 well. And he was tell me that the poor bugger had died, died very badly with cancer the poor sod. They all seem to die very badly don't they, and I am still here.

Do you remember other action and contacts you saw in your first tour?

Well, there's, I was just reading me book, trying to remember the name of the lad Quigley, he had another good, 19 year old serviceman,

- 13:30 fabulous Aussie rules player, was going back to Tasmania, and the Melbourne clubs were chasing him, he was always getting letters from overseas, they were always wanting to sign him on all these clubs offering him all sorts. The last duty we performed before we come home, the next morning, the relief battalion came in and took over from us, and we just packed everything up to get ready, we were leaving on the
- 14:00 aircraft carrier, a fortnight later. Quigley went out to a listening post outside the wire, just outside B company lines, and we had a CMF [Citizens' Military Force] lieutenant came over as an observer, so there was Quigley and the rest of the 3 or 4 blokes in the listening post, and the listening post was just this side, it was between us and the plantation. So half way through the night, from what we can
- 14:30 gather, somebody heard a noise. So the lieutenant was supposedly said to Quigley, "I wonder what that noise is." So Quigley like a fool, the poor little sod, stood up. Bang, one shot and he was dead. Fortnight later he would have been on his way home to fame and glory, the poor little bugger. Just through
- 15:00 one stupid mistake. Hopeless.

How did that first tour affect you?

Pardon.

How did that first tour affect you?

Well it didn't worry me going back the second time. Mind you in my estimation I was going back with better trained blokes around me. Because no national servicemen in the

- 15:30 SAS at the time, because they had to do a 9 month 'cadre' course and but they were all tied up with national service.

Did you think the national service people were a bit inferior as soldiers?

Not inferior, just not well trained enough. Because there was all the real instructors were in the regular army, and they were all tied up with the battalions overseas. If you were a good instructor they

- 16:00 were overseas in Vietnam with their companies in different battalions. Just not enough good instructors to go around for what was needed. But it's a shame really. Don't get me wrong, most of the national servicemen handled themselves very well, for what they had they were very good. Yeah. None of them appeared to be frightened when we were
- 16:30 out on operations, never ever. Even that night at Coral when it started, they all stuck to their guns and done a good job. Youngie was at Balmoral and I was at Coral. And he was probably worrying how I was going and I was worrying how he was going.

And this was on your first tour?

That was with 3 Battalion, yeah. So,

- 17:00 yeah and they reckon it was very hairy up their at Balmoral, so, we had, it was that bad the Yanks [Americans] came in with their gun ships and they put, fired round our wire and it was just like rain coming down, as you know every third round is a tracer bullet, and it did it just looked like rain, and they were going round like that. And they were perfect,
- 17:30 they just went right, the bullets, if you could count them they all went into the same holes as they came round again. They never came inside the wire and they never deviated away from the wire, they just kept Charlie away. And we had a heavy artillery group of Yanks there as well, and they let fly and their guns used to go off and they had a secondary charge, and they would go out about 200 yards
- 18:00 and then the second charge would go off and it was like a blinding flash, and it used to spread out like that, and it was full of, imagine little hacksaws cut up into little pieces like that, and they were all welded together, so no matter where they are, travelling through the air there is always that serrated edge, and we went out the next morning and they pinned to trees, they were lying on the ground with their hands and arms stuck to their weapons. It was amazing.
- 18:30 Frightening really, I was glad the Yanks were on our side.

Did you take prisoners?

We had one lad, there was prisoners taken, but we had one lad in, Major Cohen ex-SAS, he was the adjutant at the time in Coral. There was this one North Vietnamese, he had one arm shot off,

- 19:00 one leg gone and he was down this shell crater and he wouldn't come out. He had a grenade in his hand and he had an AK47 or one of those weapons lying across himself, and he would not come out and he was bleeding to death. And he wouldn't come out, and we said, "Come out, come out," but he wouldn't. And we always had, we had South Vietnamese rangers with us as interpreters. And they were trying to get him out.
- 19:30 In the end they just dropped a tank over and dropped the barrel and pointed it at him, and he decided then he would put the gun away and the grenade away, and they went down and brought him out. And there's a picture of him in the 3 Battalion book I have got, Major Cohen and this other bloke fixing him up. And I believe he is still alive today. They whipped him off to Saigon in a chopper. And he was in a hell, but he did. They were very resolute. They
- 20:00 were a good soldier. But we had air support which they didn't have.

How did you feel about the enemy at the time?

Well, I didn't hate them. Didn't like them, but I didn't hate them. Just a matter of survival isn't it. You never really think much about it. I don't know never hated them.

- 20:30 Just didn't think much about it.

And what happened to the dead after that day, did the Vietnamese come and pick them up themselves or...?

What they do is they tie a loop around one of the legs right, what is it, bloody like some type of vine and they have made it into a figure 8, one goes round the ankle and there's a loop hanging off to the side. And

- 21:00 as they retire from the action, they have had a contact, they are getting shot up, so they decide to retire. If they are running past and they see one of theirs lying on the ground, now their religious belief was that if they died with a face down, they go to hell, they wouldn't go to heaven, they had to die on their back. So, they would drag them, and you would come across them afterward, they would be
- 21:30 lying dead in the bush. As you followed through, doing a clearance and chasing them, you would find they had died but they were lying with their face upwards. And if you ever come across a body that had been there 3 or 4 days, even if he was lying with his face upwards, you blew him up, you never touched him because they'd be booby trapped. So, it was a funny old war.
- 22:00 **Was it hard to take the, the human casualty side of things?**

You used to get upset, because, even the young Nashos, you got attached to some of them, they comedians, they were real good lads, and some of them were smart. One of my cooks, we used to call him Casper the friendly ghost, he was about 6'2", George. "What are you doing

- 22:30 George? When are you taking your R&R?" He said, "I am going home to see Mummy." He was a high school teacher at 19 years of age for God's sake, and they whipped him into the national service. Now George goes home, where do you think he spent his 5 days R&R, up on the lookout on Sydney Harbour Bridge. "Every day George?" "Yes." "What did you get out of that?"

23:00 Haven't you got a girlfriend?" "No I am too busy being a teacher." Oh fair enough. Now George would wait until about 9 o'clock at night to have a shower. He was a bit shy to shower with the rest of the lads in the shower block. And you see him whipping across to the shower block from his tent. That's why they christened him the friendly ghost. You couldn't wish to meet a nicer lad, but he wanted to go home to his Mum and spend his 5 days, which I think was

23:30 fair enough.

Did he survive the war?

Pardon.

Did he survive the war?

Yeah, George survived. All my cooks survived. Whenever, and I am not blowing my bugle, because I used to like to go out on operations, and whenever they, Gazza would say, "I need a cook Clem," "Right here I am." And he left it at that, off I would go, he would say so and so is going out,

24:00 and off I would go, go with them. I never give it a thought.

Did you feel invincible, did you think you would die?

No, no I didn't, no. I was, anybody said he was never frightened in war was an idiot. No, I was on me toes and bloody listening, the slightest

24:30 noise. Nobody wants to die, nobody in their right senses anyway. It was funny, it was that situation between Youngie and I, we just seemed happy with each other's company when we were out on operations, We knew with our SAS training, even with 3 Battalion, when we were with 3 Battalion, with our SAS training, we were a little bit more prepared and we could rely on each other.

25:00 Which is good. But the young national service kids, they were bloody marvellous they were fabulous. Yeah. They couldn't be faulted.

Did you have R&R or R&C [Rest in Country] while you were there?

I had R&R and I went to Taiwan and played the pokies. The whole 5 days I was there.

Things haven't changed.

Things haven't changed one little bit, no. I won

25:30 \$900 at Jack's Bar at Salisbury, and I said, I rang me daughter up and I said, "Bring the kids down, pop's won this money, so I am shouting tea." So down they came, me daughter, her husband and the 3 grand kids. We ordered off the big flash menu, the prawns, the crayfish, the lot. Top shelf I had a scotch and dry. Never even had a drink out of it. David had a beer, Catriona had a coke and the kids had a

26:00 coke. And I looked across the Keno [gambling game played in pubs and clubs] and I said to me daughter, "What's wrong with that Keno, it looks very blurred?" She said, "You look bloody awful." I said, "Take me home. I don't feel too good." She said, "You are going to hospital," and that's when she took me to the Lyle McEwan [Hospital]. I was there overnight, next morning the ran me into the Queen Elizabeth [Hospital]. So I was there 5 days. I didn't have a real bad heart attack, but I had a warning. Give up smoking, bloody eat

26:30 properly, get back on your exercise, and I did. It's has left me with a bit of angina, the old smoking, but otherwise I feel great.

Did you enjoy your time in Taiwan, did you get see any of Taiwan itself?

We went out we flew out to that aboriginal Chinese native village where the dancing girls are that put on those shows and they are not allowed to have contact with anybody, you can't even speak to them. They put on the

27:00 show and there is a perimeter around them. And you all stand. You fly out there. A couple of hours from Taiwan, and yeah, it was good. Dressed in beautiful costumes. And they do all that beautiful dancing, that and the pokies and I had quite a walk round the American PX [Post Exchange - American canteen unit] there, it was fantastic. You

27:30 could buy Mercedes Benz, Desotos, Jack Nicklaus's golf clubs, but they were the prizes on the poker machines for God's sake. But the poker machines were the big American dollar, one press and the dollar had gone down the tube.

Did you ever spend time in Vung Tau on leave?

Two days. Because I knew a bloke called Schneider in the American SeaBees [US Naval Construction Force]

28:00 and I spent all me time down at the Sea Bee's watching how they performed. They call them Sea Bees, but they are army engineers, navy engineers. They done all the road repairs, aerodrome repairs, Schneider, I often what happened to Schneider, he's probably still alive and kicking in America

somewhere. But he used

- 28:30 come up, he loved coming up to the SAS on the hill. He would come up for a weekend, and he's a good contact. He was good for me when I had welcome parties or blokes going home, he would always bung on a big barbecue or a big smorgasbord for them and the Americans used to get big boxes with 70 and 80 T-bones or porterhouse steaks in them and he always got them for me, no worries. It didn't cost us a
- 29:00 thing. We always had a nice barbecue or a nice smorgasbord, and a big meal for the boys. Yeah, he was a good friend old Schneider. So God knows where he is now. Probably gone home and drank himself to death. But he said to me, a curious thing, we used to hang out, in camp we always used to carry a side
- 29:30 arm when you went into the mess. We had combined officers'/sergeants' mess, so you would hang your weapon on the hook, so he come up one day and his eyes lit up, and he said, "Do you think you could get me one of them?" "Why in hell do you want one of them? You've got weapons a lot better than ours." "Oh yeah, but I would send it home bit by bit." "Oh what's the
- 30:00 difference?" He said, "Well when I am out in the country, driving with the missus and on the weekend, I got this weapon nobody knows I got." And I said, "You are joking." He said, "No," and I said, "Well what would you do?" "Well when I seen a coon [derogatory term for black people] I'd shoot him." I said, "You are joking." He said, "No, we are trying to get rid of them out of the country. I shoot the nigger," I said, "Well you have got no show of getting a
- 30:30 weapon off me. I can't get one anyway. I can't even get one for meself." Fancy having an attitude like that!

Were there a lot of African/American service people?

Oh God yeah, but in the Second World War, what did they do in Italy? They used to send the coons in first, they would take all the heavy gun fire and then would go in their second tier troops, and

- 31:00 then the elite would go in. You know the green berets and the top soldiers, and they would put up the flags and take all the glory. When I was going to Taiwan we went from Saigon so we took the chopper took us up to Saigon. And we are hanging around waiting, at the staging part of the airport for the, Trans World Airways took us to Taiwan, and
- 31:30 this darkie [black person] come up and honest to God you would have thought it was Sammy Davis Junior. He had a beautiful engraved cane, walking stick with gold and silver on it, and horses head or something on it, and he was dressed to the nines and you would have thought it was Sammy Davis Junior, a real comedian, amazing. And I said, "How long have you been in country?" "This is my last trip, I am going to
- 32:00 Taiwan and then I am going home." I said, "How long have you been here" he said, "4 years" I said, "What, you could have gone home after 12 months," he said, "Oh, no why would I want to go back to America, here people think I am lovely, I go back to America, I am nothing." Silly isn't it, he's over there fighting for them, and as soon as he goes back to America, he's just a darkie. Terrible.

- 32:30 **Did you manage to save any money while you were serving, or did the poker machines..?**

No, no. I used to send my money home to me missus. Yeah, because you couldn't get away to the pokies too often, you had Taiwan, Saigon, I went to Saigon twice, and I only went down to Vung Tau once for the 2 day thingo

- 33:00 there was no pokies down there. And Taiwan and that was it. But I bought a lot of electrical equipment, a lot of toys.

Did you have kids at that time?

Yeah, I only had Christopher. I bought him a lot of and he was only young, I bought him a lot of electrical toys you know, motor cars and monkeys and all that, so when I got home he decided to take them to

- 33:30 pieces to see what made them work. And they didn't work any more.

What was Vung Tau like that time during your first tour?

It was like a holiday centre, that's where they had their, the Army Club was down there on the beach, and they had a swimming pool, I never ever went there, as I told you I was there for 2 days every 12 months, and but

- 34:00 yeah, the lads reckoned it was all right. But, all they did was drink all the time.

You weren't up for that?

Never been a drinker thank God. I like a drink but I have never been a drinker. We go to the pub Jean and I, we go down every pension Thursday, and I can sit in there and have a meal and sit and play the pokies and have a lemon squash all day. And Jean has one beer, so we are good company that way, neither of us

34:30 go there to drink. But I am going to Ruth's party tomorrow night, she's coming to pick Jean and I up, she's got a nice house down at Seaford, and we go there and stay there over night, and she will bring us back on Saturday. And I will have a few drinks and Ruth plays the piano and I sing me head off. So it's a good break away from here.

Do you think the men were drinking to excess?

35:00 Yeah, lot, like in fact, some of our boys were smoking dope over there, marijuana, and that's - that was there way of getting away from it I suppose. We used to play, I would play darts all night, I was a very good dart player, before I injured my shoulder,

35:30 I have got quite a few badges in there. So Jock Rafferty and I, that's how I met my Mrs, she was staying at Jock's house because she was friends with Jock's Mrs Margaret, and when I went to Woodside, he said, "Come on," he picked me up at the station, you know, when the train used to stop up in the hills. Took me to Woodside

36:00 and that's when the RSM said, "We don't want to see you till Monday and then you'll be off to Canungra," thank you very much sir. And, he said, "Oh you are playing soccer on Saturday," I said, "I haven't played for 6 months," and he said, "Oh don't worry about it." I said, "What's the name of the team?" And he said, "Texas Rangers," I said, "Do they provide a horse." But they were a good team, they were all English, Irish and Scots blokes, yeah. I had a good game on the Sunday, and then we went to his house, and

36:30 my ex was there. So, and that's where it started, and I have cursed him ever since. No, not right. I have got a lovely daughter.

Do you remember when you could look forward to the time when you could leave Vietnam or were you wanting to stay?

No, it didn't worry me. No I don't think I ever, ever, no I don't think I was ever in a hurry to come home.

37:00 I should have been, when I was 3 Battalion I should have been in a hurry because Christopher when he was born, I think my wife was upset, about me going, he was born a week before I went, and he was that far premature he was only 2 pounds 2 ounces when he was born. He was only a week old when I took off, and they transferred him from Lyle McEwan down to the Children's Hospital, and they took him out in a shoe box. And

37:30 they're running out, the ambulance driver was running out with him, and a nurse running alongside and the matron, and I said, "Who's that, whose kid's that?" And he said, "That's your son." I said, "You are joking." Looked like a little skinned rabbit. Now he's 6' 2" he's played soccer for Australia, indoor soccer, he was in Japan for 20 days with the Australian Indoor Soccer Team. So he grew up to be a big strong lad. Now

38:00 he's married and he has a son called Mitchell. He's a stocky little boy. Me grandson Robbie, he's played soccer for Elizabeth Downs, he's only 13, and he can run like a hairy goat, left winger too which is very good. So hopefully, but he's a brain so I think he will give sport away and concentrate, he wants to be an astronomer, so I think he will too.

38:30 He's that way inclined.

Could you tell us a little bit Clem about your daily routine on your first tour of Vietnam what you would do in an average day?

Average day. You'd be up early, I still get up at 5 o'clock in the morning here. It annoys Jean, because I have got to go through to the shower and the toilet, and then I come out and get dressed. So Vietnam, you get up at 5 o'clock and starting getting breakfast ready for the boys.

39:00 Think about lunch, then you, you didn't have to write out a ration statement, because the ration store in B company, or the headquarters ration store would deliver what was available. It would come into them and they would divide it up and, so it would arrive, now bread making was easy, because all you did was take the top of a number 10 tin,

39:30 and everything was in there, and all you added, the yeast was powdered yeast, so all you done was dilute it, break it down into your flour mixture, mix your dough up and then go through your procedure, let it rise, knock it back, let it rise again and then mould it, and you had - stoves were big cabinet stoves, aluminium. Have you seen them? And you got a cradle goes in underneath.

40:00 So you do your baking but we were lucky we had a pizza oven. Which was good. Stone floor, so that was terrific for cooking bread, so - scones for morning tea, make a sweet, and being a pastry cook by trade we done all right, always had bags of apple pies and custard. And then designate the duties to the rest of your cooks who was going to slice the meat up who was going to cook the meat and look after it,

40:30 and then you always got two lads to set the tables, clean the tables down. Set them for lunch, make sure all the condiment bottles were filled, salt and pepper shakers were filled, slice of bread if it was bread for lunch for whatever meal you were having, put the bread, however many slices of bread you were having, depending on how many people were sitting at the table. Just like a normal hotel routine,

making sure everything was right for the meal.

Tape 5

00:37 **So Clem primarily you were a cook but you said every now and again you would like to go out on patrols, was that just to change your routine a bit was it?**

No I used to spend more time out on operations than I did in the kitchen. I used to leave my corporal, Barry Jones in charge, and I think he was quite happy staying there. Because he ended up being a

01:00 lieutenant in the catering corps, he was a very good cook.

And they didn't mind the soldiers didn't mind having a cook along?

No, oh God no, because I was SAS trained.

Is this your first tour we are talking about or your second tour?

First tour I was SAS trained, too wasn't I. I was in SAS when it was only a company, we were a real close knit company of 120 blokes.

When it first started out?

When it first started out, and then I went to Maralinga, and then

01:30 I went to Staff College and I went across the road to the Apprentices School and then I went to Woodside to join the Battalion so I was better trained than most infantiers. But they didn't mind they were just glad to have you along, because I got along well with all the lads.

You say young, how old were you?

God, well that was 1969 wasn't it, I was born in 1930.

So you would have been one of the older people

02:00 **there?**

I would have been one of the oldest surviving boobheads [fool] in Vietnam. Definitely the oldest soccer player that ever played there, so yes I was 40 odd when I went back with SAS. At Canungra I was, I went through the assault course, and I beat everybody at the assault course. And when you go through the assault course,

02:30 then you climb up a tower, which is only about 20 foot high, stand on it, dive into the river and swim across, and the brigadier, I forget the brigadier's name, I hadn't seen him before. And I am standing up there waiting for them to call me across, because there was a few people swimming across, and for safety reasons they didn't have to have too many blokes in the water. And he looked up me and he said,

03:00 "You are a bit old aren't you sergeant for this kind of carry on?" I said, "Yeah, I am, but I happen to be first." "Oh, yes, keep going" and that was all he said and off he trotted.

You must have been incredibly fit?

I was, I was always fit.

You still are, you look fit?

Yeah, I am fit, if only for me aching bones when I get out of bed in the morning I feel good.

03:30 That, I have got two hernia's. That Ruth Higgins I was telling you about, the Director of Care, well you couldn't wish to meet a nicer person. I am sitting with Jean over in a room, as you come in the front gate and that block of units on the side, well the second last from the end I used to go over and sit with Jean of a night and we would watch T.V, have a cup of coffee and we would have a fly wire door open in the summer, and this night I heard a commotion.

04:00 So I dashed over here and there was this Greek resident, she was about 20 stone, only young she was 30 odd, but full of mental problems. And she was dragging, her mother was here, it started off her mother turned up in a taxi, and brought the girl back, the girl had been round at her house annoying her mother, and she was

04:30 screaming and shouting and the poor taxi driver was standing there waiting for his taxi terrified. And I said I had better get over there. And I come inside the dining room dragging her all round the place, and I immediately dashed over and broke the hold on her, and I said, "Get her mother out of her." The mother was wanting to get out of the place, but the taxi driver was petrified. So, Roxanne took passageway, you know the passageway you come up and

05:00 took her off up to the taxi and off they went. And I had this woman on the floor and she was screaming and carrying on, and I said, "You are not getting up until you keep quiet," but she was that mentally gone the poor bugger, she, well I said, "I am going to let you up now," but with me wrestling her down, I burst me inner skin, so I have got a big hernia that comes out of there. Yeah.

05:30 All through doing the right thing.

But you still had the ...?

Yeah, I still had the strength because I have always been strong in the upper body, and playing soccer, me legs are still solid, yeah, so I have looked after meself. But I didn't look after meself when I took up smoking, which was stupid. Fancy playing for Australia at 24 and taking up smoking, how's that for mentality.

But in those days not as much was known about...?

Well, you are right, you are quite right, everybody smoked, it was just a

06:00 social thing.

The Marlboro man.

Peter Stuyvesant if you don't mind.

Excuse me.

Funny isn't it. How we do these things.

Image. Talking about image, I wonder with you, when the SAS when they first formed, and they went on to become a group of people with a great reputation,

06:30 Tradition yeah.

What was your impression of the men that you worked with, or that you fed, what was your impression of the SAS?

Well, I was one of them, even though I was a sergeant cook, they treated me as their equal. We went out at night, we went on operations, we went on exercise and we were all pals, they didn't treat me "Oh yeah, your are a cook," like you know the old saying in the Second World War, 'who shot the cook', 'who called the cook a bastard',

07:00 'who called a bastard a cook'. But that mentality, nowadays to be a cook in the forces, you have got to be a chef, you have got to know what you are doing. I was head chef at the Bridgeway Hotel when I got out of the army, and you don't get that just by knocking on the door and telling them you can cook, you have got to prove it. Yeah, Central Districts Football Club, Tea Tree Gully Hotel, yeah I have cooked in good places.

And strange places.

Yeah, I will go along with that.

07:30 **Can you tell me a little bit about your work with SAS when you would go out in a group with the SAS?**

Right, Jungle Training Centre at Collie in Perth, so we are going out, we have got one group that's the enemy and one group's defending the place. So this time we go up, first time we go up I am in charge of the cooking facilities, so I have got blokes sneaking up "Hey Clem, give us a onions."

08:00 Now they're the enemy and they have snuck in, and they want a couple of onions to put with their ration packs. For tomato sauce or some sake. And away they would go. But, the next time we go up there Clem's a member of one of the patrols. So, we've got to go from point A to point B and compass bearing over here to another point, 5 bearings and we are going in to the dam at Collie, in the weir, where they had the Olympic rowing.

08:30 The Commonwealth rowing, sorry. So we've got to place a dummy charge at the bottom of the sluice gates to blow their weir up. So we had a lieutenant with us who had just come in and he was doing the cadre course to join SAS. So he's in charge of the patrol. Each man takes charge of each leg, and we were unlucky, when we got to the river crossing, this lieutenant's in charge. So before we

09:00 had started out, you get your briefing in the briefing tent, right this is what's happening, this is where we want you to go and we want you to go, put the dummy charge in, leave it there and we know you have been. Fair enough, so we leave the briefing tent and we go back to our own little tent and have a talk amongst ourselves and what do you think and how we will approach it, and every man's got to know what's going on. If anything happens to number one,

09:30 number two takes over, or three or four, bingo. So we drew a sand map, we had been up to Collie that many times it wasn't funny. So we drew a sand map and we explained everything to this young lieutenant, and we forgot to tell him that there was easier ways to cross the river than where, well we didn't know at the time that he was going to be there, but he just happen to be, the referee, you always

had an umpire with you.

- 10:00 Umpiring us 5 in the patrol. "Right, change over" you know you could be halfway from A to B and he would say change over, and this is in the middle of the night and they have just kept you awake for 78 hours. This is 78 hours in Swanbourne, then they put you on the back of a truck and take you up to Collie, and it's in the middle of winter. So, but you want to be there because this is what you are glad you accepted. So we get there,
- 10:30 work all this out, O.K. The umpire says, just before we get to the river, the umpire says, "Right take, change, you take over, right you are in charge now," so you get down on the ground and they put a, and whoever is in charge, I forget who was in charge before, the two of them, under a ground sheet and they look at the map with a pencil light and he said, "Right, compass bearing so and so, we'll go this way nor-north east
- 11:00 so," and you have got a bloke, the bloke at the back of the patrol and he's counting every pace you take, he's the pace counter. And he'll let you know when you have done the required amount. So we get to the river, and he's changed it over just before we got to the river and the lieutenant said, "Right, we'll cross here," we'd take a compass there, and one of them said, "We don't have to cross here, 200 yards up the river you can nearly walk across without getting your boots
- 11:30 wet." He said, "Oh, no we'll do it this way." In the middle of winter, and there we are crossing the river with our weapons above our heads and we are freezing, and this is about 2 o'clock in the morning. And we are like that until the next morning. And the umpire's listening to us all moaning and groaning, and we got in and we put the charge next to the wall of the dam. Got out without being sprung
- 12:00 and the only thing he said at the debriefing, he said to the lieutenant, he said, "You've got to learn sir, not to be a one man band, you had 4 men telling you which would be the easiest way, when you go out on patrol, you don't make things difficult for yourself and the rest of your platoon." He never qualified, he got sent back to his unit in one of the battalions. Yeah, because he thought he was going to do everything on his
- 12:30 own. Even wouldn't listen to advice. But it was a shame because he was a nice enough bloke, he just wouldn't...

But it was very hard to qualify for the SAS?

Oh, God yes, 9 month cadre at one stage yes, you had to....

And you did that you would have...

I used to run 9 miles and beat young lads home, because I was so strong in the legs and I had a good set of lungs.

And tell me about that 9 months, sorry I interrupted you.

The 9 month cadre was done up at

- 13:00 Ingleburn, where 4 Battalion used to be, on the road out to Campbelltown, and that area there, the bush there is magnificent, like that, and they have got to do everything, and then when there, and when they finish there, they go - they join SAS. Now before you become a parachutist,
- 13:30 you have got to do all the qualifications. So, then we go down to Albany, you know what Albany is like in Western Australia? It's mountainous. And it's in the middle of winter, it's freezing cold. Now we had a bloke called Kelly, and he was a Judo champion, he never qualified down there, he just give it away, he couldn't
- 14:00 handle it.

But you handled it.

Yeah, but it's amazing, he was, he could fight in a ring all day doing judo, but he couldn't take this ambling over hills and reading compass bearings. Back bearings, you have got to know what you are doing. It's a shame, because he was a nice lad, but he just couldn't handle it.

Did you find it psychologically quite taxing?

Well I must be

- 14:30 stupid you know because these things never worried me. No it's funny, it's like I was telling you when I was in Vietnam, Youngie and I ambling down the main road, going to Baria into action, and we just strolling, like we are out for a walk. It's silly isn't it.

Well, it's not silly, you were young.

Yeah, it's a good way to be, you are still frightened but it doesn't, it doesn't make you act any differently.

Can you tell me

15:00 **about some of the hardest training they put you through?**

The hardest training.

When you were, during that 9 months period.

Shark Bay. They dropped us, this time I was looking after headquarters cooking, but we had a pallet in the middle of the compound, we were on a sheep station, he'd allowed us to use his sheep

15:30 station. The wool sheds were right on the edge of Shark Bay, now the cooking facilities there were 44 gallon drums split down the middle, put over a cradle, wood fire underneath and we had our back to the water, now you imagine the sun shining off that in the middle of summer, it was hectic. You didn't worry about it. Why half the lads didn't die of cancer has got me beat.

16:00 I cooked in a pair of black football shorts and thongs. So they are dropping the 'enemy' off out of the Hercules, decoder, it was only a platoon, the 'enemy platoon'. Now they are dropping them off a few miles towards Carnarvon and then they are going to make their way in, their own way in, nobody knows how they are going to get there. And on the way through they are going to pick up their rations that are there, and there was

16:30 4 poles with lights on the top and they pick up their rations and they carry on after they have put their attack through. And this was supposed to happen the next day, they get dropped in the morning, the next day they have moved through, done a reconnaissance on the place and they are going to attack. So we are all ready, outside the back door of me kitchen, old father Jackson the sig [signal] sergeant and I we have got our slit trench there, he's got himself

17:00 and a couple of the sigs and meself and me cooks are there and we are all organised. They drop them out of the plane, now before they drop them out of the plane, they have got a wind controller on the ground, a ground controller, you don't just jump into nothing when you are training. He tells them the velocity, the wind speed, everything on the ground, right, let them go. Let them go when they are there, means they go round again and come in and drop them.

17:30 The wind speed's picked up a hell of a lot and they get blown off about 20 miles off course, they are up there and they get a thermal, and they go. One of the lad's gets an ant in his ear. So one of his stupid friends in the patrol puts paraffin in, or kerosene to kill this and, didn't do nothing for the boy, they had to knock him out. So, they had no means of communication, but this Jock Reid was that good,

18:00 he was an ex-British navy lad, Jock Reid, one of my pals, but he, he changed, he managed with a normal radio set between here and point A over there, or point B over there, he managed to get contact with the aeroplane. And told them what was going on, so they got through to Amberley. And Amberley sent a helicopter to pick this lad up.

18:30 So while this was all going on, that delayed the attack by 3 days. While Jock Reid was working all this out to get this communication set up working and he ended up getting a medal for it. But they were that late...

He got a medal for a training exercise?

Because he got the communications with the aircraft that managed to

19:00 get back to Amberley to get the helicopter out to pick this lad that seriously bloody ill with his crook ear with this ant in there with the kerosene. It would have burnt hell out of him. Yeah so anyway, that held up the exercise, so they virtually run from there into put their attack up. They were on the go all the time, that's how hard it had to be.

Where was the hard bit for you?

Me.

19:30 Running on sand. And the hardest part with me little short legs was a 20 miler. Dropped us at Amberley, at Pearce Aerodrome sorry, at Pearce Aerodrome we had 3½ hours to get to the bus, now 20 miles you have been carrying your parachute around, and we had been lying at the hangars in Pearce, waiting for the wind and everything to be right,

20:00 then we jumped into the old Hercules, the Dakota, up we go, dropped us out, we land, we got to run right across the other side of the drop zone, fold your parachute up, throw it into the back of the truck, and the patrol leader's got a coloured glove on, red, yellow whatever, and he holds his hand up, and you all, and if you are blue you congregate on the blue glove, the 5 of you, and away you go.

20:30 And you have got to come in, in a patrol in the whole stick, the 5 of you together, and you are running with blokes that have got legs 6 foot long, and it's really hard yakka. I run that hard I burst a blood vessels in the back of me knee.

But you kept going?

Yeah. And, oh what's his name, he was only, he was smaller than me, he finished his 20 miler, took his boots off and his feet were bleeding.

21:00 **Tough men.**

No brains. But nobody ever, it was amazing, nobody ever pulled out.

I imagine there was a sense of pride.

Well there is, because you are glad you are in SAS, it's like a medal.

And how did they test you psychologically, what did they do to be sure that you would hold up?

Well I never had to do a cadre course where

21:30 I had to do a psych test. But I cooked for a cadre course at Georges Heights, Middlehead. They would bring these lads in, and this is the last thing they did everything, after they qualified everything, you are ready, pass the psycho test you are in to SAS. They use the old fort, they have got music blaring, the old Chinese

22:00 music. All bloody night, and they have got the lights on all bloody night. They stand them against the wall with their finger tips, and they are off at an angle like that, and they are standing with their legs apart, and they are hitting these lads, these candidates for SAS, and "back, back, back." And they are like that and all the pressure is on the end of their fingers, and they are abusing them all the time. Calling them all sorts, trying to break them down.

22:30 Well all these lads that ended up in SAS went through this. Do you know we had a catholic priest there, he broke away, we found him heading over towards Taronga Zoo, do you know Sydney, across Clifton Gardens where the water transport, and Clifton Gardens is there, with the swimming pool and all that, and he was heading towards Taronga Zoo, he couldn't hack it.

He was training to be in the SAS?

He was going to be, no he was just going to do, he was an army

23:00 padre and he was going to do the cadre course and he couldn't hack it.

What kind of men were they that passed all of those tests?

They were a mixture, you couldn't look at a bloke and say he's a big strong bloke, because he'd be one that failed, and then you would look at a nice skinny, slim, but muscly, sinuey

23:30 and they would pass with flying colours. And little blokes you would say he was too small, and they would pass, they were as strong as bloody lions. They were amazing.

What kind of men were they, you must have talked to them quite a bit when you were cooking for them?

Oh, mentality, they were all right yeah. There was only one, and the padre and one other bloke that failed. Yeah, yeah. It's their inner resolution. It's amazing. So I am cooking them, the first day

24:00 there I am there we cook them up a big slap up feed. They said, "This is great, beautiful," we had all sorts prawns, crayfish, sausage rolls, the lot, party pies, glasses of beer, and that's all right, they whip them down to the fort, because, this is at the School of Military Intelligence, which is just down from the fort, and it's in their cooking facilities that we are using.

24:30 Right, what's for lunch tomorrow, boiled water with chicken cubes through it, grass off the oval, chopped up and put in for colour green. And that was their lunch.

You were instructed to make that?

Oh yeah, the menu wasn't nothing to do with me, the menu was made up by the people running the course. And, it was the same, and boiled rice, and not decent

25:00 boiled rice that had been you know, the starch that had been washed out of it and was nice and fluffy. It was a big cloggy mess, you can imagine how rice is if it is overcooked. And just water and no salt or anything in that. I used to be petrified, I said this isn't right. I never had to do this.

But they had to toughen up didn't they?

Oh yeah and it was getting close to where they were trying to sort out the wheat from the chaff.

25:30 and get them really elite, and they proved themselves in Vietnam, and they proved themselves in Iraq haven't they. Afghanistan, yeah. And see what they have done, they have given these lads medals and they are not allowed to tell anybody about that. That's bloody terrible.

It sounds like something has been done about that though?

Yeah, well it had to be, because they have earned them. They earned them.

So were you, if an SAS group would go off, they were usually in groups of 4, is that right?

26:00 5.

Is that 5 including ...?

That's just 5 man patrol.

So you wouldn't usually go with them on that kind of thing?

Oh yeah, I used to go. I spent more time when I was with 1 Squadron in Vietnam, than some of the lieutenant patrol leaders, patrol commanders.

Even though you hadn't gone through the psychological test?

No. I sued to go. Slag O'Keefe, big one - he was that big he had to leave the

26:30 armoured corps he couldn't get in the bloody turret of a tank. And he was a big lump of a bloke old Slag O'Keefe, I went with him Short Turner, Connigan, yeah, I used to go out with them. "Want to come out Clem, we're going out tomorrow?" "Yeah why not." "Right I am going," leave the boy in charge and off I would go, I used to love it.

Can you tell me about your techniques because they were known for

27:00 **going to the front line and often part into enemy territory?**

We never ever travelled on a road. If you are only going 400 yards from here to there, you travelled, and it could be the worst piece of bush in the world, you always travelled through the bush. Because paths and roads are mined, booby trapped and we always made our own way through the bush, kept away from the roads. Yeah, it was good.

27:30 **And how did you signal to each other silently?**

Hand signals. Hand up we all stopped. And if we wanted you to come up and give the old walkie-talkie, and we all moved up and then we would whisper what was going on. I will give you an instance. We got a new patrol leader, came up from Portsea, and I was out with Youngie and his platoon this time, we were doing a

28:00 cordon and search of a grid square where there had been enemy movement reports and they thought there might have been a staging camp in there. So that's all right, the lieutenant's at the back of the patrol with the radio operator, you always kept your radio operator at the back in case, and a rifleman with him in case, we got sprung,

28:30 the radio operator's up there and he can protect him and he can get a message off that we was being attacked, send for help straight away. A phone call comes through it's for Youngie. Sergeant Young wanted on the phone. So instead of saying, passing the message down through the platoon that Sergeant Young's wanted on the phone, or the radio operator going down to see Young, which he shouldn't do anyway.

29:00 This lieutenant shouts out at the top of his voice. Here we are running through enemy territory. "Sergeant Young you are wanted on the blower." oh my God Youngie went up, he said, "Well it's a bit late now," and he gave him a right old rocket. He said, "You have just told every Charlie within 400 m that we are in here."

Basic mistake.

"Very sorry." "It's a bit late now to be sorry." He said,

29:30 "Don't let it happen again." Barry was only a sergeant at the time. Youngie and I came home from Vietnam with 3 Battalion, and this is how good a mate Barry was, and I wasn't married at the time. He said, "What are you doing" and they used to call me Henry because I sang a bit. So they, Henry from My Fair Lady, because that was one of my favourite songs. I have often walked down the street before ...

Why don't you sing it, are we going to get a chance to hear your singing voice?

Maybe. So,

30:00 I have talked it away haven't I. So anyway, he said, "What are you doing Henry?" and I said, "I'll get a job in a hotel somewhere. Meet some nice young waitresses and I will have a ball." He said, "Come home and meet some the family." I said, "I have never been to Tasmania," so I went with him to Tasmania. Go to the races on the Saturday, blew \$1,000 on the horses. So we are only home a week and Youngie, gets called up to the Barracks, and so we go up and the CO up there said,

30:30 "Congratulations, Warrant Officer Young. He had been promoted. And Youngie said, "Oh that's good," and "Pack your gear you going back to Vietnam with the training team next week." "Oh" he said, so he give him his travel warrant, he had stuffed up the initials, it was Barry, Barry I forget his second initial, Barry something Young and anyway on Barry's old travel

31:00 warrant to go back to the mainland to 3 Battalion was something else. And Youngie said, "There you are, there's your travel warrant." So we both come home back to the mainland as Young's. But it was funny you have to be awful careful, without thinking, and that was - the SAS trained their soldiers that well, it was just done straight away

31:30 automatically. And if anything happened, if a patrol was sprung they just went to their positions without being told, they just done what they had to do. It was good.

So in a strange way even though you were in dangerous territory with them, you must have felt quite safe being a part of it?

You did, you never thought about it. In fact, Connigan, that's one of the patrol sergeants I was telling you about. Now Connigan, he was just a little shorter than me, he probably come up to there but you couldn't wish to

32:00 meet, he ended up an instructor in the infantry battalion, Infantry Training Centre. But, we're going up this old dry river bed and there was a fallen tree, now the normal thing to do is crawl, and there was plenty of room to crawl under it, not Connigan, he goes over the top of this tree, and he gets to the other side

32:30 and slips, and he buried his rifle in the mud up to the barrel, about that far into the mud. Now we don't know who is watching us or what. But the other 4 of us in the patrol were rolling on the ground killing ourselves laughing. And he said, "Nothing to laugh at" and then he started to laugh. I said, "Why in the hell didn't you go under the tree," and he said, "I don't know." So we had to wait for an hour

33:00 while he cleaned his weapon and get the mud out of the barrel. Over there, it's a hell of a place Vietnam, for weather. And 5 of us would sit in a circle of a night, with our kit on and you would all take turns to sleep. You would have your 2 hours, and then you would touch the next bloke and he would do the next 2 hours. So you all relied on each other, so everybody would do what they were supposed to do.

How did you judge your 2 hours?

Your old watches,

33:30 good old luminous army type watches. I wish I had one now they are worth about \$400 or \$500. You know J Farren Price the watch people from Queensland, they are always after them.

Did they have a little alarm, how did you know your 2 hours was up?

You just kept yourself awake because you were looking round all the time, they relied on you so you couldn't go to sleep and we'd all stay awake until last light.

34:00 But you had no trouble, you are that well trained you would wake up. I wake up here at half 4 every morning.

So you had trained your own mind to...?

Yeah, and you realise you know, relying on the other bloke so he's going to do the right thing by you. Because if he goes to sleep we are all dead if we are sprung. Yeah, it was very good.

What were the patrols they were doing, what were you doing?

That patrol with Connigan, we were doing a cordon and

34:30 search. Another time we were, I wasn't on that patrol, they were doing a cordon and search. They got information from an American reconnaissance patrol that they think they had come across a staging camp, which there were a hell of a lot of them through, down the Ho Chi Minh trail and through different grid squares down to Saigon. And, who was it

35:00 yeah, Junior Smith, the designated member of your 5 man patrol, one of them is a forward scout. When you stop, it could be, could be 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, but one of them is the forward scout. So you stop somewhere, and you think, I wonder if there's somebody in there. They go in, the forward scout goes in and checks the place out thoroughly,

35:30 sometimes they wait there for hours checking for movement. No, no movement, back he comes, hadn't seen a soul, seemed all right to me. So in they go, and he was in the middle of a thingo, in the middle of the camp, and all of a sudden they got sprung, Charlie had seen them coming. There were a few Charlies in there, they were resting up on their way somewhere.

36:00 They were lucky, there was a shell hole right in the middle of the camp, so they jumped in there, the radio operator called for help straight away and a helicopter come in and picked them up. Dropped the rope, and they all on the rope, and they were still climbing up the rope when the chopper took off through the trees.

That would have been a sight?

Well one of the Kiwi, we had a Kiwi platoon with us. And this

36:30 you know Bill, have you watched Bill Sailor, the rugby player, rugby union. Big black Thursday Islander, this Kiwi looked like Bill Sailor. And when we got there, when I went up with 1 Squadron to relieve 3 Squadron, it looked like he had a dart board on his stomach, it was a circle and it was white. The year before in the patrol he was with, the Kiwis, we used to have the platoon

- 37:00 with us on the hill, but they used to be down around the corner away from us. But we all ate together, the Kiwis and the Aussies. The patrol he was on got sprung. So that's all right chopper comes in, picks them up, he's the last man on the rope, an enemy bullet hits one of his phosphorous grenades, I couldn't believe, it was burning
- 37:30 hell out of him, it had sprung the lever off the grenade, it's burning him, and how was he for resolution. Hung on to the rope and they hauled him in, lifted the rope up and pulled him in to the chopper, straight to Saigon. They had him in a bath for days pulling off bits of phosphorous from his stomach. Then he went back to New Zealand, and he volunteered to come back the next year, he was there when I seen I said, "What the hell do you
- 38:00 use for brains?" My God how was he for strength, strength of mind. It must have been, he must have been suffering something terrible. You can imagine phosphorous, eating into you.
- Well I can't imagine.**
- Oh yeah, it's terrible. Terrible stuff. You know when a match sticks to your fingers. And it burns doesn't it, well phosphorous they use in these grenades, is 80 times stronger than that, just a little flake of
- 38:30 phosphorous. And there he is back the next year, volunteered to go back with another platoon. Terrible fellow.
- What are you talking about, you were volunteering to go out with the SAS patrols?**
- Well, I enjoyed it. I think you are that well trained you don't think about the danger. It's there and you do think about the danger, because anybody that thinks it's a walk in the park is an idiot. They are the people that get killed. If they just stroll along and they haven't got their
- 39:00 wits about them, I stroll along, Youngie strolls along, we have still got our wits about us. Yeah. I haven't told you about the Yank, the Yank film crew. Bloody threw themselves into, it was too late then, they were dead. You know if the bullet had have hit them they were gone. But they hear the report, that comes up after the bullet.
- What it an advantage for you when you went out on these SAS patrols to be a small**
- 39:30 **fit man, you know you could keep very quiet, as opposed to somebody who is very big and, was it an advantage?**
- Yeah, yeah. More and I think being an athlete I was very light on me feet, I was used to ducking and weaving on the soccer field. Dribbling and, but you are still looking at the ground, watching where you are walking, but you are quieter on your feet. And a big bloke, sometimes their co-ordination
- 40:00 and if he's carrying an M16 machine gun, the poor bugger he's got no chance of being quiet, or being nice and gentle walking through the bush.
- 40:12 End of tape

Tape 6

- 00:42 **So just getting back to Vietnam Clem, and we have been talking about you going out on the patrols of the SAS, did you also help set up ambushes with**
- 01:00 **them?**
- I was part of the ambush, like I told you about the ambush out at the fire support base at the Long [Long Sun Island], Youngie was in there again, he was always there the bugger. Yeah, we set up ambush positions of the evening, were on the inside of the paddy bun, which was a wall around the rice paddy, and we were on the inside with our feet in the bloody mucky rice water, and we lay there all night because the track was coming
- 01:30 down from the hills down that side of the paddy fields. So we just lay there all night until it was ready to spring the ambush.
- You were in a lot of unsanitary conditions, you were often cold and wet, did you get sick?**
- You know I get a cold now, I think it might be due to my smoking, and that spot on me lung, even though I was always so fit. Now I get a cold
- 02:00 at the drop of a hat. And me doctor, Dr Blanche, said, no I only had my, I was bringing blood up for 3 weeks. Every morning I was bringing blood up, and it just wasn't a little bit of blood from our of your nose, it was bit clot of blood.
- But in Vietnam you were relatively healthy?**

Yeah. Because you were on the go all the while, and in those days I was fit and healthy. But, Youngie, and I would go out 5 man patrol,

02:30 you come to a, first thing you done on a patrol you went out in the aircraft the old Swiss plane, it hardly moved, you thought it was going to fall out of the sky. The Pilatis pilot and when it turned over like that, you would have a look at the bush, you would pick a spot to bug out [move] to, and you would pick a spot where you wanted to be landed, in the grid square. So down

03:00 you would come. Yes, so you would pick a spot to be landed in, which you thought would be a good start off point for your grid square, but you also had a bug off [evacuation] point, in case you were sprung, so you would go to that square and that reference was given to the chopper mob

03:30 and they knew where to come if you pressed the bug out alarm, bing they would be there right to that spot, because they knew you were heading for it. And, but of a night as you were ambling through the scrub doing your search, you were always looking out for a place to hootchie up for the night. So we always used to look for a bamboo clump which would be a pig wallow. The pigs would go in there rooting around

04:00 getting the roots off the bamboo, and leaving all their nests there, but we found the smell in there, stopped Charlie from smelling us. So we would go in there, sit with our backs to each, pour some water into your freeze dried food, eat it stone cold, couldn't have a smoke. And that was it, you couldn't even talk you just sat back to back.

04:30 And then at the designated time the 4 of you could drop off, and first cab off the rank would start the 2 hour Watch, and then the first thing next morning your food again, your bacon and eggs, throw a bit of water in it and eat it cold. And off you would go. So you always made sure you found the filthiest place to lay up for the night.

And what was your purpose in being there,

05:00 **was it to check any Viet Cong...?**

Yeah, movement, and sometimes you would lay in ambush for 5 days. If there had been a lot of movement on that track, somebody reported a lot of movement, aerial reconnaissance would have reported a lot of movement, so if you were the patrol to go out, and you would lie there for 5 days and watch troop movement, down the track, and reporting that back, if a mob of them

05:30 were there, you would let them go and you would send back signals to headquarters, and then headquarters would make up their mind whether they were going to act on it or not. So virtually our main job in Vietnam was reconnaissance, and information for headquarters, but sometimes you were sprung, and you couldn't help it, so you were in a contact, break off the contact and start running.

06:00 But mainly reconnaissance and information back to headquarters to act on.

Did you ever lose any of the group?

No, not while I was there. I lost one of me good soccer players, Burma Melan, but he was out on patrol, but he didn't lose his life until he come back to Fremantle. He had secateurs around his neck to cut through the bamboo and through the bush, because it's terrible over there, lantana is worse over there than it is

06:30 here. And so we as I told you, we always travelled through that, we never travelled on tracks. A bullet hit him in the secateurs and left a hole in it, and just give him a bruise on the chest. During a night exercise about a year later in Fremantle, he stepped backwards over a cliff and killed himself the poor sod. And he was from Burma, and he lived through all that, his Mum and Dad had lived through all that bloody regime you know with the Chinese in Burma

07:00 and he was a fabulous soccer player, he had everything to live for, he had a lovely girlfriend and bloody stepped back off, one night training exercise, bingo without thinking. Killed himself the poor sod.

Being as you were on the reconnaissance missions, you would have, I imagine, learnt how to kill people very quietly, is that the case?

Out there,

07:30 no out there you just shoot them. You are taught unarmed combat. My old mate, getting back to me other old running mate, old father Jackson, tall 6 foot high. Getting back to the VC winner, the instructor, he was the unarmed combat instructor, Sergeant Major Simpson. So we are doing unarmed combat this day, that was the

08:00 physical training course I was on. So he's teaching us unarmed combat, just freshening us up, he's got a K-bar, you know the American troop's dagger, and he's got, and luckily he's got it in the sheath, he comes at me with this dagger, he said, "I am going to come at you with this, you know how to stop." "Yeah, yeah." And at the last minute he throws the dagger in the other hand and he hits Jack up there and broke 3 ribs.

08:30 And Jack goes on the ground and says that's not very nice. He was black and blue poor bugger.

He will remember that lesson.

Yeah, he did, he said, "You weren't supposed to change hands." He said, "Are you going to say that to the enemy, don't change hands keep it in that hand." Yeah.

Did you get quite close to the enemy at times?

Yes, we let them go past because there was only us,

09:00 so we let them go past and send the information in.

Could you smell them like they could smell you?

Oh yes, because half of them were doped up on opium and bloody smokin' and they smoked all that bloody terrible stuff. They're like us, when you are out in the bush, when I was with 3 Battalion and Major Irwin, and Youngie when we were with 3 Battalion, we went out, we were

09:30 out for 28 days doing a search. A couple of grid squares, and we got sprung, but we got sprung the right way, we cottoned on to them first, and our forward scout, he got mentioned in dispatches for his alertness because he was behind a tree, and he just looked round the corner and he could see this

10:00 gook [derogatory term for Asian] coming down the track and he didn't shout out, he just raised his rifle and he killed this bloke stone dead. And then that's when all hell broke loose, because he was forward scout for his mob. So they were debriefing him later on and Major Irwin said, "What did you think about when you looked up and seen this, enemy coming up the track, did you

10:30 panic?" He said, "No not really," (he was a real broad Lancashire lad), "Not really," he said, "I just put me rifle up to me shoulder and let him have one, and that was it."

Survival.

Yes, survival. But he said, "I was shaking like a leaf after I had killed him." Because I don't think any soldier gets any glory out of killing another person,

11:00 it's just survival for you, if you don't kill him he's going to kill you. I don't think you get any glory whatsoever. I can see why some poor buggers, they go to pieces, they end up like screaming wrecks.

Why didn't you?

I don't know, I think it's my casual approach to life. Because I survived Malta.

You have been dodging bombs for a while,

11:30 **haven't you?**

Quite a while. Ever since I was a nipper, the tiger in India, it's amazing isn't it. If your time's not up it's not up. There's nothing you can do about it. Me Mum brought me up to have a good positive outlook on life, you are a Christian and nothing's going to happen to you. And when you are ready you'll go and there's nothing you can do about it son. I said, "Thanks very much Mum."

12:00 **It doesn't seem like much protection does it?**

I still say my prayers at night.

Did you say them in Vietnam, were there times when you were saying them a lot?

Oh, in a hurry. Yes. Even the B52 bombers the Yanks, with all their computer references and numbers, they come up, and they bomb them long high hills, now behind us about a quarter of a

12:30 mile, which is a good distance behind us, there was a village. Big water hole there, and the buffaloes were all there all drinking in the evening. Somehow one of the B52 bombs went astray and killed half the village buffaloes. Didn't kill anybody thank goodness, but killed half the buffaloes.

What did you think of the Americans?

There were some good ones, but

13:00 they were foolhardy. The trouble with the Yanks was, patrol leader we've got down, Slag O'Keefe, would go down and do a briefing at headquarters with the American liaison officer. And headquarters task force would say right, this patrol of ours is going into grid reference so and so, going to do a co ordnance search of that grid square. Say to the Yankee officer,

13:30 now have you got any plans for that grid square, and the Yank would say oh no, no, our boys will be miles away, they'll be 4 grid squares away doing what they have got to be doing over there. O.K. fair enough. Got it all written down. Off they would go. Slag would come back and say it's all right, we're off tomorrow, chopper will be down in the morning, we had our own little chopper pad to pick us up. So the chopper would be down in the morning and away we'd go.

14:00 We'd be lying up for a couple of days, in an ambush position. Next minute a platoon of Yanks would come through with their bloody ear phones on and their bloody Walkmans going, smoking cigars, talking among themselves, rifles slung upside down. They were the sloppiest soldiers in the world. Look real gung-ho in pictures. So as soon as that happened, we had to abort the mission.

You were compromised.

Compromised.

14:30 Call a chopper and get us out of there. We couldn't stay.

It must have been very frustrating?

It was very frustrating. And this happened that many times it wasn't funny.

And they just didn't get it?

They didn't get it, they were stupid. You couldn't move when they were going through because they would have shot you. So you just had to put up with it, they would trample the place down. Chewing them Hershey bars and leaving the wrappers laying round. If we took anything out with us, even going to the toilet

15:00 you had a pouch on your knapsack you had one in there with a plastic bag inside, and that's where everything went, and you took it back to camp with you and it was burnt. You left nothing in the jungle. See, even a Hershey bar wrapper, you couldn't wrap it, dig a hole and put it in there. They would find it. It's amazing how they could smell. We are fighting them in their environment. So it was amazing.

15:30 **You mentioned earlier that some of the Australian soldiers were smoking dope at this stage. What did you know of the American troops and drugs?**

They were rotten with it.

What makes you think that?

You could smell it a mile away. You could smell the marijuana miles away, walking through the scrub with a bloody smoke reefer hanging out their mouth, yeah. But that's well known. That's gone down in history

16:00 about their drug bloody habits over there.

Were their superior officers just...?

Just turned a blind eye, didn't bother. It's funny isn't it. Yeah, they would, they could tell. Like I was telling you about that darkie, tap dancing and carrying on like Sammy Davis Junior waiting to go to Taiwan. He was probably hog tied to heaven.

16:30 He was funny, but you could tell they were on dope.

I would have thought it was the most frightening place in the world not to be on top form, like I would have thought you would want to be as sharp as a tack.

Yeah, well that's how so many of them got killed wasn't it. One of the hills up there, I forget, I am not sure, but I think they made a picture of it.

17:00 They're on this hill, they are going to attack it, Charlie's half way up the hill. Firing back at them, then they drop back a little bit and the Yankee officer moves his company forward a little bit, and Charlie really digs in, and the fight goes on for a few hours. So the officer calls for artillery support.

17:30 Charlie's not stupid, he knows he's been there long enough, he moves back over the hill. Come on lads we've got them. And this mob run up the hill, and in comes the artillery support and kills most of them. Now that lieutenant, he should have called off the fire support before he moved them up that last half of that hill. But in the thick of it, the

18:00 circumstances half the time they seem to forget what is going on.

What did you think of the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong's fighting tactics?

Viet Cong they were terrific soldiers. The only difference between them and us is that we had fire support. We had air support. They had Russians teaching them and their Russian instructors were very good. We often seen a

18:30 Russian ambling along with patrols.

But the Russians weren't supposed to be involved.

They weren't supposed to be there. But they were firing all Russian AK47 weapons weren't they. And RPGs [Rocket Propelled Grenades] made in Russia, so it, war is a funny old game isn't it. Well look at Iraq last time, America was sending them around all the money, giving them all the money, giving them

19:00 all the weaponry they wanted, selling it to them, to fight Iran and Iraq. Afghanistan, the same deal.

Did you ever question why you were there?

No, no, no. I was in the army, I was doing as I was told.

When you came home after that second tour, what sort of public response did you come back to, do you remember?

Well, it was a bit better than the first

19:30 time. It was better than when I come home with 3 Battalion.

What happened then?

Nothing happened to me, but a lot of the lads were getting a hard time off their friends and neighbours. I didn't belong to South Australia really, and I was in civvies [civilian clothes] and half, most of the people didn't know I had been anywhere, which was a good thing.

And you weren't going to tell them?

Definitely not no.

20:00 See three quarters of the people down stairs don't even know I have been in the army. They don't believe it.

Why don't you talk about it?

Why?

It's part of history.

My soccer is part of history, isn't it. I don't know war is not a thing to be generalised is it and

20:30 glorified, it's not. My Dad never talked about the war. He just said it was a thing that had to be done I was in the army you do as your are told. He said a good soldier obeys orders. He said whether you like it or not. That's a part of it.

I suppose the thinking may be that if people know the truth about what war is really like, then perhaps they'll think more carefully before they

21:00 **go into another one, but I am not sure that it would change.**

No, no it's like Northern Ireland isn't it. You know, my Mum and Dad having to go, you got religion, and the trouble with the Asian countries you got religious fanatics and you got people, well that last blow up they just had in Pakistan, two ladies, willing to be bombers and blew themselves up. What for, I can't work it out.

But then people can

21:30 **say to you went to some, you were in some of the most dangerous places in the world, you could have been blown up at any time, what for?**

Well I picked up, you have heard of the butterfly bombs [cluster bombs] haven't you?

You can explain them.

Yeah, well the butterfly bomb is about as big as your fist or a little smaller, and before they had, sometimes they wouldn't explode, they come out the aeroplane, and the casing opens up and thousands of these

22:00 little butterfly bombs come out. The butterfly bombs now because the Yanks put wings on them, and the anti-lifting device. If they didn't explode when they hit the ground, you oh, boom. Blow your hand off or kill you as well. I picked two of them up in Vietnam, very stupid. We're out on patrol, and we'd stopped and we found a staging camp and we stopped to blow it up, and there was two

22:30 butterfly bombs without the butterflies on, and these were the earlier editions. I was lucky they were the early edition because they didn't explode. And we had a pioneer with us and two sniffer dogs, two black Labradors they were beautiful. Yeah, so Youngie said, "What you got there?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "Put the bloody things down, they could explode." He said, "Gently." So I put them down. So the pioneer [engineer] who was with us, we were doing tunnel

23:00 searches, you have got to search the tunnels because they could be hiding in there. And after you have gone they come out. So I put them down. Youngie goes and gets the pioneer and he comes back. Looks at them, and he says, "Righto leave them to me." So he put a plastic explosive around them, put the explosive charge pin in, pressed it and 3 minutes later, up it went, left a nice old hollow in the

23:30 ground. But if that had have had butterflies on it and an anti lifting device I probably wouldn't be here talking to you.

There are probably a lot of times that could have happened that you couldn't have been here talking to us? I mean starting from when you were a little boy.

Yeah, poor bugger, "Who's going to be the head of the cow Mrs." Yes shocking isn't it. My Mum, this isn't a warrie [war story],

24:00 but it's in Malta, Mum's going into town on Saturday, couple of boats have come in so she's going over to Valletta with another couple of the married ladies to see what she can get to break the monotony of the food, and whatever else, any clothing. She says, "I have got the copper going, the old brass copper, I have got the clothes in there, keep your eye on it, keep the fire going," "All right Mum, I won't be long."

24:30 So we are out the back playing Germans and what have you. About an hour later, I look down the road coming from down below. The fire, race in methylated spirits, nothing helps, methylated spirits and it explodes, and burnt all me hair off. Only for the quickness of me brother he rolled me in the carpet, and belted me in the head, I said,

25:00 "Stop." He said, "You are on fire you silly bugger." He saved me. I went round like the man in the iron mask for 6 months. You could see me eyes, you could see me mouth. I fancied one of the little girls at school, she was lovely. I used to go up to the school and peer in the window, and the teacher would come out and say, "Go home Higgins."

You were scaring people.

Yes, she said I was distracting the class.

Speaking about girls, you got

25:30 **married in the early 60s did you?**

No, I had me babies first before we got married.

Oh, did you, you weren't a good Irish boy then were you?

No, definitely not a good Catholic, and she was a Protestant, ooooh.

That still would have been not the norm in those days?

Oh God no. Me poor old Mum would have turned in her grave. If St Patrick told her what was going on

26:00 she would not be pleased.

We know obviously how that came about, but you ended up marrying?

Jock Rafferty's wife's girlfriend, yeah.

But you had your 2 babies first?

We had our 2 babies yeah.

What was the thinking behind that?

Oh, I was madly in love with the girl, bloody hell, but she just wouldn't shut up. Talk, talk, talk. It was safer in Vietnam, I often tell people, it was safer. Why did you and Marj split up? Because it was

26:30 safer in Vietnam. Oh. When I went there and told her that it didn't do much for the marriage. She was, verbal abuse, I never laid a hand on my missus. I don't believe in it, I don't believe in hitting, a girl or a woman. Never hit my kids. My Dad

27:00 he only had to talk to me, he never raised his hand to me, the tone of his voice was enough. And, so, we went out to a party one night, and I said to her, "Do you want to come to a party, Margaret and Hughie are going over to this party." So she said all right, we had a couple of drinks so in a mad moment of passion we had Christopher, and then we had

27:30 Catriona.

Another mad moment of passion.

Yeah, thank God she's lovely.

Were you living together when you were away?

She was all right, she was as good as gold, it was just, it was like a dog scratching a flea, she would never shut up, keep picking at you. I would be sitting reading a paper on a Sunday morning, this was after I come back from Vietnam, I would be sitting in the dining room, Christopher

28:00 and I, he got up, he cooked a big breakfast, we would have breakfast together, I would be reading the Sunday paper, and she get out of bed at 10 o'clock and come walking through and she just look at me and I would look at her, and she would say, "What's wrong with your face?" I said, "Nothing wrong with my face, it's stuck on me skull and stuck to me shoulders." She said, "Oh." That was the type of thing

that went on all the time.

And how was it that you.. obviously Christopher came

28:30 **first, did you not have time to get married before the next baby came along, or did you decide you weren't ready?**

No. No. I was waiting for her to change her attitude. I think, and then when Christopher, being so young as he was when he was born, he's grown up to be a big strong lad. But, then me coming home and being home for 11 months and then volunteering to go back again, I think that was the straw that broke the

29:00 camel's back.

Well she didn't see much of you did she, and she had two children?

No she didn't, but after Catriona was born there was no more travel around, wherever we went we were in married quarters. She was with me in Albury/Wodonga and back at Elizabeth Fields, after I got out of the army, and we both worked at weapons research.

How long were you together for?

Oh, 20 odd years.

Quite a time

29:30 **then.**

Yes, I stuck with her for my kids sake. I done the right thing by me children. So, even Catriona, as young as she was in those days, now and again, we will sit and talk she says, "Dad, I don't know why you didn't hit mother. Why you didn't hit my mother. Why you put up with it." I said, "I put up with it for you and your brother." She said, "I realise that." So she's bringing her children up the right way,

30:00 her and David. A good mother and father, so it's good.

Then you got married again, or just the once, and the two children?

Yeah, just the once.

Interesting that he turns out to be a bit of a soccer mad boy as well?

Yeah, he was a fabulous goalkeeper, but the trouble with him was he broke his ankles. He went to England for soccer trials, he went to my old club he

30:30 was with them for 3 or 4 weeks. But his attitude was, he was a party boy as well. Friday night before, even after he come home after playing for Australia, instead of realising he could have gone somewhere, and done something for himself and he wanted to play in England, but Friday night her in Adelaide, he would go into town with his mates and have a few drinks and go to the sportsman bar you know where McDermott, and them are, and

31:00 get home at one in the morning. I said to him, "You'll never make it." I said, "To be a soccer player," I said, "I didn't drink and I didn't smoke until I was 24 years of age, and I got to where I wanted to be before I was 20." I said, "I was playing with Everton as a youth in their junior teams, getting good coaching, before I was 17." I said, "I coached you," I used to coach soccer teams in Elizabeth.

31:30 We went to camp. We went to Canberra and I won two cups the first year we took them up there. We played against 30 odd teams from all over Australia, in the club competition and we beat all the states in the state competition.

That's impressive.

The next year we won the state competition.

32:00 I have coached some good lads, and we won a couple of local Elizabeth and district championships and Christopher played all the way through the state teams from when he was 11 right up till he was 17 or 18. Then he got picked for Australia in the, after them games in Canberra. So we went up to Sydney to play there in trial matches, and 4 of my boys got picked for Japan. But

32:30 I said, "You have got it all in front of you, you can be anything you want to be, but you have got to put your mind to it and stop thinking because you are a 'soccer', you know, half baked soccer player you go out on a Friday night telling lies to each other, it's not good enough. You gotta put your mind to it." "I'll get there Dad." Blow me down Sheffield United have got a hotel there, they own a hotel where they keep all the, outside the ground, where they keep all the apprentices and everything. And all the young players living away from home, come from other parts of

33:00 Great Britain. I rang up to talk to him one night, and I got on to the Manageress who was in charge of the hotel, and I said I would like to speak to Christopher, "Is that you Mr Higgins?" I said, "Yes, where is he?" She said, "Oh he is a lovely lad, he's in the kitchen doing the washing up." I said, "But how is he going at soccer?" She said, "I am afraid your son's a bit of a playboy." I said, "Don't tell me about it." I said, "He has cost me a fortune,"

- 33:30 I know it. He's got that, thinks he's just going to stroll through life and end up being the best goalkeeper, he was, he had reflexes like a cat. He was, he was really good. Not because he was my boy, but everybody used to say it, they said, don't know where he gets that from, you were bloody useless Clem. So he was, he was fabulous. I thought oh God, I have done the right thing. He came home
- 34:00 from England, playing for Sheffield United reserves. They playing against a local side in a trial match, and before he went he had broken his ankle and the doctor down at the Lyle McEwan had plastered his ankle and trapped his Achilles tendon, so 4 days later they sent for him, the had x-rayed it again they sent for him, but they had done the damage. His ankle was always going to be weak.
- 34:30 So he's playing against this team and he's having a great time, 5 minutes from the end of the game, he jumps up for a ball and comes down puts his foot in a puddle, away it went and he had to come home. Come home with his leg in plaster again. So he couldn't train any more, here in Australia, so he used to just play with the Elizabeth Fields Sunday league side. Which was a shame, but I don't think he would ever have got to the top because his attitude wasn't right, because he just wanted to be a party boy and a good soccer player as well and they
- 35:00 don't mix. Because he was a big good looking lad.

Maybe your dad used to say that about you. He could have been a soccer star but he went into the army.

He said that to me, he said you are fool to go to Australia, you'll be playing for Everton first team soon. That was after I come home. When I went down to Yeoville, to the Naval Air Station, I was playing for Yeoville town, the town team on a Saturday, and playing for the

- 35:30 naval team on a Wednesday. Now to do that I had to get permission from Everton to play for Yeoville, even though I was an amateur I was still their player and they had to get permission from Everton. So I was still learning with Yeoville, went back to Everton, I was killing them. Another year or so with good coaching, I was have been whipping up and down that left wing. It reminds me of the if only.
- 36:00 If only I had stayed in England, then I would not have had my daughter and my beautiful grand kids. And I wouldn't have had a lot of enjoyment with me son coaching him at soccer.

Do you have those kind of regrets?

No, no. Life is too short to have regrets about anything isn't it. I am sorry me marriage didn't work out but I don't regret it. I don't think it was meant to be.

Sometimes that's just the way.

Yes,

- 36:30 I have done the right thing about me children so that's all I am worried about. And me daughter loves me. So that's and me grandchildren love pops so that's that. So it's great. Yeah it's a funny old world. We were playing in a navy game in Poole, Dorset which is near Lands End, right
- 37:00 down on the leg of England down the south coast. And we are having a couple of drinks in the local pub after the match, because it was too far to travel back after the game. Because we finished the game in the nice bright, over there sometime in the year it's midnight and you can still play soccer in the park,
- 37:30 it's that light, so we played late. And we won, so we had a few drinks, not going overboard, just enjoying the company of each other, and I met this beautiful little girl. In the hotel with her mother, they were French, they had snuck across to England when the war was on and they had settled in Pool. I fell in love with her straight away. So we made arrangements to meet in
- 38:00 Yeovil the following Saturday. Anyway like a fool I forgot all about it. I was so wrapped up in me soccer something come up and we were going away with Yeovil probably to play with, passed London, with Essex or Kent. In the Saturday league. And I forgot all about it on the Saturday night to meet her. And that was the end of that, and I thought you stupid boy. And she was, she was fantastic.
- 38:30 Beautiful little girl.

It was one of those if only's.

If only yeah. Yeah. Sally Langdale-Hunt, a girl I met out here before I met my wife. After Maralinga I had 100 days leave. So I ended up at the Crown Hotel at Victor Harbour, I chafed there over the Christmas period, and Sally Langdale-Hunt was

- 39:00 a without a word of a lie, was a Maori princess. She was a high school teacher she was heading for Alice Springs to take charge of the schools up there, so like all school teachers and trainee school teachers, they work hotels to earn money to keep them going while they are learning. And so Sally and I fell madly in love, and at the end of the period, my 100 days there I had to move on to Victoria
- 39:30 to the staff college, and Sally moved up the road to Alice Springs and we just sort of drifted apart, we used to write to each other every day I used to write to her. And then once every 3 days and once, and then it just sort of petered out. And you couldn't have wished to meet a more beautiful girl. All the

travellers that used to come down to the hotel, and we used to go up to the Grosvenor

40:00 and have tea of a night. And all the travellers would be there sending drinks over to her. And I would be sitting there with a big smile on me face like a cat with a bowl of milk. Yeah it's funny isn't it.

Well it's not funny, it's just different priorities, at different times.

You have got to get on with your life.

We'll leave it there Clem.

INTERVIEW ENDS