

Australians at War Film Archive

Winston Parry (Bill) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:34 **Bill if you could start off and give us a bit of a life summary?**

Certainly, good morning. My name is Bill Parry. I was christened Winston Oliver Parry. I was born in August

01:00 1944, on a little farm about 33 miles north-west of Toowoomba, in a little area called Mt Darry. There wasn't too many things there those days; it was pretty isolated. So obviously, at a very early age I decided to go to the city and work. I worked in a few little jobs in the city but always returned to the farm, until I was 17. And when I turned 17, I

01:30 joined the military. I joined the army. My first preference was the Royal Australian Navy, but I approached them when I was 16½ and they told me to go away. I don't know why, but I come to the army. During my army service I was allocated to the Royal Australian Infantry, which I wanted, and at that time in 1962 it was fairly difficult to get the infantry,

02:00 they didn't want any. But I did. There was only 2 in the platoon that I got in. I had various postings to battalions of the Royal Australian Regiment in the army; I started off in Enoggera, and went to Borneo and Malaysia. Actually I went to Malaya as it was called at that time in 1963, and I didn't come back until the end of 1965, almost 1966. In that

02:30 period I had done active service in Borneo, in Sarawak, Borneo, against the Indonesians in the confrontation. Since then it is now classed as active service in the Malaya area too. So that happened later, we did see some there. From there I returned to Australia. I got married, in 1965 sorry, in 1966.

03:00 I then was - I went to Vietnam in 1967, in May 1967 with the 2nd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, came back from there and came back to Enoggera, joined the 8th Battalion, went back to Vietnam in 1969, and when I came home in 1970, or near '71, I tried to get

03:30 back again. And the war sort of stopped for us. They didn't send anyone over in quantities again. From that time I did all sorts of postings in the army, mostly battalions, infantry battalions, up until 1976, I was selected for the 1st Recruiting Unit in Brisbane, and I had a wonderful 2 years travelling around Queensland

04:00 talking to children about the regular army and getting them into the regular army. I enjoyed it tremendously. It gave me some paperwork skills, and it also gave me the skills of interacting with people, which you have to become out of touch with in the army in the main. After recruiting, I went to an instructional unit, training corporals to be

04:30 sergeants. After that I become - I went to reserve on promotion to warrant officer, in Lismore, then to Townsville as a company sergeant major, and then from Townsville I went to Kapooka, I was discharged from the regular army in 1986, the rank of warrant officer class II. After a few months, I joined the emergency reserve, and I did it at a

05:00 time when they wanted people. So actually from 1986 to 1997, I was recalled and I did full-time service and sort of working on a what they call a D-40 I think it is. And I worked with the army virtually with other security jobs to boot right up until 1997. So In 1997, I suffered a... My

05:30 health was breaking down, I suffered a blood clot, and I was discharged from the reserve forces, so that's about entails my military life. After that, I did a bit of security work and I was granted the invalid pension for my knees, back, my nerves and also for my - well not my blood clot, that's still

06:00 going, but that comes under compensation, because it wasn't war time. And virtually I have started to write books now, I have been writing books for 3 years now, and obviously they take a little time to come out, but I have achieved 2, plus a second edition of the first book. That just about winds it up in a summary about my wild and chequered life.

06:30 Is that all right, for 5 minutes.

What would be your earliest memory?

If you read my book called A Walk Through Life, we would find that, but I don't think I can say it here, because it's a little bit, you know. My earliest memory was about 5 years old,

07:00 and I can remember you know how we lived on the farm with the lights out, because I think they still thought the war was on at that time. I don't really think so but the Korean War was on, and we were sort of isolated. We didn't have electric lighting, no refrigeration and that's the sort of way I grew up. I went

07:30 to school on a horse with my brother. For the first couple of years, about 5 kilometres away, and after that I went to school on a pushbike, but things were pretty slow and isolated in those days.

What's the earliest memory in your book?

Well, if you want to know I'll tell you. My earliest memory was standing on a table,

08:00 on the kitchen table, and I was just recently circumcised, and those days it must have just come in where circumcision is dangerous. Because now they don't want to do it you know. And for some reason I didn't have this operation until I was 4½, 5 and that's the first memory. I was standing on the table

08:30 in the nude, my mother was bathing, and the kids were all laughing at me, all me brothers and sisters, and jeering at me. That was my first memory and that's the best way I can put it for you. It's put a bit different in the book.

What a memory. What was it like growing up on the farm?

09:00 Well it was fairly, the other kids were all grown up. The other kids were sort of grown up, and I was sort of lonely, wasn't so much lonely, but I was left to my own devices. When the other kids would play with me, they would sort of use me as sort of a

09:30 whipping boy, and I can still remember they used to call me Homer, because every time they started to give me a hard time, I would want to go home. And I can remember they called me birdie, because I used to stutter. So, and one particular day, they almost had me drowned. My big brother left to do something, and he said, "Don't take that kid near the

10:00 rock pools." We had very deep rock pools, about 20 or 30' deep. And they used to fill up in the storms, and they used to crab in there with lines. And, they took me down there because I wanted to go there anyway. And they were on the other side, and I was on my own and I followed my... This yabby [freshwater crayfish] got my cotton and it disappeared, and I followed it into the rock pool. And I almost got drowned; I remember that very well, I was about 6.

10:30 And my sister - my brother was laughing. But my sister she was about maybe 11, and she jumped in, and it was a wonder she didn't drown herself, and grabbed my Panama hat. And I was going down for the third time, and that was the only thing she could get, and she grabbed it and got me out. And I remember lying on - there was rocks and green grass, and I remember lying on the green grass bringing

11:00 all this water up and that. I know they laid me down on me stomach. So they must have known that. I don't know what they did to me, I don't think they knew enough to do that, but I vomited all this garbage up and I lived, but it was very close. And when my brother came home, he went - you know, he nearly went mad because he told them not to, and my father and mother belted them all. I don't know whether they belted them, but

11:30 that was one, that was close. I have had a few close ones since then, but that was a close one.

What kind of farm was it?

Mixed. It was 160 acres, very fertile in the Darling Downs, and it was cattle, not cattle, milking cows, about 30 milking cows. You would carry about 40. And they grew grain, you know he

12:00 ploughed and milked cows. You know, dairy you would call it.

So did you have to help out on the farm a lot?

Well, the other kids did, but because I was younger and there was such a gap, no. I always used to boast about I had never milked a cow, and I have never milked a cow in my life. So no, the only thing I did, I used to cut all the wood,

12:30 and get the cows sometimes, but I never milked. Unless I had to. But they never sort of made me do all the work. Of course I was going to school. Where all the other kids had to do that. So I never ever liked the farm, I wanted to get away. You know, so no I didn't. I used to shoot the cows for me Dad, when they got down in the drought, because he

13:00 couldn't do it. He didn't like doing it and he would call me, and I was only 10, and he would say, "Make

sure you hit it in the right place.” That’s my... I used to do that because I could do it.

Was your dad involved in WW2?

No, no. He went to join when it was on, well I think they all had to. But he couldn’t get in, he had bad lungs or something. He wasn’t

- 13:30 taken. “No, you’ll never hear a shot. You are out.” So he never went. But I don’t think he was an army type. But I had uncles in the war and all that, you know. Not uncles, his father’s brothers all went to war.

Can you remember the men coming back?

Not from WW2, bear in mind I was born in ‘44, they come back

- 14:00 about ‘45. No, I was too young. The first glimpses or understanding I got of a war was the Korean War. Because when anything happened on a farm, you can imagine if a car went up a road once a day, you’d think who that was. But they used to fly their Vampires over our place, I think they were Vampires, and they used to fly that low in training from
- 14:30 Amberley [air force base], for the Korean War, you would see the pilot, and that was my greatest thing. I would run around and I would dream about that. You know if anyone in a uniform was seen I would look at him and see what he was because we didn’t see much of that. And the next of course when I started to read papers and all that. Well I left home at 13½ so
- 15:00 you know I was pretty well advanced for my age. I remember the first guy that got killed in the Training Team in 1960 in Vietnam. And of course in 1960 I was 14 or something, and I thought, “I want to go there. I might be able to get there.” And that was one of my aims, you know, you know when I joined the army. Not so
- 15:30 much Vietnam because there were only a few there. And that went between ‘60 and ‘65 before they put the main people in. So Malaya was my actual aim. Sorry.

Just before we get to there, tell me about your schooling days. What were they like?

Well they were pretty miserable. I didn’t like school very much; I was not a good student,

- 16:00 I was good at some things. I went to a small country school. I think the nominal roll read about 28 kids in about eight grades, 1-8, and the teacher, there was one teacher, so he had in some classes he had three or four, in others he had one, so I don’t know how he went there. But I was
- 16:30 very poor at maths, and I could always write, and I liked that, but I didn’t quite understand or comprehend nouns and verbs, and I remember you know I got into a lot of trouble with this teacher about that, so I possibly wasn’t a good student. I left early, I left in 1958,
- 17:00 I was goin’ for my scholarship. The year was coming up. I probably would have passed it. I wasn’t too bad at that stage, because my mother had put a lot of work into me. I was one of the best of the kids, but I wouldn’t say I was great. I left before my scholarship, another teacher change, and I had an altercation with him, and I pushed the blackboard one day, and the big wall clock fell on his head, and after that
- 17:30 he asked my mother if I could leave. I wasn’t expelled, but I was sort of counselled out. So I left school at 13½, and without any scholarship or anything, and I probably had the potential to pass the scholarship, but yes. Do you want to know a funny story? If you have got time.

We have got time.

Okay, you see

- 18:00 being a bush school, the kids were sort of phased into... Because their fathers were farmers, they were phased into a calf club. We had to have a calf for the agricultural guy to come and judge, and it was called ‘Calf Club Day’. And they give ribbons and all sorts of things. Now I was no more interested in cows than I was in an astronaut
- 18:30 in those days. And there wasn’t any. So hence I used to tell lies about the calf. You know you would have to go through from January, and, “I selected my calf. It is brown.” Well I always selected the calf but I never really selected it. And I used to make all these great, what do you call them, submissions in the book, saying, “My calf is progressing well. My calf is progressing well.” And this went right through
- 19:00 for 9 months. And I would throw in a little, “She was groomed yesterday.” Never groomed, I didn’t even pick one. So when the time was coming up in the 12 months, for me to show that calf and to lead it around, I didn’t have a calf, and they are hard to train, so I used to say, “It died.” So I used
- 19:30 all sorts of things, like bursting on the clover, used the trocar, it died. Right up. This went for about 4 years, so obviously they were suspect, they must have been. So the last year, my parents said, “You have got to have one, you have got to get one.” So about 6 months into the time we did get one. Which was friendly, so I took it to

- 20:00 school on a lead with my sister on a horse behind me. Well we managed to get to school quietly, it was judged, it didn't do anything it was supposed to, it wouldn't lead around, I got a green ribbon, it was probably the last ribbon in the – so I did achieve that, but my sister had gone home and when we finished about 3 o'clock, I went to take the calf home and it bolted.
- 20:30 And I had the quickest 3 kilometre run I have ever had in me life. Because I wasn't going to let the calf go because my father would have killed me. It was a nice looking cow. Cherry was its name, or Buttercup. So Buttercup was gone, I was in full flight, so that was my sort of school days. I really detested that. I have still got the calf club book where I put in these admissions
- 21:00 on how it went. So my school days weren't really something I would write home about.
- I love the name Buttercup.**
- I think it was Buttercup or Cherry.
- A great name. Pretty little thing.**
- Were you still travelling to school on the horse towards the end?**
- No, no. I was at the other school where we couldn't go because my mother didn't like the teacher. But she died or left or
- 21:30 something, and I could go to the closer school. Because we had this teacher in the other school who had been there for 30 years or something, and the other kids got into trouble with her and when she – as I said I don't know whether she died or whether she retired or what – but when she left, I went to that school so it was that school. The other one was further away. I would have dropped dead before I got home from the other one, because it was miles. We had to ride horses to that one.
- 22:00 I said 4 but it was probably, probably about 7, long way. The other one was 3.
- Did you ever get involved in motorbikes?**
- Yes, I got involved in motorbikes. I was the – I bought a bike in between me trips to work in Brisbane. I bought a bike at 15, a big Matchless 350, big bike. And I used to ride it to the
- 22:30 dances, hide in the scrub, and walk to the dances and then creep back, get on the bike, whenever the dance ended and come back home. I had a bit, well I didn't have too much because I went to the army at 17. You know I had long hair, I didn't fit in with the local group. You know I definitely was not destined to be a
- 23:00 farmer. But the girls liked me.
- Why do you think you weren't destined to be a farmer?**
- I didn't like it. I didn't want to stay there. I didn't like the quietness of the country, although I do now, but I just wanted to go out and get into the world. I was never one to stop trying to do something. I am still the same. That's why I write books.
- 23:30 There's a lot of vets [veterans] that sit at home and cry in their milk and think about Vietnam and this sort of thing, and talk to their mates. I don't do that. I really like to go ahead. Even when I am 80 years old I will be doing something, you know. I don't like to stagnate be doing something, you know. I don't like to stagnate because that's the way to kill your brain, and become a... some guys I see of 51 and
- 24:00 God, they look about 80, you know, their minds all completely old. And that's something you must keep achieving something, or you'll go like that. And that's my personal opinion, and not all are like that of course, doing something, you know. I don't like to stagnate because that's the way to kill your brain, and become a ... there's a lot of blokes doing things ...
- So you left school, what next?**
- Well, I wanted to go to the
- 24:30 city.
- What was in your head about what you wanted to do?**
- Just get out, get out and do something, work, get money, get to Brisbane where all the chicks [girls] were. I liked chicks. I still do. And that's what I wanted to do. And luckily I had a sister in Brisbane, married and gone to Brisbane, and in those days, it was about '60s, I left school in 1958 so I
- 25:00 left home about '59. I left home pretty early and I went to the city and I did... I got a job at a bowling green; I think it was a bowling green in Ashgrove. And I used to ride me bike from Enoggera to Ashgrove, and work on the bowling green. They were going to make me the greenkeeper's assistant. But after about a month at that of squeegeeing the lawns in the frost at 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning, and the
- 25:30 tediousness, and there's nothing exciting about it. I decided to... Big money, it was 10 guineas a week,

which is £10/10/-. And I decided to try something else. So at that stage I probably went home to the farm for a while. Because you know, my parents were sort of easy on me because I was the last kid you know, and they didn't make me do anything. They sort of let me go a bit.

26:00 So I come home and chopped the wood for a while, and gathered the cows, and went to a few dances, and upset a few locals and the police because I got drunk one night at there. At the dances, so...

What happened?

Well it was funny, I got drunk on, I will never forget it, it was '99' they wouldn't sell it now, it would kill a dog. 99 vintage or something, Mildura. And I drank a couple of these bottles, and I don't know what I

26:30 did, but the policeman got my, the local policeman in the next town seen my father, in town day and he said, "You've got a son about 18?" He said, "I have got 3 sons, yeah." he said, "One's in the navy, one's in New Zealand." or not NZ at the time but Brisbane working. And he said, "But what about the 18-year-old, like is he home?" He said, "No, he's gone." He said, "What about the other son?" He said, "He's about

27:00 14." He said, "Is he the one that was drunk?" And my Dad come home and said, "The police are after you." So anyway 99 vintage, I never ever drunk it since. Oh they wouldn't have it now. So I probably went back to the city, I worked in a tannery in Bishop Street, in Kelvin Grove, \$15 a week, hard, very difficult, but I was a big boy. And then I left that and went and worked in a

27:30 case maker's factory, and probably went home again. After that, I worked in a potato factory. Gone now it is. I went to the shows, I was... Oh, when I left school I went straight to the city and become a showman. I was selling fairy floss, toffee apples and waffles in NSW [New South Wales] and Sydney and I found myself in Sydney at about 13, 14 years

28:00 old, with no money. So I borrowed £15 at the time, off this poor old grandmother, the guy I knew. And I come back home, and I sent her the money of course, because I am an honest person. So that's basically that.

So you first wanted to join up with the navy?

I wanted to join the navy. My brother was in the navy. At that stage he was

28:30 out, he did 6 years. And I wanted to join navy because that would have suited me you know. The ports and the travel.

What were your other reasons apart from your brother?

I just wanted to travel. I wanted to get overseas. From the time I can remember, I looked at books and I looked at you know, I just wanted to go overseas and that was my ambition. The navy would have done that, but

29:00 for some reason I can't explain, I went to the army, and the army rejected me.

But the navy had rejected you?

They only rejected me because I was too young, and they told me to go home. And I sort of got upset with them, and I went to the recruiting officer and I tried to join the army. Now they rejected me, because you can imagine, it was the '60s. Everybody in the '60s

29:30 had a very narrow view on life, I had tattoos which I got when I was about 14. Not all these, but here I am fronting up to the army, to join up, navy was okay. But fronting up to the army, and recruiting in the army at that time, their counsellors were overweight they didn't come from an exciting branch, they come from psych [psychiatry] corps, the most

30:00 stuffy people you could ever find in the military. And here they were two big psych corporals I didn't know at the time they were psych corporals, sitting in the booth. "What do you want?" I said, "I want to join the army." You can imagine, a skinny kid, couple of tattoos, I was their meat. So they said they didn't like me, because in the '60s you wore ties, everything was conservative, you know. And

30:30 so they gave me, they didn't even give me a test. They just sort of told me to go away. So I tried again and they said, "No." So I thought, "I am not going to get beaten by these characters." so I wrote to the minister for the army, who was a bloke by the name of JO Cramer at the time. He would be gone now, that was '62. So JO Cramer must have been a very good

31:00 politician, a very good minister, because he wrote me a letter. Liberal Party he was, conservative. He said, "We are investigating your situation." I was just a kid, I was uneducated, I wasn't educated, I could write fairly well and I wrote this letter enough, it must have been enough to impact for this man to take credence of it. So he said, "We are investigating your

31:30 situation and we'll get back to you."

What did you write in the letter?

I wrote that the two psychologists – the two overweight people, treated me like a dog, words to, I can't remember exactly, because I didn't keep copies, there was no such things as you know, there was no such thing as, in the bush you know. And I said that they didn't like the look of me because I had tattoos, and they immediately

- 32:00 said I was unsuitable for the military, and they were at the desk. And they did. So he investigated and then I received a letter saying report at the recruiting office, take your clothes, whatever, and if you pass your medical you'll be enlisted. So they still put me through me psychological test. Which are not very
- 32:30 hard anyway, but they are tricky. Kids do them now. But in our stage – you know, in those days they did not teach you 2, 4, 6, what's the next number, the kids do it now in grade 1. A star, two stars, 3 stars, what's the next formation? A star, 2 stars, 3 stars what's the next formation? We were never taught that. This is what they threw at me, and I didn't know what they were talking about. So it didn't matter
- 33:00 though, I got in because I had the letter. So I beat them, I beat the system, and I beat the system a few times since then. You can always beat the system if you have got enough integrity and perseverance. But that's how I got in.

So you got in, and what happened then?

Well, off to Kapooka, I was about 17 and a bit.

33:30 **What was your parents' reaction?**

Well, they signed the papers. Well they knew what I wanted to do. And remember now, my parents were getting on, and they sort of let me do what I always sort of was given more freedom than the others, and they probably wrote me off. I don't know. But they didn't. They were good parents, lovely parents. So

- 34:00 yes I went to Kapooka and I had bad luck there, because I was only there for 3 weeks in a platoon, and in Kapooka there is only 11 weeks, now there's less, but there was 11 weeks, and you have to really achieve everything pretty fast. So in about 2 weeks' time after I got there, I was
- 34:30 in hospital because I had come from Queensland, down into Wagga [Wagga Wagga] in the middle of March, and it was cold. And no hot water in those days, it was cold showers. Everything. Nothing. So I ended up in hospital, it was the greatest, beautiful, I was so sick. After I was there a couple of weeks, I went back of course, and instead of sending me to a platoon that was just
- 35:00 marching in, they sent me to a platoon that had already done a little bit more time than the 2 weeks I had done. And bear in mind the first two weeks in the army, you don't really assimilate too much. Especially when you are sick. So I was at sea. I really was at sea; I didn't know what was going on. But I sort of picked up about the ninth week, I
- 35:30 started to understand all this. It come together. I wanted to go home, I wanted to get out. The officers, said, he was a good officer, and he, a really good officer, an armoured corps bloke actually, and he become the, anyway doesn't matter. He's in charge of Legacy now I think. Formby was his name, and he was a real good young officer. And he said, "Look." you know, "I have got 25 in the platoon that
- 36:00 want to go home. Don't worry about it, have a go." And I did, I had a go and I achieved and I turned out one of the top 10 in the platoon of about 40.

Were you just worried that you couldn't do it, was that why you wanted to leave?

Oh no, yeah it would have been psychologically I suppose I thought, "I could never do all this." And I suppose I was homesick even though I was away. The army was... When you join the

- 36:30 army, you go into a different culture and you can imagine us sitting in this room today, talking, we are divorced of everything apart from when Connie dropped the plate. But when you join the army, you are completely in another world. You don't see the outside world, they break you of all your ideas. They do this because they
- 37:00 must do it to get you thinking that way. It's hard, it's very difficult, and they still do it the same way. Even though people say they don't, they do, because I was at the recruit training centre when I was a warrant officer in 1985/86. They still do the same thing, they have to, and then after they let you go back again, and you get the soldier wandering around and he's forgotten about that. But yes, I wanted to get out, and this is
- 37:30 what Lieutenant Formby said at the time. He said, "No, you stay and give it a go." And I did and I become one of the top 10, and I was the only – in the top 10 you have got your choice of what you can go to, what branch or corps they call it. And I wanted to go to infantry because they went to Malaya see, and consequently I was given that privilege.

- 38:00 And away I went. So from there I went to Enoggera to the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment, and they were... There was only three battalions in those days, they were pentropic [system of military organisation]. There was only about 1000 in each battalion, that was all we had. There was 1, 2 and 3 Battalions, and 2 was in Malaya, 1 was in Sydney

- 38:30 and 3 was in Enoggera. Now, from there I was selected to go to Malaya, which I was really happy about. So at about 17½, too early, I should have been 18, they took me to Malaya and I was on the advanced party on the, I almost remembered it, yes 13th July 1963. I
- 39:00 was on the advanced party going to Malaya and I thought I was the king. I had achieved it. And that's what I wanted. I was a bit young, but they let me go, and they even sent me on the advanced party. So in those days they must have overlooked a bit of what they can't do now.
- 39:22 End of tape

Tape 2

- 00:32 **So, in that tell us a bit about your rookie training, tell us the specifics of it?**

Well, Kylie [interviewer], rookie training probably deals with fitness, which you are not fit when you go. It deals with assimilation of the situation, which is getting up in the

- 01:00 morning and doing your bed, and putting boards in your bed, they don't do that now. But it also entails weapon training, and drill, which I detested and still do, on the parade ground. Weapons I liked, map reading, all basically it's infantry orientated subjects so that when you diversify into a job, we'll call it a job, a corps,
- 01:30 in the army, you are basically an infantryman. But of course engineers get trained to build bridges, and clear bombs and all that. Where infantry go ahead and specialise more in infantry stuff. So it's map reading, and fitness and all that type of thing. And that's what I couldn't sort of get all this stuff, and I couldn't get map reading and all this. And I passed
- 02:00 that, I come good, and then you've got stages of fitness you have got to do. Now on the test you had to do these insteps to the bar, now what insteps to the bar are, you hold the bar, it's about 6' high, you jump up and get it, and you roll your body through your arms so that your bum is pointing down that way and you come down again and you had to do 6 of these. Do you think I could get...
- 02:30 It's a trick, it's a method, you have just got to jerk yourself, I couldn't get it, no-one could teach me. I looked like failing this all over this stupid... I passed everything else, no worries. So the last day, they said, "Go away and do some practice and do what you have got to do." And I was doing this, and not achieving anything. And an instructor came over, an infantry guy, and we were lucky, we had most infantry instructors in our platoon,
- 03:00 and he said, "Look, this is what you do." And he told me how to jerk up, and I got it, so then I had done about 8, and he said, "Right, in the morning, not now, you go over here and we'll let you go out and you try that for a while, and make sure you got it again." So he watched me yeah, no problem, so I passed it no problem. So when the physical training instructors come with their, they don't let anyone go the, you know. Their
- 03:30 mother, they'd let their mother die, you know. And passed no worries, and the infantry bloke was standing there smiling. So that was the only thing. No infantry training, sorry the recruit training was good. I had a good officer, in that second platoon, by the name of Krasnov. He lives up Noosa somewhere, he writes books now, like most officers do. I wasn't an officer, but that was one of the reasons I write books. But anyway he
- 04:00 was a good man and he put us through some good things we were excited about. He put a live machine gun on fixed lines, and we run through this valley and he fired over our heads, which we thought was great, I thought it was great, because for Kapooka in those days, they wouldn't do it now, they can't do it now.

What guns were you issued then?

The self loading rifle, they had it for 30 years, the long

- 04:30 rifle, the 7.62 self loading rifle. That had just come in, so I didn't have the .303. I tell you something that went out about 2 weeks after I joined, oh no, we had it a bit, we did have it, was this gate where you had to put this powder on it, they were terrible, but it sort of ended after Kapooka. We had the Bren gun, we had to do and
- 05:00 the Owen gun, yes the Owen gun, Bren gun, Owen gun and the self loading rifle and the pistol, no not the pistol.

What about your uniform, what uniform were you issued with?

Oh, in those days there was no dress uniform, just greens. And there was a winter uniform. It was called battle dress. And that sort of dress carried on right through.

- 05:30 Well, in the '50s or the late '50s, the army had a good dress, but in the '60s when I joined, it was terrible, and it looked nothing, and it didn't look very good. Summer wise you had no uniform, only your summer greens. Which was hard. And they didn't look good. And the battle dress which you only wore in the winter. Not good uniforms at all.
- 06:00 **So in that early recruit training, did you find that easy to assimilate into the army structure?**
- No. For a while I wanted to go home, it was hard for me and I was orientated that way. But after a while, with the instructors, they sort of teach you, and if you have got a bit of potential, they look after you and make sure you learn things, where you are down in some areas.
- What about the hierarchy**
- 06:30 **and the authority and all that?**
- That didn't worry me too much, we had pretty good people. We had some mongrels, I thought at the time, but probably half of it was acting, because I learnt that later you know, to be a good instructor you have to be half an actor, so people can remember. So no I didn't resent any hierarchy. They were all pretty good.
- 07:00 WW2, Korean War, Malaya, all pretty good. But the main feature in a soldier's life is the non commissioned officer, the warrant officer down. He's the person who, you know, you look up to, not the officer. But we had good officers, it was no problem.
- And did you have much leave in that time?**
- We had 5 days' leave in the middle where we came home
- 07:30 I didn't come home. I went to Sydney with a guy to Punchbowl. It wasn't a real good 5 days either. I should have come home actually. Then after that break, you could go to Wagga, and I think we got into Wagga about twice. It was all curfew, until 10 o'clock. We went to chase girls and didn't get any, you know all that. Because they didn't want all these log head
- 08:00 soldiers. But Wagga has changed. When you can grow a little bit of hair in the army you are better off in Wagga. I did all right in Wagga. I went all right when I went back as a warrant officer.
- So how did... Tell us about when you found out you were going to Malaya?**
- Well, it was great. I was excited and you know I couldn't have cared if they sent me for 4 years.
- 08:30 They sent me for nearly 3.
- How long did they tell initially you were going to be gone?**
- Oh, it was a 2 year posting. Yeah, it ended up in our case about 2 years 9 months, because of the Indonesian confrontation, but that's another story I will tell you about when you come to that.
- So at that stage what did you know about Malaya?**
- Well I only knew that it was Asia, and that it was overseas, there would be
- 09:00 pretty girls there. And that's all I knew. We didn't have any sort of briefings about anything in those days. People rave on about the old army and that, but really they didn't tell you very much. In Malaya, at that time, the hostility, it's a strange situation; the battalion we relieved didn't even get a medal.
- 09:30 But now, they have the Active Service Medal for the border, and the other one there, the ASM, so the poor devils didn't get that until about 30 years later. So we were actually coming into a place that was peace time. It wasn't peace time; you were sort of on special service. And the Australian government are
- 10:00 wonderful people for camouflaging situations, and really you know it wasn't anything, but now it's been proved and they got 2 medals out of it. But in our time we were just going there and we knew there was some border operations against the communist terrorists. Pretty low key, although one of the company's had
- 10:30 contacts, shot a few. But actually what happened to me was our company only went to the border once. You know, commitments and all that sort of thing. And the border was for 3 months, and you just lived in the bush, and it would have been good. But just before we went to the border, I become very sick, and I went down with a malarial or they called it
- 11:00 proxy of unknown origin, PUO. They didn't know if it was left over...whatever. And many, many blood tests later, they couldn't put a finger on it, but they treated me for malaria type stuff. And I went down with that, and my company left, and I was in hospital. Then they sent me to the coal station up in Parap in, it's a British Hospital anyhow, in the Cameron highlands.
- 11:30 Beautiful place, they grow tea up there, magnificent country, beautiful and I was up there in convalescence, and I come back to Malacca and I was - had my gear packed and I was joining my

company at the border, but the Indonesians landed, 120 parachuted into the Mura River, and everyone in the camp was bang, grabbed, went to a reaction company, which was

12:00 A company, and I was in B company. And away we went down and we fired a few shots, and that was my first shot in anger. And we carried ammunition in, and there was mortars going in and I was like Lord Jim, and it was wonderful. And that was October 1964, and I was about 19 or something, and that was my first action. So in actual

12:30 fact, when the guys come back from the border, all us blokes were back there, were sort of the people who had a real big action. And from then of course, things changed in Malaya. Our big exercises stopped, we were given live rounds, we were patrolling beaches, we were going out searching junks off the coast, it become excellent.

13:00 You know, the Australian Army, when they have to in active service, is a great army. In peace time they are - I don't like it. But in war time when they have to, they drop all the garbage and they can really get into action. And they did. And they were good to work with.

Just to take a step back, how long were you in infantry training before you...?

The

13:30 required time, although we were longer. Because, sorry I am jumping ahead, what happened was, strangely enough, my platoon commander in infantry was a guy called Pat Beale, he is now a Military Cross, DSO [Distinguished Service Order]. Pat Beale was my platoon commander in Ingleburn, which was the infantry centre. And because

14:00 they said we were the best platoon - I think we were the only platoon that could do it at the time - we were stopped from marching out. We had our march out parade, but we didn't go. We went to enemy the exercise with 3rd Battalion, the one I had come to on a big exercise called 'Nutcracker'. Oh, everyone was on it, we had Asians on it, Americans on it, it was a pretty big exercise. There was troops everywhere in the Singleton area,

14:30 mountains as big as. So we did that for about I think all up about 2 months, that took us. So I marched out of infantry centre to 3rd Battalion a little bit later because of that exercise. So I was only in Enoggera from about the November 1962 till

15:00 July 1963. So I... Very short time. And I was overseas, which suited me because life in the army in Australia in peace time, I did not like. I was thinking of shooting through, I really was. I didn't like all the... Well, I don't want to say it, but all the garbage. But when we went

15:30 overseas, I loved that, that was my forte. So yeah. infantry centre was good, great, no problem at all, loved it. Went out in Sydney every weekend when we were off. Went to the Cross [Kings Cross]. Those days the Cross was wonderful, believe you me. Went to the pinball machines, went to everything you know. Had a great time.

Why was the Cross wonderful?

16:00 It was in the '60s and it was wide open. No restrictions, no nothing. It was wild and it was good. Yeah.

So your time in Enoggera, what did you do there?

Just trained. But we... It was different those days, we were going to Malaya. I went down to the company that I was going to Malaya with,

16:30 and remember it was splitting up from a big battalion to a small battalion to go to Malaya, so that's why they got rid of a lot of people. A lot of them didn't go. And I went down there and it wasn't like nowadays they'd be putting you through the Canungra, and all this. Didn't do it, we just trained ourselves, had the exercises as a battalion, and away we went, we were ready. But there was no overkill about jungle training,

17:00 and going to courses, it wasn't... They have specialised a lot of things in the army now which is not good. And we were trained as a battalion, and they trained us and they looked after us. And now you go to different schools, and you are trained by some guy that hasn't got the experience your own people have got. But anyway, it was good.

Did they give you any lectures about malaria?

17:30 Oh yeah. Not as much as Vietnam, but we had lectures and we had needles, not a lot of lectures. Probably on VD [venereal disease]. We had a few over there. We had most of our lectures when we got to Malaya. When you used to go to Malaya on those days, there was a curfew on you. When you were new you had to have acclimatisation, where you marched with your packs off and packs on and then weapons, to get

18:00 used to the heat. And you wasn't allowed out of the camp. A big garrison it was: British, New Zealand, Australian. Beautiful camp. You wasn't allowed out of there for a month. So you were sort of watched. But I went out, I went out about the second week. I tested the water.

Where did you go?

I went to the local girlie house,

18:30 and the bar, and yeah. So...

So prior to leaving, did you have any pre-embarkation leave?

Yes we did. That was all very well done in those days. In the army those days, as a private soldier, you did not have to worry about anything. The guy in the orderly room did all your leave, he looked after you, you just

19:00 had to ask someone, it was done. Present day army, you go and you want your leave, they will throw you a form and tell you to do it. You know, they don't even call them orderly rooms any more, they call them front shop windows or something. And the poor old soldiers that see it, if he can't write and understand, he doesn't go on leave. It's probably not quite as bad as that, but it's not good. And that changed in about the 1985, 1987,

19:30 that started to come in. Look after yourself. Not good.

So what was your pre-embarkation leave like?

Oh I think I come back to the farm. And I don't think it was anything spectacular. Yeah. I think we probably had BRL, or ARL as they call it - annual leave - and I think we went a few months later.

20:00 I don't think it was this Vietnam thing of 5 days or anything like that. It was all taken in your stride. You have 5 days' leave, you go home and come back and when they were ready you went. It was not any special.

What was your parents' reaction to you?

Oh well they were happy that I was happy, and you knew what I wanted. Yeah. They were

20:30 good parents. You see I sort of was growing up. We didn't have a lot of money, but we had money, we didn't owe anybody anything, and we sort of... There was no great dramas. With me, as I said I was sort of more, I had more freedom than the others, because they were getting old and

21:00 that's about it.

So how did you get over to Malaya?

Aeroplane, I think the old, they don't ride them any more, but Qantas took us. Can't remember the plane, but it was good. And we stopped in Darwin, it was very hot, it was the middle of winter here, and we got to Darwin, it was summer, it was

21:30 hot, it just hit you when you got off the plane. And we got there later on in the night, and we were loaded in buses and taken from the airport to the camp. And when we got to the camp, the platoon I had in infantry centre who I thought was very hard at the time, he was the first one on the bus,

22:00 he had been over there for 6 months, reinforcement for 2nd Battalion. He said, "All you B Company blokes, follow me." I thought, "No, not again. I got him again." But Pat Beale was there again. Very young man at the time.

What was the atmosphere like on the plane?

Quiet. There was a lot of married guys with us, most of,

22:30 not all of them, a quarter of the NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] were married. But they had to go unaccompanied for a while until they got houses. Yeah, it was no big deal. Remember there was no war on, we weren't sort of going to fight a war.

So what were your first impressions?

Of Malaya? Oh wonderful. The Chinese

23:00 lights and the shrines, and the Muslims going to, it was the time, probably the time we got to... By the time we got to our camp in Malacca, and I think we were ferried from Singapore from the plane, but I can't remember that, that's one thing I can't remember, where we landed. But anyway we... The Muslims were all goin' to church and the lights were on and the

23:30 smells of the jack fruit and you know I thought, "This'll do me." Yeah. I liked it. Liked it straight away. Then when we got to our camp, wonderful organised, beautiful camp.

Can you explain the camp?

Oh yes, it would be... It was brick buildings, big verandas, like we got here around the house; they were right around the buildings for the cool.

24:00 The platoon NCOs had a little room on each end up the top on each building, although they were long buildings, and they were built high so that the air would get in, beautiful windows for that area. Sort of made for the climate, and everything was brick and trees, you know, it was a nice camp, very nice camp. That was at

24:30 Malacca. Called Teranak Camp, some people call it Turanda, but it's spelt T-E-R-A-N-A-K, I think. But I am not sure, I think it was, very nice, very nice place.

And the British and New Zealanders were there?

Yeah, they were. Their battalions were on the other side of us, around us. We were in a straight line, and the engineers and the medics and all

25:00 those people, you know the minor units that you can't do without - dental corps, engineers, signals corps, you know - they were all there somewhere. And we had... There was a beautiful hospital there. It was a well organised camp. You have gotta bear in mind the British Army are the top army, and if I had my day over

25:30 again I would have gone to the British Army from the Australian Army. After I did a few years. And a lot of guys are doing that in the later day now. A lot of our blokes are going to the British Army. They have got a bad name, the British, of being regimental and that, but they are not all that regimental. They are pretty modern now. They could really... Their logistics, their

26:00 thinking was very good. It was well run, and we came under the British.

Did you cross over with the other battalion that was leaving?

Yes, yes, they had a rear party, and they didn't train us or anything, but they gave us lectures, and the doctor there was a... I think he was left over there for

26:30 a while. And we had lectures on VD, and everybody was worried about VD in those days. And they would show you these gruesome movies you know, which didn't worry you at all. You know, you walked outside the door and just went like that you know. And they told us about the situation there and what you did. The daily routine. And we sort of followed that battalion in their

27:00 routine. It was a good battalion too, the 2nd Battalion. And they did a really good hand-over, good experienced men. And we had a lot stay with us, reinforcements, halfway through their tour. They were very valuable because they knew what was going on. The army will always do that, they will always leave reinforcements with you. In most cases. Vietnam was the same.

So they stayed back to help the trainees?

27:30 No, they become one of us. They were drafted into our platoons. We didn't have any formal training, we had lectures. But those people could tell you more about the situation. The dhobi wallah, the guy that washed your clothes. The boot boy - was he honest? What you do in the bush, so what you carry in the field, what you don't carry. You know, because you don't know at this stage. If you listen to the army, they'll give a

28:00 sheet of paper saying, you know, you carry this and you carry that. And really it is not right, local knowledge is always good. They didn't over there, but as I said, when the Australian Army goes overseas, and I hope it's the same now, I have heard other stories, but they do drop a lot of the way they carry on here.

What had you taken with you?

I beg your pardon?

What had you taken with you?

28:30 A few civilian clothes, and your field kit. But we got issued, no sorry, we got that over there, we got British stuff, we were issued British weapons. Because bear in mind in Australia those days, we were still carrying the pack they carried in WW2, up the Kokoda Trail. Which was the worst pack in the world; you couldn't put anything in it. It had no pockets, no nothing. We have come a long way. And we were

29:00 wearing American webbing, which was designed for the Americans, and I don't want to go too far into it, but in the infantry in those days, in the [United] States, and they still do it in some areas, your field stuff for the night comes out to you. So that stuff we were wearing from America, that webbing was designed not to carry food in, and bedding, because they didn't do that, like in Hawaii this stuff comes out. So we were carrying

29:30 ungodly gear, we wear carrying WW2 stuff, we were carrying American webbing, that - well it was okay but it wasn't too good. When we went to Malaya, we got all the British stuff; we got British uniforms, British clothes, the lot. We got their cool shirts, their shirts in the night you wear to keep you warm. Because it gets cold in the jungle sometimes. So everything was from the British, which was tops.

30:00 Jungle boots - they weren't very good, they give you tinea for the rest of your life. But they were light,

but they were about the worst item I think.

Was there any alterations made to the British uniform that - so that you could tell the Australians in them?

Oh yeah, in camp we wore different, we wore Australian patches on it, but they were basically British uniforms. We wore the hose tops, the putties,

30:30 you know the things you wrap around, what do they call them, like gaiters, but you wrap them around. It's a bit of cloth. Puggaree, not a puggaree, putties, I think it is, we wore all that stuff, shorts, and long trousers in the bush. All British stuff, good, good uniform. And the webbing was good, because it had pockets on it, well they were all there.

31:00 And those days the Australians, the army seemed to have more common sense. But they didn't have this great big drive to be Australians, you know must be Australian, must do this, must be our own. Like, you know they bought a gun off the British about 20 years ago, so what do they do, they change the gun, it was no good, just because they wanted to say it was Australian.

31:30 They did in those days.

So you still had your Australian guns, the ones you were issued with?

Oh yeah, well so did the British, they had the same weapons. But the 7.62 SLR [self loading rifle] which was 7.62 here, the Bren gun here was .303 which was WW2, but when we got over there the British Bren gun was 7.62 so it could use the same ammunition. So again the British was ahead again because it had the right

32:00 ammunition, it was a better machine gun. It was the same gun, only a bit smaller I suppose, maybe.

Did you take anything personal?

Oh yeah, we were allowed to take our writing gear. Our housewife, do you know what a housewife is? Well a housewife is a... It's a little bag, and in it you have got your needles and your buttons and all that to sew your

32:30 shirt up. And it's called a housewife. All that personal stuff, you know, we didn't take our golf clubs like they do nowadays. But, we were allowed to carry you know, just a bit of silly clothes, and our housewife and our writing gear, and you know that's about it.

Did you have any photos with you?

I can't remember. I was going with a girl

33:00 that I married later on, I probably had her photo. Not this one, of course.

When had you met her?

What my first wife? Oh before I went to Malaya. We used to... I used to frequent the movie shows and all that in Alderley, in Enoggera camp, and I used to go out with a lot of girls from that area, so I met her there, in the movies actually. Sad

33:30 movies.

So, can you remember which movie?

No I can't remember which movie, but it was technicolour.

So what was that like, saying goodbye to her?

We weren't all that keen. You know I was only 17 you remember. I had to say goodbye to a few of them, because I was going with another one up in Wilston, so you know

34:00 I wasn't planning to get married at this stage.

So you did a round of goodbyes?

I can't remember, I suppose I did. Yeah.

Did you have various photos with you?

I probably had a few, but not a lot. I probably had some of me mother and father. But not a lot, I can't remember taking too many. But then again, I didn't... We weren't... We could only take so much gear.

34:30 **So you arrive and what's the first thing that happened, you had a lot of lectures?**

Yeah, lectures, training, acclimatisation training.

What did that involve?

Oh marches, firing on the ranges, lectures, training, I think we might have had a couple of tours to have

a look around. I don't think we had many. We had

- 35:00 our own... But no, it was... By that time our own group was there. And then the training started and the formulisation of the year's training, exercises, guard duties. We didn't have mess duties, which they don't have now. We had... It was all local labour, so we didn't go in the messes. We didn't do all that drudgery you did in Australia, that's probably why I liked it so
- 35:30 much, because I was a private soldier. The guard mounts were a lot of the same. It wasn't as bad as Australia. It was regimental, but it wasn't over the top. And our training went in the jungle and we had a lot to
- 36:00 learn, living in the jungle, even though we had done it here. Some of it here is as bad, but you know we had a lot to learn and it was just then we moved into a life of ...our life there, which was week ends in Kuala Lumpur, drunken pay nights in Malacca, the next town, or the town near us, exercises, range shoots, sneaker lanes where you are firing live rounds, all the good stuff without
- 36:30 the you know with out any restrictions. There weren't a lot of restrictions back here in those days, but there were still more than over there. You had safety, it was all safe, there was no problems. But we didn't have all this government garbage hanging over our heads, like OMH or OHM [OHS - Occupational Health and Safety], or the workplace safety and place like that. You know it was an army before the civilians moved in. Now civilian public service has moved into it, it is a different army in my opinion.
- 37:00 And I was lucky enough to experience the other army, and then I experienced the other one. But I had to stay in it because I didn't have anywhere else to go.
- So you mentioned when guys first arrived, they had a month of not being able to leave the barracks, were there any other initiation type processes that happened within the barracks**
- 37:30 **with the new guys that came along?**
- What do you mean, with tar and feather and all that? No that didn't happen. My army, my 35 years in the military, I have never seen anything like that, and I certainly wouldn't have had it anyway when I become an NCO. I never ever in my 35 years seen any stupidity done. Everyone was men.
- 38:00 They might put you on... If you played up you'd be... They'd give you a CB [confined to barracks]. I didn't get it, I was too smart, but that's where you report every hour and they run you round the parade ground. No, no initiations, that was never done. Kapooka, the NCOs never done anything like that. Some of the diggers did, you know, the recruits, but that was stamped and that was usually discharged. No there was none of that, never
- 38:30 ever, not like that. Our NCOs had been Korean War, Malayan Emergency; remember there was an emergency in Malaya before then. It had just stopped, where they got active service, they were fighting the communist terrorists. There was still an element of that left but the Australian Government had cut out all the medals for it, as I said. Now they all got medals for it, different ones, but not imperial ones, but Australian
- 39:00 ones, but it has all been revised. So we have come a long way. Yeah.

Tape 3

- 00:32 **So can you go into details about being in camp when you heard about the paratroopers being dropped in?**
- Yes, you want me to go into details?
- Yeah, if that's all right.**
- Well, it was a... You can imagine, all the barracks was spread out, and there was leftovers from... Well the rest of the battalion was in, but B Company, we were living in the rooms on our own virtually,
- 01:00 there was only a couple of us. Well the A Company sergeant major was a little Irishman - I believe he has passed away now - he run around and said, "Right, you, pack your gear. I want you over in A Company in 10 minutes." They were searching everything, they were getting people out of the toilet and everything, we didn't know what was going on. They didn't know what was going on either, these paratroopers well armed. So we were reacted straight away.
- 01:30 In any army you will always find they will have their webbing ready, and their pack ready, and you just step into it. So away we went in trucks, about, I forget how far, I think it would have been about 30 miles, to the Muar River at Khe Sanh. I think it was called Muar River, I am not sure of the area, I have just lost it, and away we go,

- 02:00 and it was just in the afternoon, turning, the CO [Commanding Officer] was there. He was back behind runnin', he was an old WW2 bloke, passed away now, Military Cross, Korean War, piece of cake to him. He had all the communications goin'. The mortars were firing into the area where they penned them up in because they landed in a swamp, you know, they were unlucky. What they wanted to do
- 02:30 was land, go into different little areas, and put civvies [civilian clothing] on, and go in amongst all the civilians. They had lots of money. They were going to probably what they are doing in Iraq now, you know with Saddam [Hussein], their army. They were guerrillas, and they were going to live with the people and go around from there and build up resources.
- 03:00 So, they had lots of money, they had weapons, they were good soldiers, they were trained soldiers. So as I said, we were lucky. We penned them up in this swamp, so we were firing behind them, they were firing the mortars behind to keep them in, and they got all the troops up around them like that, so we had...
- 03:30 They had to come out of there that way. Because we had penned them. And bear in mind I was only a private soldier, so I didn't know all that was goin' on and we didn't get told too much in those days. And that was what was going on. And then the ammunition run out, and I spent most of the night carrying ammunition into the area for the mortars, because fired a lot of mortar ammunition because they had to have that barrage going down the
- 04:00 back all the time to keep them in.

Where did you have to go to get the resupply of ammunition?

Oh about 3 kilometres away. And it was wet, storm lightning, rain, flares going up, mortars going off, beautiful. Then at about 11 o'clock that night, we were brought up to form the you know, the blocking

- 04:30 force on the bank to stop them coming out. And during that night, some of them surrendered. So we had most of them all surrendered by about 10 o'clock the next day. But then we had to go and search the swamp and get the remaining ones that weren't, and we captured those. And they fired at us that night,
- 05:00 but didn't fire any more when they knew... Well, they were not silly. They knew they landed in the wrong place. They knew we were too strong for them, although there were 120 of them.

And you fired your first shots of anger?

Oh yes, I wasn't supposed to but there was a... I was a reasonably young soldier and I was pretty keen, and I thought, "This is the place I am going to get my first shot away in anger." So I heard a noise out the front, there was no troops, we were in a straight line, so I thought it might have

- 05:30 been an Indonesian so I fired four rounds at it. So the old soldier next door to me, "What are you doing this for?" "I heard a noise."

And they were firing at you? That must have been pretty exciting for you, was it?

Yeah, well they didn't exactly fire at me, but I think in the initial stages the first elements were fired at. I wasn't fired at on that particular occasion, not that I can remember.

But just with everything going on, and everything you were involved in...?

- 06:00 Oh, it was good you know, really good.

Did you see anything of the Indonesians surrendering?

Oh I have got photos of it.

How did that sort of transpire?

We just took it in our stride; we didn't belt them around or anything. They just took the ammunition off them, made them carry their own guns back to the trucks. When they carried all their heavy guns back to the vehicles, they

- 06:30 took the weapons off them, the ammo was gone, they couldn't do anything with them. Took all the weapons off them and sent them down to be interrogated by the Malays, I suppose. But there was no big drama, everything was quiet. No-one had a go at the Indonesians, some guys give them cigarettes. And we didn't do any more because our job was finished. And I think I had a good night in Malacca that night.

- 07:00 **Did we have interpreters there?**

Oh they would have done. But remember that basically, I was a private soldier in a rifle company, and those days I only seen the trucks and the HQ [Headquarters] going past them, he'd have had all that. The Malays would have had interpreters.

But the relaxed atmosphere once they had surrendered, did that take you by surprise? What did you think of that?

It was not quite that relaxed. But I mean there was no shouting, it wasn't that... I mean we still had our

07:30 weapons on them and everything. But it's just... There's no drama, just everyone doing their job. Just so nice to be with a group that... Remember there would have been other people involved in that too. There would have been medical people there to see if they were all right. There would have been interpreters. Intelligence would have been right on to them. Malays Australians, you know, we had intelligence. British would have been there,

08:00 they would have been running it. So it was actually an Australian operation, but I feel that if I had have been higher up in rank I would have sort of understood what was goin' on at H

And you went into the swamp to help bring them out all the time?

Yeah, yeah, I was in that. And it was hard, it was very hard. There were a few shots fired there. But I can't remember any of them comin' our way. Some of our blokes fired I think

08:30 but we didn't kill anybody. We rounded them up and it was hard goin'. It was hard work. Swamps are hard to get into. It was a nice thing to happen because I had missed the border, and you know, for me, remember there wasn't much going on. But after that of course things changed.

09:00 **As a result of that?**

Oh yeah. That in my opinion that was when. You see, let me digress. We were under the command of 28th Commonwealth Brigade, run by a British brigadier. Everything we did was come from the British hierarchy, although the CO run the battalion internally. Okay, the Brits were fighting in Borneo

09:30 against the Indonesians, right. The New Zealanders hadn't, but they were leaving soon after that to go to Borneo. Here was the Australians, not allowed to do anything. So virtually we... not so much in that stage, but that was the trigger for the Australians to... well, I believe anyway

10:00 in my opinion, for the hierarchy to say, "Eh, we got to look at this." And I think the British said, "Eh, I know you are training Indonesians in Duntroon [Royal Military College], but you gotta get back to reality, you are in my brigade, and you gotta do something and you gotta start doing what we are doing." I think. So the politicians of the day, which were hiding their heads in the sand, which our politicians up until John Howard [Australian Prime Minister] now

10:30 did, and he didn't in Iraq and he's good. But those days they didn't do that. They hid their heads in the sand and they had an each-way bet. So I think that was the time they were told, "Eh, you are in the British brigade." And that was good for us because we wanted to go. We were a battalion, very, very well trained. We knew one another for 4 years; we had been with each other. We knew every man

11:00 in that section and we knew the capabilities and the weaknesses of every other man, so we wanted to fight. And we were like footballers, we were fighting a football game actually. Koalas actually, we were called Koala Bears at one stage. We were not to be shot at, and that was bad for morale, and that was the trigger and after it all changed. Beat patrols, live

11:30 rounds, no guard mounts, live rounds on guards, all these key points on the beaches had to be protected. British brigadier had to have guards around his place 24 hours a day. Not 24 hours a day, but beach patrols. We used to go out in areas, go out in boats, search the junks to see if they had weapons in it. And at that time the British were in Borneo fighting, but they had been there since off and on

12:00 since 1962, the Azahari Revolt [a revolt led by the Brunei People's Party leader, Azahari against the Indonesian government], but that was in Brunei, I think. But so we were becoming... this was about the time we were to come home. So that's why we didn't go home at the time.

Were you aware of Australia's military cooperation with Indonesia?

No not really. Sort of. Oh it was talked about. We knew we were training them in Duntroon. We knew their tactics were the same as ours.

12:30 **How does that make a soldier on the ground feel when your enemy is basically being trained by your own country?**

Didn't worry us, because you see, it wasn't like Vietnam. We didn't have a screaming bunch of people back here saying, "They're shooting the kids." We come under the British. We were professional soldiers. There wasn't anybody in Malaya that didn't... that wasn't... well if he didn't want

13:00 to be there it was a personal problem. We weren't constricted, we were dying for a fight, and we come under the British and that was our area. So there was nothing, in papers. There was very little about this particular situation, it was all very... They didn't advertise they were training officers in Duntroon. They didn't

13:30 advertise this, but it did stop the government from letting us go, I think you know. I didn't read The Bulletin in those days; I don't think there was one. But I was too busy doing other things. But I was no student, but I feel that was what was goin' on...

And once the level of Australian commitment was stepped up to that sort of level where you

were having live rounds and doing your searches and all that sort of stuff, how did the blokes on the ground feel about that?

14:00 Very good. Remember, cut out all the guard duty, we still guarded with live rounds, all the guard mounts, and the bands stopped, we started doing our job. But we enjoyed the first year too. You don't mind doing that when there's nothing goin' on. No, everybody was very... Worked in together, there was no dramas.

14:30 Remember I was a private, I didn't know what they were saying at the top like they did in Vietnam. But no there was no... Everybody wanted to do their job. Because the Brits had gone, the New Zealanders went soon after that, and we were the only ones. And we weren't allowed to go - you can imagine how we felt. So that we did go in the end, we did go in March

15:00 1964, we were due home in July. So obviously we were going to be delayed.

What about, were there any other incidents at all?

In Malaya, no. For the last - from 1964, from October 1964 onwards, I am talking. My company, A Company on the 3rd Battalion, has come into contact with a couple of

15:30 communist terrorists on the border, the Thai border. But basically it was a war like situation up there but I don't think it was too you know, it wasn't fighting all the time or anything.

What about your searches that you were doing and things like that?

That was really good.

What did that involve?

Oh, we had to search anything that come through different beaches, you know the junks, the Chinese junks.

16:00 We would get out there search them for weapons. We did it tactfully; there was no brutality or anything. Those days, everything was well done. The British briefed us and obviously the Australian commander was an old soldier, nothing, you know, I can't remember anyone out there having to shoot anybody, doing that. Yeah. It was good because we were doing our job.

16:30 **How much were you learning of the local population when you had leave and that besides going houses of ill repute? Did you go to the markets and you know, what ways did you mix with the locals?**

Well I didn't. You have got a situation where... And military don't in that sort of an area; military sort of live in their own environment. There were people, there were...

17:00 We weren't restricted to do that, I mixed with... That particular tour, I would go to Kuala Lumpur, and mix with the people in the bars and all that, but it's not a country where you can readily mix with people. It's not that sort of an Asian country. The Philippines is, and Singapore is, but you have got Malaya at time and there was a close proximity rule -

17:30 you would be jailed if you were caught with a woman, a Malay woman outside of curfew, which was midnight, because there was a rule that still applies because they are Muslims. But of course the Chinese there aren't, so a lot of our guys fell in love with Chinese. They went to... They married them, they went to their houses, they would have interacted, and I didn't interact in that way. I only interacted with massage parlours and

18:00 bars, and that's about it.

What about the blokes with the dhobis and things like that, that must have seemed quite weird, the shoeshine boys, and having maids and getting their washing done, and things like that?

It was beautiful. Oh, we paid for it. It was a beautiful set up. "This'll do me." Some blokes stayed there for... They did about 5 years there. They kept goin' back. It was a good place, really was.

18:30 Of course when we went to Borneo there were no maids, but we still had a few locals in the camp. But, you know, that were trusted.

And what was the food like, all sorts of different foods up there?

Ah, British, and sorry no, in our Australian camp we had Australian food. You know it was the same as here, but when we went on British camps,

19:00 like when we were detached for a course, they don't have so much meat, and you got paid extra because you didn't get as much meat as you should. Because every soldier nowadays has worked out how much meat they get, by the penny pinchers and all that. And that is something we like to do, we like to go on courses with the British army, so you got all this extra money, you know. And it was good food, I liked it. I don't mind eating. They eat a lot

19:30 of – or they did, I don't know what they do now – sort of ravioli things, you know, without egg things, sort of ham and egg, without the hard steak and all that. Know what I mean?

A few of the blokes we have spoken to reckon they really got stuck into the curries and things like that.

Oh outside, well I did, but I sort of done what I was told over there in those days. You wasn't supposed to, because you could get pretty

20:00 good sick from that, but we had our days. Our Indian boot boys used to bring me in food, chapatis and that, which I paid them for, and they were clean and all that. But we were told not to do that in the market place. I got sick over there without doing all that. I took all me medicine and everything and we were on Paladrin the whole way through, every day. And I took all that and I still got sick.

20:30 **What did you come down with?**

I don't know what it was. Leptospirosis, malaria, they never knew, they give me 1000 blood tests every day, it just wore off. But I had it for a long time after.

What sort of illnesses did the other blokes get? Did anyone get malaria up there?

Yeah. Well I sort of did. Yeah, there was a few. We had one bloke die in Borneo from encephalitis. Which is a mosquito-borne disease. He was in

21:00 C Company I think. But mostly we were looked after pretty well.

What about water? Where would you get your local water from?

Well in the camp it was okay because they had their engineers and it would have been all purified and all that, but outside we were not supposed to drink water. And bear in mind, those days we did not have these plastic water bottles where you can buy water, that wasn't on. So every restaurant you went into in

21:30 Malacca or Kuala Lumpur gave you a big glass of water in case you choke, I think it's a requirement, I think America do too. And consequently we were... We never ever drank that. I don't know what other guys did, I sort of did sometimes, but I used to get soft drink or something, or beer or something, I was only a kid.

Was there much correspondence with home?

Yes, I

22:00 did so much correspondence that I married the girl that I left. So yeah, I did a lot of letter writing, become expert I suppose.

Did anybody decide to send you mail?

Oh yeah, me mother wrote to me all the time. I got plenty of mail.

Was mail a big deal for the fellas up there?

I think mail is a big deal anywhere. Even when you go you know intra Australia,

22:30 you like to get your mail as a soldier. It's something we all like. You really hang out for the platoon sergeant to... He used to give it to us on parade. I used to get quite a bit; it's a kick, anywhere.

Did they send you any goodies?

Oh yeah, me ex-wife sent me a jumper in Borneo – it was a bit hot.

23:00 No it was... People, they...

What about recreation on the barracks?

Oh, anything you wanted. Football, cricket, they were always sport. I used dodge away and do something else – I am not a sportsman. And I suffered through this in the army, because to gain rank in the army, a lot of people might not agree with me, but if you are a whiz kid sportsman,

23:30 you'll get rank faster than just an ordinary soldier that tries. And I was not a sportsman. I played volleyball and I played tug o'war, and I was in the teams, and that, but I figured I could knock myself about in the bars more than I can play football, it was a lot easier. I played a bit of football I suppose. They had parachuting clubs.

24:00 Anything. Motorbikes. Some blokes bought motorbikes and toured around. They would have been the people who interacted with the locals.

I mean you weren't involved in the motorbike club?

No. I wasn't. My recreation was pretty enclosed in having a good time and then soldiering.

What about the booze on the

24:30 **barracks, what was that like?**

Yeah, we had NAAFI's [canteens] we called them. Navy, Army, Air Force Institutes, run by locals, Chinese and that, mostly Chinese. We had as much beer as we wanted. We had our own sportsmen's club up the back where a lot of people went after the games. Those days the company quartermaster if you done a... I used to do a lot of

25:00 cross-country running. That was probably my sport. Did a bit of sailing, nearly drowned myself. But cross-country running after that you would have a big trailer full of beer on the sports stage, all iced up. Things were well done for the soldiers.

When you said you nearly drowned yourself sailing, after your waterhole incident, did you ever learn to swim?

No I didn't. I can swim but I can't put me head under water, no-one can teach me.

At some stage of your

25:30 **army training, basic training, infantry training, they must have thrown you in some dams?**

Yeah they did. I can get there, but with me head up. I get there through brute force, with dog paddle. But you know if you are tossed out of a ship you have had it anyway, unless you have got a life jacket.

So did you come back to Australia before going to Borneo or did you go straight to Borneo?

No, straight to Borneo.

Can you tell us about hearing about that?

What, going to Borneo?

26:00 **Can you tell us about hearing about that?**

What, Borneo?

Yes, hearing that you were going to be sent there?

What, from back here?

No, from Malaya. Was there any sort of you getting moved up sort of thing?

Oh yeah, we didn't know until the end. But we were so welcome to hear it.

Because at this stage you still thought you were going back to Australia from there?

Yeah, we thought the government was never let us get into this, and someone must have leaned on them you know. Well they got their head out of the sand. The Liberal government was in at the

26:30 time, we had [Prime Minister Robert] Menzies. In the end they must have said, "We have got to go." and we did and we did a good job. We wasn't situated as a battalion up there, we were strung across the border in different companies. And we weren't quite on the border. Our camp in B Company, the border was up a bit, but later on the next battalion 4th Battalion, they

27:00 moved it up there. But we didn't move it. Thank God. It would have been hard work.

So what sort of operations did you do up there?

'Claret' operations, they call them 'Claret' operations now. We did ambushes, on the border over the other side, sometimes quite lengthy distances, just in gun range, and it was all platoon work, through platoon section work.

27:30 And our main aim was to contact the Indonesians, and keep them from coming into our area. See what basically the Indonesians were doing, was they were coming across from their area, coming across, this is in Kalimantan, coming across to...over the Malay border, and shooting up the local civilians and just doing their normal thing of harassing,

28:00 like Timor and taking over. So bear in mind the Malay battalions were up there before, but they couldn't seem to contain them. I don't know why, because the Malay battalions are no good because I am sure they are, but our time there they had 90 battalions, 90 battalions, but we were under the British. And we just got up on to the border and

28:30 we had no vehicles, no vehicles could get on the border where we were choppered in. And we used to patrol those areas and ambush those areas all the time. And bear in mind there was British SAS [Special Air Services] and Australian SAS over those borders, checking them out for us so we could ambush them, which we did at a later stage.

Can you tell us about any specific incidents there?

Yeah. I was in a big one.

- 29:00 It's well-known now. Pat Beale again was my platoon commander in Borneo. I couldn't get away from the man. We are quite friendly now, but he didn't talk to me much when I was a digger [soldier]. But anyway, we had the river ambushed. Every company had contacts. Every company. There wasn't any company that didn't have fire fights in that 6 months. B Company were
- 29:30 not havin' any until one day we did, we had a big one on the river. There was a Military Cross and a Military Medal awarded. Pat Beale won a... He was a lieutenant. He won a Military Cross. It's in his book; he talks about it. He just put a book out; I think it's called Operational Orders. I have got it here. And he talks quite clearly about it. And Laurie Jackson, a private British
- 30:00 ex-seaman, he won a Military Medal. And basically I wasn't... we recced [reconnoitred] it the day before and we found out we were in an area teeming with Indonesians. Literally teeming. Walking up the tracks with their towels over their shoulders. Rifles in their hands. We were right in amongst them. We were just a little way up, 300 metres is a fair
- 30:30 way in the jungle, but we were up there, and we were looking at them. And the river we had to ambush the next day, from SAS reports, where they were bringing down the stores and soldiers from up the river, down the river, or whatever, to different points, where they had their unit. It was a big concentration of forces. And must have been about 3 battalions, and we were right
- 31:00 in amongst them. And we knew the river they were doing it on. So we recced the day before and we knew we were in a base camp or something. But the next day I wasn't in it. He took his scouts and machine gunners and some of the corporals, down to the river and put an ambush in. And our group on the top under the platoon sergeant were told at 11 o'clock that we
- 31:30 were to move down and go in and they were to come back. But those days, we've only had one radio, we didn't have two radios, we didn't have the luxury of Vietnam you know. So the poor old platoon commander got his ambush group down on the river, but he had no other radio to tell us that you know, that it was too busy, there was too much activity down there to try and change over. They scarcely got in without being seen.
- 32:00 So 11 o'clock come and the old platoon sergeant you know give us the nod, and we were getting ready to get the word to move down. But it went off, it went off before that. They come down, 5 boatloads of them. Couple of Dutchmen, some sort of fair people with them, foreigners anyway. Advisers I suppose. They were probably the first ones killed. They wiped out
- 32:30 5 boats. It's well documented. The British guy, Laurie Jackson, was away from the rest on the turn of the river, and I think he wiped 3 boats out by himself with grenades. Remember the river is down here and they are here and you are there. So he just... And rifle fire. But then they got fired on by rifle fire because there were a couple of battalions over there. So it was
- 33:00 a real big area there, a big confrontation, and we were up on the hill. And the only part I played in it, I was supposed to cut stretcher poles in case we got wounded where you stick your poles through your shelter, and you carry it. I got up, the first shot was fired, and I stood up to do what I was told to do, and I got shot at, because the Indonesians on another area, seen us up on top, or they mustn't have seen us but must have heard the movement.
- 33:30 There was bushes being shot down around us. And the platoon sergeant said, "Stop it. Don't worry about it." Anyway, I didn't. I soon got down. And like all good ambushes, carried out well, they came back straight away, up the hill like a very fast, I can assure you, and we just up and left.

Because you were grossly outnumbered weren't you?

Oh yeah,

- 34:00 oh we only had about 28 men. There must have been a lot of people there. Anyway the artillery guy was there, the forward controller, FO, Forward Observer, and he was British, and he had the - I believe he - I have heard since he was a New Zealander, so I better not say that. I always believed he was British, but someone said he was a New Zealander. But whatever he was,
- 34:30 he had those rounds goin' in when they went. An ambush is supposed to go bang and like that and finish. And he had them comin' in. They were comin' in on those Indonesians, you could hear them yelling.

Besides the rounds that were being shot from you guys above, could you hear the ambush?

Oh yeah, it went off. It only took, see you are trained in ambush, and an ambush takes... You know, you all fire at once, then bang. That's

- 35:00 the big characteristic of an ambush, and you get out. And in Vietnam it was a bit different, but that's the way we were trained. Oh we heard it go off. We weren't far away; we were about 150 metres, that's not far. We could hear it.

So as a young soldier here, how were you feeling at this stage as well?

I don't think I was frightened, I think I was too young and silly to be frightened. I thought it was a bit exciting,

35:30 I don't remember being frightened.

What about adrenaline, could you...?

Oh yeah, that overcomes any fright you got. You know you want to do right, you want to do everything right. But the big thing that got us out of it, the big thing that got us out of it, the British had their... I mean for the supporting troops they had, I am not talking about the ambush, but the Indonesian forces, they mustn't have had

36:00 communications to tell the other ones where we were. There was a group knew where we were, but they didn't sort of tell the mortars. And most Asians are good with their mortars and they immediately put their mortars on the tracks because they thought we come on the tracks. We come over the ridge line, we come the hard way. But this group here that knew where we were didn't tell the mortars where we were. If they would have, we would have had a lot of

36:30 casualties. So consequently we raced out of it. There was a platoon, a backup platoon with a company commander behind, so we leapfrogged through there. And when they got up, we leapfrogged and we leapfrogged to the border. We got to the border and we had machine guns dug in on the border. Everything done very well. In case they were following us we had them all dug in ready, and we just shot through over the border,

37:00 through our machine gun platoon. Up into the village. Had a, you know, had some drinks or something, and the villagers come out with whatever they had. They were good people, because they were being shot up by these people. And then we went to our camp and had a couple of days off I suppose. Our camp was on the border, it was all dug in. Everything was - there was very

37:30 little buildings that were above the ground. They did it well.

What sort of debrief was given afterwards?

Good. There was a debrief before we went with armed guards outside the bunker, so no-one could hear us. Because we did have a few locals in the area, they were okay, but no-one was trusted. Other platoons wasn't even told. We

38:00 had a detailed briefing. Detailed, down to right checking our gear for letters. We had no Australian identification on us whatsoever.

Dog tags off?

Can't remember that. But I think we wore our dog tags. But we definitely we not supposed to be Australian. We were anything. As a matter of fact they thought we were Ghurkhas, but we had relieved the Ghurkhas

38:30 there. And the Indonesians thought we were Ghurkhas because they were the same as us. And that was one of the big things, that was a 'Claret' operation, because if that had have gotten out here, they wouldn't be too impressed. So this sort of thing was done with... When we left, the 4th Battalion took over. They are the only battalions that

39:00 ever served in Borneo in that confrontation.

Tape 4

00:33 **In your section?**

We're still in Borneo?

Still in Borneo.

The way we work, a section is made up of 9 people. And you've got your forward scout, you've got your section scout, you got the section commander who is the corporal, you have got the machine gunner, his 2IC [Second in Command], he's a lance corporal, and then you have got your rifleman or No. 2 on the gun. If you have got

01:00 enough people. Then your riflemen. Normally in the Australian Army, you are sort of trained to do everything, but obviously there are people are better machine gunners and better scouts. My job was No. 2 on the gun. I was at times a scout, I was at times carrying the gun, I was at times in the rifle group. I did everything.

Did you find

01:30 **when you joined the army, just growing up on a farm and having shot rifles and that helped**

you a lot?

It should have, but however, in my training at Kapooka, when they were not too smart at it, they would discipline it so much and harass you so much on the range, it took all that away from me. In today's army, they

02:00 don't do it like that. We have learnt a lot and you find that you are coached, you're not yelled at, and everything is more humane. By being frightened by the instructor, at my recruit training, it took all those skills away from me. Unfortunately. I got them back later, but at that stage it didn't help me much.

Did you ever have to go forward scout, what was that like?

Yeah. Oh well, you know

02:30 we are still talking those days, yeah, I was, I did it. It's all right, you are leading everybody, you have got the whole platoon on your, you are it. Yeah it was okay. You had to follow what you had to do.

It must go through your mind that if anything happens you are the first bloke that is going to cop it?

Oh yeah, that's right. In

03:00 Vietnam as a corporal on two tours, I was actually up with the forward scout and all. At least you know what is going on.

And can you tell us exactly what you would do as a No. 2 on the machine gun?

No. 2 is just basically, he would take the machine gun over if the other guy got shot. He carries it sometimes to give the other bloke a rest. He carries most of the ammunition for the other bloke. They both carry the

03:30 ammunition. So basically yes, that's what you do. Change barrels and all this sort of thing. Help him clean it.

So how long were you up in Borneo for?

Six months we did.

But you didn't know at the time how long you were going to be there?

Yeah. I believe so. We were told 4RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] was coming to relieve us.

And were you looking forward to coming back to Australia or were you keen to stay?

We didn't come back to

04:00 Australia straight away, we went back to Malaya in August, on the 1st August. We sailed back on a British ship. And then we stayed in Malaya until about November I think it was. So we weren't coming home straight away.

Were you still being sent on operations?

Still doing the normal beach patrols and everything that was happening when we were sent there.

Was there anything about being deployed that you didn't

04:30 **like?**

Oh no. I can't remember anything. I sort of didn't think much of it. I was a soldier and I was doing me job, and I was going to get a medal out of it. Even though it took us 3 or 4 years to get the medal. But, it's a British medal actually.

And when you signed up you signed up for six years was it?

Yes, I actually signed for 6 years.

So

05:00 **at that stage, you're a young soldier, you are loving what you are doing, you are overseas which is what you wanted to do, what were you starting to think as far as your career is concerned?**

Well I... Yeah, I was starting to think I wanted to be a corporal and actually they held an NCO course, there, and we all did... I think we must have been given our lessons. There were hundreds on it, but I didn't get to do the course, so I must have been real bad.

05:30 So yeah, I didn't get to do the course, not there anyway. But you know I was reasonably... Those days you had to be in the army at least 3 or 4 years to get one stripe. You know, she was a pretty intensive sort of thing. It's different now, and also in Vietnam.

So when you came home, what was that like?

06:00 Well I soon found out that there was different types of people in this country, and if I may say so, when I first got to Sydney, everybody on the street looked like they were Chinese. Because I had been over there that long. My

06:30 brother, who was sort of a leftie [left winger], took me to a blue collar pub, where they were mostly unionists, and it was the wrong place to take me, because a few people had a go at me, and started the red raggin' business. I soon found out that it was the Australia I left, there was a lot of divisions, there was a lot of

07:00 hating governments, and it was coming in. Because, bear in mind Vietnam was on, and the 1st Battalion was in Vietnam and we were in Borneo, so the civilians or the population here knew all about this Vietnam business and it sort of divided... There was a division in the country, and I seen it when I got back,

07:30 even though I was only 21 or 22, I think. You wouldn't see it anywhere outside, but in a pub is where you would see it.

How would you describe it then? What it was like before you went away?

It was different. People weren't snarling at you in uniform. And I am not saying everybody was snarling at you in uniform, but the element was there. Vietnam was on,

08:00 but it was just on. But it was there and people were not taking too kindly to us. And here I am come back from Borneo, thought I had done a bit and I am immediately told I am useless and we shouldn't be doing what we are, and it hurt me, very much so. And it was then that I thought you know, "I will just do what I do and keep to myself

08:30 and me family." Which I done. It was there, I mean I only went to one pub; I didn't go to every pub in Sydney. I am sure it wouldn't have been the same, but it struck me, it was really not nice.

Was this the same brother who was ex-navy?

No. Another brother, oh he had done his National Service, but it was just that he worked in a seaman's type

09:00 job, and they are all pretty union.

And what was he like, being your brother and all that, what was his opinion?

He didn't give it to me at that time, but you know later on I found out that he's a Labor man and you couldn't get chalk and cheese in politics, but that's fine you know.

Going back to being in Malaya, in Borneo,

09:30 **to what degree were you guys told about the political situation of what it was all about?**

Well we were briefed on Vietnam. Our platoon commander had gone up there.

But before that with Borneo and Malaya, was it the same sort of lectures given to you of what it was all about?

Oh yes, we were briefed. I can't actually remember it all but we knew what was going on

10:00 oh yes. We knew why we were doing it.

And you were in Borneo when they first went over to Vietnam?

Yes.

What did you sort of know about what was starting to happen in Vietnam?

Our platoon commander went on leave and served up there with an American group for his holiday. And he come back and briefed us all.

And what was the thought among the fellas then?

We wanted to go, as a battalion. That was the biggest thing. We were really

10:30 dissatisfied. We wanted to go to as a battalion from Borneo to Vietnam. As the 3rd Battalion, but you know, things don't work like that.

And you mentioned earlier when you heard that the first training team guy was killed?

Yeah, his name was Hacking, Sergeant Hacking. He was killed about 1962.

Did you just hear about that through the normal..?

No the newspaper. It might have been 1960 when he was killed. I hadn't joined

11:00 the army yet. He was the first one in Vietnam. But things was... Newspapers didn't say much in those days. I have got a scrap book. My mother used to keep what she found, and there wasn't a lot.

Coming home from Borneo and Malaya and that sort of thing, did you have an idea of what you would be doing in the near

11:30 **future with the army?**

Well yeah, we knew we were going to Vietnam because we knew straight away what battalion we were going to, and we were going to Vietnam and that was it.

So as soon as you got back to Australia you knew?

Oh we knew before, but we didn't know when. Whatever battalion you were sent to dictated when they were going. So we knew that if you went to 7 or 2 Battalion, you were going in about May 1968.

12:00 1967 sorry. So you had a couple of years. You could have asked to go earlier, but most of those battalions were already in place and training. It takes a year. The Australian Army used to train them a year before they went you know, Nashos too, National Servicemen as well.

So when you first get back to Australia, did you get leave?

I think so, I can't remember, but it was near Christmas

12:30 so I think so. I know it was close to Christmas that we went on leave. We had a long leave, maybe 2 months. That's when I got married, did all these things. Yeah.

When did you celebrate your 21st birthday?

I celebrated it in Borneo I think. No, I celebrated it in Malaya after Borneo. No wait a bit.

Did they put on a dig [party] for you?

Oh, no no no. We

13:00 didn't even talk about birthdays, we just went out and got drunk I suppose. If we weren't on duty or something. It wasn't a big deal. My mother sent me a present.

And when you got back on leave, did you go up and see your mum and dad?

Oh yeah, yeah. Got drunk in the local pub, again, and found the civilian attitude. Not good.

13:30 Yeah. You could see it everywhere.

This is even up on the [Darling] Downs?

Yeah. In a little country pub.

That must have hit you even more did it?

It did. It made me feel even more insular. It made me feel, "Well, I am in the military, they're not. Let them go. I am happy with what I am doing. They can go to hell." That was it. That was the way I lived all the way through.

Do you think most of the blokes

14:00 **in the army shared those feelings you were having, the insulation from civilian attitudes in life?**

Well Peter [interviewer], there are some guys in the army that don't seem to have those feelings. I guess it's the sort of guy you are. There are some that do, a lot do. If you talk to most of them they will agree in their way, most of my mates did

14:30 yeah. Most of my mates do.

When you were in Borneo and Malaya, what was the average age do you reckon?

Oh, well you supposed to... You had to be 19 on active service. You could go to an area at 18, but you had to be 19 on active service. But it would have been 19 in Borneo. Most would have been about... Most of us were young. The NCOs were about... They were

15:00 ex British, we had a lot of ex British army with us that had come and joined the Australian Army. They had a bit of age on them. Most of them were 27, but most of us 18, 19, sorry 19, 20 around that area.

How did you find the ex British NCOs?

Good, they knew their stuff.

Different to the Aussies?

I would say they brought so much experience to the Australian Army that it will never be repaid.

15:30 They had been somewhere. They had been to Cyprus, been to Korea some of them, Malaya in the emergency, yeah. It was a great big step for the Australian Government to recruit those people. Most of them were good. Anybody that had been somewhere, had a different attitude and that was nice.

16:00 We had some good soldiers in the Australian Army that hadn't been anywhere, and were very good. I am not saying it wasn't that way. They were all good. Most NCOs in that area were good or they wouldn't be an NCO.

So you are back in the battalion in Australia, whereabouts...?

7 RAR in Victoria. I had just got married. We were going to Vietnam; we were training for Vietnam, in the cold.

16:30 If it wasn't snowing at night, the blowflies would blow your bed blanket, which we had it taped. They would blow up the next day in the heat. I was married, just married, and we were living in this little house in, or this little flat in Seymour, not one of the best places in Australia.

What was the army doing in regards to looking after you in a married...

17:00 **Were they paying any sort of married quarter...?**

To tell you the truth, I don't think I even asked. We rented, very scary in those days, but then again I was the sort of a guy who didn't like to ask. It might have been my fault. We moved out of there into a half house. I don't think we got any extra, but I can't remember that. Anyhow my wife became pregnant, and we got a

17:30 doctor and he examined her and she had a miscarriage. So after that I wanted to get her back to Brisbane. And I went through all the... It was a different battalion to in Malaya. It was a new battalion, 7. Good battalion. Should have went with them, but anyway, they give me a posting and they said, "You can go back to 8 RAR, that's

18:00 going to Malaya." I think Malaysia at that time. I said "No." I had been to Malaysia, "I want to go to Vietnam." So they sent me to 2 Battalion, 2nd Battalion, and it put me back 3 months. So I sort of still went at the same time. Got my wife up here in Brisbane, and we went from there. We went to Vietnam from Brisbane.

What was the living situation up here? Did the

18:30 **army have married quarters?**

Yes, but I lived in a unit in Newmarket. I cannot... I don't believe we got any money for it. But we weren't looked after too well for that. It's only nowadays... I don't believe... She moved in with my mother and father when I went to Vietnam,

19:00 I don't know, but I don't believe we got extra for living.

So how did you find it when you came up to Brisbane?

Oh, no worries, I was a pioneer, an assault pioneer, in 7 RAR and that's what they wanted me to be. And I had done training, but I didn't like it very much, because I wanted to go back to the rifle platoons.

Did you volunteer for that,

19:30 **for assault pioneers?**

No, what happened when we come from Malaya, when we were split up, the senior soldiers as I would have been then, were sent to specialist platoons. They didn't want them in rifle platoons, only if you are an NCO. So I wasn't an NCO, I was a private, so they sent me to signals platoon, that's the infantry platoon. And I didn't like that so they sent me to pioneers. I didn't mind that, but when I come to 2 Battalion, I shut my mouth about that.

20:00 And I went to a rifle company and by the time they found out where I should have went, I was promoted, so I soldiered on.

What was their thinking? It seems odd they wouldn't put experienced infantry men in infantry sections?

No, no they needed them for specialists, like pioneers, anti tank, that sort of thing. The NCOs were old soldiers, like the lance corporal and the corporal, but the other blokes weren't

20:30 but they didn't want them as ordinary riflemen when they had all this experience behind them.

What sort of new skills did you learn being assault pioneer?

Oh, blow things up, build, you know really we were engineers, infantry engineers. Very good platoon. Very nice, but I didn't want to do it up here, I wanted to get back in the rifle section. I wanted to get rank by then. I wanted to be corporal. I

21:00 knew I wouldn't get it in that mob. Because their corporals were old soldiers. So I just shut up and, "Where are you going?" "I don't know. Rifle company, I think." "Oh, our company. You are a lance corporal now." They were dying for NCOs.

Had you done your corporal's course there?

No.

They made you up to lance [corporal] without that?

They can do that. They can even make you a

21:30 corporal without that. Temporary. But they sort of get you qualified. Before we went, I was qualified.

Did you enjoy that?

Oh yeah. No worries. It was getting... You don't want to be a private. You got skills, you got knowledge, your organisation, you must pick something up in years. Most people want to get out there and

22:00 use that. Not have someone else who doesn't know telling you. You know. So yes.

Was it round about this stage that National Service started up?

Yes, yes, we had - that's as I said, I wrote a book on Just a Nasho. We had National Servicemen, the third intake in just the 2nd Battalion. And we took them over, we trained them and took them over, and they had done about 8 months before their time was up.

Before you ever saw a National Serviceman, just on what you knew about

22:30 **sort of what it was all about, what did you think of it?**

Well, no problem, because without National Servicemen we wouldn't be able to go to Vietnam, because the government said it was a 50/50 split. But I think it might have been a little bit the other way. I think it might have been a 40/60 split with National Servicemen. We needed them. And National Servicemen were good soldiers, okay.

23:00 They were like all other soldiers, some didn't... If some weren't orientated towards it, they put them in different jobs. There are so many jobs in an infantry battalion - you could be a driver, a clerk or whatever - so mostly they moved people around and most of the National Serviceman did a very good... Well, all the National Servicemen that I know did an extra good job. That's why I wrote a book about them. I don't think anybody ever wrote a decent book about them.

Because you're saying when you came up to

23:30 **Brisbane that they were 3 months behind the preparations they were doing in Melbourne?**

No, they went about 3 months later. I wouldn't say they were behind, because the two battalions did the same big exercise before we left, which was called 'Get Set' or something.

Where was that?

Shoalwater Bay. That was worse than Vietnam, that Shoalwater Bay. Yeah, they were probably...

24:00 See they put a battalion to replace another battalion that had done 12 months, that's how it all worked. So, the two of them changed over about 3 months apart, maybe it was 4, I don't know.

Interesting what you just said about Shoalwater Bay being worse than Vietnam. Can you go into that, explain that?

In training. Well training is worse than any war, you know, because in training you have got people looking at you, taking notes all the time, whether

24:30 you are doing your job all right, especially as an NCO. Plus, the murder you go through with young commanders. Then you have got the safety aspect, they're green, they don't know how to cut down on the red tape. They do everything the hard way. I trained twice for Vietnam in battalions that were going. And I think

25:00 it was the most murderous 12 months or 2 years altogether that I had in my life in the army. You are in the bush all the time, in the field all the time. You might have seen your family once every 3 months, or 2 months for 2 days. It was hard. So actually a wife that was married to a soldier in those days, probably you could say they had 2 years' separation. Because you wouldn't get home much,

25:30 I tell ya. If you did get home you had a night here and there. Then you had your duties to contend with, you had dixie bashing to contend with. These duties went on and on. Guard duty. All sorts of duties, and then your bush, your field, getting you ready, and so there was no respite, it was a hard time.

Did you guys go to Canungra or anything like that?

Oh yeah, went there every

26:00 time.

What was it like?

Murder. Murder. But what we were fortunate about, our battalion put cadres into Canungra, and under the jungle training centre at the time, under the auspices, they trained us, the cadre from our own battalion trained us, but the Canungra people did the final... Well they were watching there all the time, but they didn't have enough people to do

26:30 their individual training of us. And our people were pretty good - they knew what they wanted. So that was just one God bless him, but it was just continual go, go, go. Pardon me. It was just go from 4 o'clock in the morning. Every day. And then you went to the field. They marched you over that Great Dividing Range between Canungra between NSW and that was the march out,

27:00 that was about 30 miles. And if you didn't do that, you didn't go. I hate training.

Did you find blokes losing the plot even at that stage?

No, Australian soldiers are pretty good. We train them fairly well, it's not a matter of forcefulness, it's a matter of making them do what they are told, but in a decent way, in a man's way.

27:30 I was a lance corporal at that time. And it was me who organised the rosters on pickets, made sure they didn't do the same one every night, made sure they were looked after with their socks, that's just the way we did it. No, the Nashos handled it very well. I... There possibly was... There must have been a few guys that were no good, but they... If they were worth anything, they were put in admin [administration] company for

28:00 drivers. There wasn't a lot of National Servicemen. There was probably a few regs [regulars] that lost the plot, but the old Nasho, he... Bear in mind, he was selected from... He was selected... It was a selective thing.

None of this random number lottery?

No. They would have had trouble with that. They were sort of tested, I think. Yeah.

So you are doing two-

28:30 **month exercises at Shoalwater Bay, how long did you spend at Canungra?**

Well, I might go too far with the two months. It might have been a month with a few weeks added on advance and rear if you were in that sort of situation. Canungra was a month, from memory. We did lectures and we did bush training. You know they really got us ready. And if, you know the Australian Army

29:00 does things well. When they are going to war and training like that. They don't do things halfway, and everybody was checking me to see if I was a corporal. No I was a lance corporal at that stage. They were checking me to see if I was doing things right with what I had to do, checking the section commander, not standing over him, but just sitting writing notes. And then the report would come

29:30 back whether the battalion was ready or not, and if they were not ready they didn't go. But there wasn't too many battalions that never went. I can't really remember any.

Do you reckon having had that experience you already had, did you have a different take on the training with some of the blokes that were raw?

Yeah, well I could give feedback, I could help them. That's why they make you NCO. Because you know how to cut corners and still do it. Not out of a book. So, being an ex

30:00 veteran from Borneo and Malaya was very good for me, because it put me in good stead to assimilate everything. I am not saying the guys that didn't... They were good too. You can't sort of separate anybody, but we must have had more... But obviously we must have had more ability. But probably not in all cases.

30:30 There were probably better people than me that hadn't been anywhere, you know what I mean. I am not saying, that... Depends on the people.

So as soon as you got to 2 RAR, you knew how long it was going to be before you went to Vietnam?

Oh yeah, we knew.

What other ways, as well as training, sort of more on personal administration, in which way did you prepare for that?

With the wife and that? Well they were told we were goin' around May. I think it was May we sailed.

31:00 I had a house at that time. I bought a house when I got up there, in Alderley. And she was pretty well set up with the kids and had an allotment, and a car for her. So everything was in place. I didn't have to go

to the hierarchy for any problems because I was an NCO at that stage, and NCOs shouldn't have any problems.

31:30 But some of them did. Everything worked out. I don't know if everybody was in the same position. There was a lot of marriages didn't last over Vietnam. Mine lasted two tours. But there was problems. The younger soldiers had a bit of trouble. I used to counsel them on you know, in my way. I was only a lance corporal, I hadn't done much counselling, but I know what they should have been doing with their bills and how to

32:00 get it organised and I had helped a lot of people. The married blokes you know.

Do you feel that, unofficially, it was your responsibility and that it was something that maybe the army should have looked at?

No. It was... The army was pretty good. Most of it was people that sat on it and didn't tell people. But as an NCO I didn't try to solve their problems if I could see it was too big for me, it went to the platoon commander, and then the

32:30 platoon commander went to the company commander, and the captain of the company, which is the 2IC, took it higher. But they were well in tune with that. I would say it was probably better than what it is today. They didn't overlook much. It was done in a rougher way. There was no counselling or holding him around the shoulders or any of that garbage. It was, "You do

33:00 it." and, "You have gotta do this." But no, those people were well trained.

What about getting your gear, was there specific things you had to do in the regiment like packing up gear and stuff like that?

Oh yeah, we had to paint our trunks different colours and they would change their minds and put the flag on the left instead of the right, and you know. The kangaroo I think it was. Yeah, that was murderous, but it was a

33:30 rest. Yeah, there was various shortfalls of confusion and that, but we sort of took that in our stride.

When you guys sort of got a chance did you go out and paint the town red?

Well I was married. And I didn't actually go... At times I did, I got caught DUI [Driving Under the Influence] at one stage on a company

34:00 party, so I did do a bit... I did go out a bit too much. I didn't go out all the time.

Where were the army haunts in Brisbane in those days?

I think the Treasury. No, that might have been in the Malayan days. I think the World by Night was later than that, that was a strip club up in Petrie Bight there. No

34:30 I am not sure where they went. Really, I can't say. We used to go to the Newmarket Hotel and drink a lot and have orders groups in amongst all the civilians and put sentries out and you know, took the whole pub over, that brought them up. I don't know where the younger blokes went. I was sort of in an NCO bracket then. So we were older and we had wives that we had to go home to.

35:00 So we could get fed I suppose.

So you went over on the Sydney?

Yes, went over on the HMAS Sydney.

Did you have to do anything in regards to loading with that?

No, no. I would like to say that the Royal Australian Navy, were perfect hosts. The sailors knew that we didn't know our way around

35:30 much. I never heard anyone get abused. We were treated very well on both tours. And we didn't do any of the work unloading. It was all done for us. I suppose there was an advance party from the army went down, but being in a rifle company I wouldn't be on that advance party, you know what I mean. Probably Admin Co [Administration Company] did all that.

36:00 **Where was that loading done?**

At what wharf? I can't tell you. I don't really know. Hamilton, I think. Can they get in there? Hamilton, I think. There would have been different work parties from other units I think.

So by the time you guys rocked up to board the ship, everything was ready to go?

Yep. Our packs were on,

36:30 everything, and we just walked on with our rifles of course.

Was there any sort of farewell or anything like that?

Oh yeah, the wives got down to see us. I can't remember any bands, I don't think so. I know my wife the first tour was heavily pregnant, two weeks overdue with me first daughter. And they were decent they got her a chair or something.

37:00 Yeah, it was a nice farewell, but there was no band. It was all a military thing.

Was that hard, that must have been hard for you leaving a heavily pregnant wife, kid on the way?

It was, it was hard, but you know, I was a soldier... And you see if you... When you a sort of military person, you overlook a lot of sensitivities

37:30 of that sort of thing because, especially you are going up in the army a bit, you are dedicated to it. And I feel that that's why a lot of marriages went. There was no... There was a wives' club, but the ORs [other ranks] like the privates didn't have much for their wives, here. The sergeants and the officers

38:00 all had clubs. But we probably had something, but she didn't go to it. It was all pretty critical and it worked. And what else could they do? They didn't hold your hand. They expected you to organise yourself.

Just talking about the wives' clubs and that sort of thing, it was a bit of an oversight that the

38:30 **ORs didn't have anything like this?**

They probably did, I can't remember, but my wife didn't choose to do that.

So how excited were you to be going?

I don't think I would have been excited, it was pretty... Well I suppose at that time of my life it wasn't too traumatic, because I wanted to go. But going and that is hard, even though you have go no kids, but it's harder when you have got

39:00 kids, and that's the second tour. But I wanted to go, yeah. Because I thought it would be a re-run of Borneo, but it wasn't.

Did you have blokes in your section who had kids?

Oh yeah we had a few married blokes, not a lot, but most of them were single. Thank God.

You could see a lot of the problems they were having?

Yeah. I think. No, I had

39:30 single blokes that trip. The second one I had a couple of married ones. I think, yeah.

What was the general buzz amongst all the blokes?

Quiet. You know. No-one was over excited, because we were going to war and we had heard a lot of things. You know if I sat here and said I wasn't, you know, apprehensive, I would, you know...

40:00 It's like jumping out of an aeroplane. I would have jumped. I went. I wanted to have a go at it. But the poor old National Serviceman was drafted in. I suppose he wasn't too happy about going, but most of them had accepted their fate. Made the best out of it.

So going to Vietnam for you definitely felt different to going to Malaya/Borneo?

Oh yeah.

Tape 5

00:34 **At what stage were you guys told that you would be going over on the Sydney?**

I can't remember. I would have said we would have known pretty well a month before, but we knew sort of virtually we were leaving. In 2's case we relieved 6, and in 8's case we relieved 9, and they had nearly finished their 12 months, so...

01:00 But it was sort of kept... You know, you were not to tell anybody. But the newspapers, they had it anyway. I don't think it was a big secret - it was always leaked. I can't remember any big secrets about it.

So what were conditions on board ship like when you got on board?

Good. We were in the way of the sailors because we didn't know where to go for a while, but they did their best, you know they really did a good

01:30 job. And of course we had training goin' over you know. We had firing, firing off the back, had markers and balloons and all sorts of things. And we had lectures about Vietnam, and language course - not that we ever used the language course in the infantry battalions - but you know - "Come here with your hands up." We knew that, but you didn't need that anyway. But anyway they went

02:00 through all that.

What sort of cultural courses did they have to teach you about Vietnam?

Oh, they would have gone over the history of the French, and what the religions... Oh yeah, they covered that. They covered all that.

Was it covered to an extent, to a much more in depth than what you experienced when you went overseas previously?

No, about the same. But it was covered, they don't sort of

02:30 sit you down for 10 periods, but they cover it very well. We knew what we were getting into, the more so they were teaching us the enemy dress, the enemy in the field, what their booby trap signs are, after the summary of the country of why it was at war and why we were going, obviously we got into training.

And what did they tell you about the enemy?

Oh well there was a lot things you know, that you

03:00 don't know, like formations of signs. Every soldier army in the world, if they put booby traps out, they must mark it for themselves so that they don't trip them or go into them. So there was rock formations, there was broken sticks, wood pointing directions, car tyres, things like that, bamboo tied back, things like that for us to watch for, that indicated there was

03:30 something up there for us to watch for. And they did that because their own people had to travel those tracks, and we learnt all that.

A couple of the fellas we spoke to were told how the VC [Viet Cong] wear black pyjamas, and when they got there they found everybody was wearing black pyjamas. Did you come across that?

Well I knew that anyway. Most Asians wear white and they wear black and white and they are workers in the rubber fields, so that didn't come very big to me, but it might have to

04:00 a guy that had never been outside of Australia before. That's a common one soldiers will say.

What were the food conditions like on the ship? Were the navy guys looking after the army blokes or did the army have their own set up?

No. They fed us the whole lot. The only army representative on there was a warrant officer from water transport, who come under engineers. They come under another corps now,

04:30 RACT [Royal Australian Corps of Transport]. But they were liaising between us and the navy, the navy fed us. Everything. We were... There was no problem, we all got on well.

How many days up?

Eleven. Got there on the 11th day. We went different ways though. The first time we went through Manus Island. The second time we went straight up. We didn't go near New Guinea, but I think it was the same time though.

And besides

05:00 **training, running round and doing lectures and things, what else would the blokes get up to on the way up?**

Oh just relaxing, playing cards, singing, writing letters, just the normal things. Us having orders, corporals were having orders. I wasn't a full corporal so I was probably just sitting around. The army believe in keeping you busy, even though you haven't got anything to do, just so you don't think about anything.

05:30 That's their philosophy in life. But they always had something to do. And there was duties, I didn't, but the soldiers did some duties in the mess and that.

Anything that stood out on the trip up?

No. The only thing that stood out was actually the way the sailors coped with us, and didn't lose their tempers and things like that. Because getting used to a ship is very you know, it has got sharp edges,

06:00 and it takes a little while. You can hurt yourself on a ship if you are not used to ships. So we had to be careful about that. Leaning on gangplank rails is a no-no in the navy, they don't have that. So anyone that leant on the rails, they were told from above somewhere to get off the rails. That was in case you fell over. They didn't like that. Two cans of beer a day, big ones, monster ones, and of course the

06:30 army soon got into the idea of taking the mates that didn't drink, but the navy got on to that - they don't like that. But no they looked after us very well. Fosters was the beer. I can remember. Monstrous cans.

Would they have been steel cans back then?

I think they would have been.

So you arrived there on the 11th day, what time of day did you turn up?

We docked I think just the night

07:00 before we got in. So it was fairly early when we got there from what I can remember. And that was in Vung Tau Harbour, and from there some were choppered... Oh we... Some of us were taken off on landing barges, that would have been possibly American or I think Australian landing barges. And then some of us were choppered to Nui Dat and others went in

07:30 trucks, that I can remember, and that happened the same on each trip. It was fairly early, about 9 o'clock I think.

I just had a thought, did the ship have blackout discipline at night-time at all, or...?

Yes. Yes, they did. After a certain time, when they got into the waters it meant something - we had destroyers escorting us. We had two destroyers. We had boxing competitions,

08:00 and when you cross the Equator, they had a ceremony and the navy joined in. And the navy and us boxed, we had a boxing competition. The army won it on the first trip. I can't remember the second trip. I don't think we had a boxing competition. But when you got into a certain line where it was getting...or they considered it dangerous, they put on all the blackouts and all that.

You mentioned all the different methods in which

08:30 **people were taken off the ship. How did you go off?**

I went by landing craft and then truck to Nui Dat. I think I did that twice.

So you were off the ship and into Nui Dat the same day?

Oh yes. Nui Dat, I think, was 30 or 40 kilometres from Vung Tau. I am not 100 per cent sure. I don't go into that sort of thing, but it was about that, about 1½ hours.

What were your first impressions of Vietnam?

09:00 It's a nice country. It's very picturesque, but, yeah it's a bit like Thailand. Not like Malaya. Or Malaysia or the Philippines. It's more like Thailand - open paddy fields, hills, not a lot of hills in some areas, but a lot of hills in other areas.

Of course blokes always talk about the heat and the

09:30 **smell when they get there?**

Yeah, well I had been used to south-east Asia. The smell doesn't worry me. The heat didn't... Well it's better heat than over here, because it's not so hot overhead. You find in Asia, you probably... But I find, myself, I don't know whether I am right or I am wrong, but I find that the heat overhead, the sun isn't as torturous as it is here. It's hotter, but it's, it's easier for

10:00 me than here.

So what were your initial responsibilities, was it looking after your section or...?

Yeah, we just wholly and solely did platoon work. And of course in Nui Dat, because it was a base where they almost hit 18th August and we went in November, and that was Long Tan, and we relieved those mob, the 6 RAR, obviously you have got to have a lot of work

10:30 on the perimeter, and the whole base requires a lot of people on duty of a night. So when you are not on operations, you are guarding the place.

So what was your impression of Nui Dat when you first got there?

Oh, nothing outstanding, but I think I didn't expect it to be as you know as comfortable as it was. There was some hard

11:00 standing buildings. We lived in tents, but everything was fairly well organised. But that... The first time we went we had only had two battalions in there. The 3rd Battalion moved in while we were there - they had to build their own camp. Like that one probably would have been built by 5 RAR. And they had to work hard, very hard. They had to work until midnight some nights. Digging in.

So can you remember that first day, like what happened when you first arrived there?

11:30 **Were you given a tour of the area or...?**

No, no tours, but you found out there wasn't much time for tours, because we had security to worry about. But we were told where things were, but I don't remember going for a tour, and that was on the both trips. I can't remember that.

So any period of

12:00 **acclimatisation would have just been digging in and securing your position, was it?**

No. We didn't have to dig in, it was all built for us.

You didn't have to do any other work?

No, not until later when the company commander decided it wasn't good for him, and he wanted to change it all. 6 RAR. He wanted to be his own boss so he worked us to death. But that didn't happen on me second tour, they just did the job. You know, that depends on individual company commanders and whether they want to gain points or

12:30 whatever they do it for. I don't know. It certainly doesn't win the men.

So what sort of settling period did you have before you were turned around and send on operations?

We were lucky because... What... You do orientation training. Actually we... You get some demonstrations, and one of the demonstrations was chopper fire,

13:00 which went horribly wrong. It was an American gun ship showing us the how they brought fire in. I don't know who was in fault, you know, I am not an American knocker. I think they are as good as anyone else - we all make mistakes. I don't know whether the Australians put the machine guns in the wrong place or the troops. It wasn't our company. It was another company. Or whether the American come in wrong. They say it was the

13:30 Americans, I don't know, but they would do that anyway. Any side would blame the other. But the gun ships come in, they strafed one of the platoons, D company 2 RAR and there was about 3 killed and 9 wounded, because we went out and got the rifles later. That was a tragic thing. We also were given an artillery lesson, which nearly went wrong, on the second tour.

14:00 They sent me up because I had been there before and it was for NCOs and I was a corporal on the second tour. They sent me and my section up to be standing patrol, so that everything could be done then non tactical. And I was up with my section, started to come in you know to show us, they knew I knew. I heard the first round, it was coming near us, I could tell it was coming in us, so I got me

14:30 troops up and I moved them about 300 metres back and it hit where we... I just got them back in time, maybe we covered about 100 metres, but with artillery fire it all goes to the front. So we were lucky. And they thought we were hit, they were bringing up the stretchers, so it went horribly wrong. So that afternoon we went over and looked at the gun positions. New Zealand... And they are very good gunners. And something had happened, they had some sort of slippage on the guns

15:00 and that nearly went horribly wrong too, so I didn't like these acclimatisation things very much.

Some intro to Vietnam with the helicopter incident, it must have been - must have put the wind up some fellas, did it?

No-one sort of talks about those sort of things. We just carried on. And it is that busy, and you are being told so much and getting orders groups and all that, you don't think about

15:30 what happened. If you was to think about every time you put your foot down outside the wire, you would be tripping on a mine, you would be a nut case in about 3 weeks, so you sort of you know, we sort of handled that. I can't remember anyone being completely scared and not moving. But like, it's a... Going back to the orientation, they send you out on a tail

16:00 patrol, which is about 1000 clicks [kilometres], metres out, 2000 metres. And they acclimatise you to the area. And in about two weeks we were going on operations. It may be less, maybe 10 days and we were out on an operation. Our first operation. That would have been on both cases. They haven't got the time to just let you have two months to check. You know, the other battalion wants a spell. And there was usually

16:30 one in and two out. So you were busy.

Can you explain the set-up at Nui Dat with your guys? Was it like, with Nui Dat defence was everyone tying in with someone next door?

Yes.

Who was next door to you guys?

Well we had our companies, and basically what happens in between the companies, there is barbed wire, so if the enemy get into one company they can't get through to another company, so you are really on your own,

17:00 you are isolated. But your guns tie in with the other companies, and it is not long before you find a hole in the wire where you can get... If your company don't get enough beer, usually the other company are a bit better, so we soon got our holes. But everything's built irregular as you know, so that if you walk that way, you gotta walk that way to get in. They didn't have any of that there was nothing between companies, only what we made. Holes. Or come in the

17:30 front way.

So did you know who was either side of 2 RAR?

We were B Company, A Company was on our left, and I think C Company was on our right. In 8 RAR, D was on our right and I was A Company then. But that was a different area. B was on our left.

What about stand to and

18:00 **clearing patrols and that sort of thing, can you tell us about that?**

Well it become a bit of a... Everybody got so used to it, there was a track around that base. And I really didn't like it and if I would have been the enemy I would have cleaned up a few people. I would have mined those tracks. But they couldn't have got too far in to do that, although they

18:30 used to probe around us. But when I did my clearing patrol, I used to get them out, out of that and down into the rubber and that because I didn't like the way they... Towards the end, people just belted around it to get it over you know. But that wasn't always the case. I am not saying this was done everywhere. Usually everything in Vietnam was done very well.

And where was stand to done?

Oh, last light. Whatever it was at the

19:00 time.

Nightfall?

Yeah, fairly quick, long shadows, long evenings but then bang. But this sort of changed through the seasons.

So what season was it when you got there?

I think it was monsoon when we got there first time, I am not sure.

Had you experienced similar conditions in Malaya/Borneo?

Yeah, yeah, same thing. Rain comes in the afternoon about

19:30 4 and you get wet, and later on it stops for the night. Monsoons are a bit different - it can rain for irregular periods. But it peters out the same as you get in the Philippines. But then you get your storms every day, like we've been getting them here, and after that it's gone. But in the monsoons it can rain all night on you, you know. But the conditions over there are so warm that you dried out pretty

20:00 well.

What did that do to the earth there, because it's pretty red soil there isn't it?

Yeah, mostly red soil. It wasn't too nice. But in the camp as I say, it was an established camp so they had pretty hard tracks, and sometimes cemented but that wasn't a big problem, sometimes dirt on your boots, but there was... But in the bush, in the jungle, it's you know

20:30 you don't get dirt on you because no-one travels through it much.

What sort of natural cover did you have there, at your area there?

In the base camp?

At Nui Dat?

Aaah, rubber. Rubber and bananas. Rubber in the 1st Company and mostly bananas in the other. More clearer, bit of rubber.

Blokes help themselves to the bananas?

Oh, sort of, maybe. It wasn't a big

21:00 deal.

So you said within the first 10 days you were out on your first operation, what was that?

Well we were out earlier than that. We were on this close operation, sleeping out and ambushing straight away virtually in two days. But we were sent out on a big op [operation], as a part of the operation about 10 days later, maybe 15 days, maybe less.

How long from when you got to Nui Dat was your first contact with the

21:30 **enemy?**

Oh, you know, it's a long time now, but it would have been... In 2 RAR we didn't get too much in our company. There was a couple. But sometimes there was other platoons, but I think we had just a glimpse and a bang and gone. We found a lot of enemy villages. We had to burn them. We had to backload the rice first.

22:00 It was a lot of that. I thought it would be action all the time, but it wasn't. You know war is a lot of work and a lot of frustration really. It's not all bang, bang, bang. You might search, you might see them, they might run away. You might ambush for nights on end and get nothing. You know it's... 8 RAR was

22:30 quicker, we got quicker things done there, we had a contact quicker than that. It depends, you know.

Were you making comparisons between your previous overseas service?

Well there was no comparison with the 3rd Battalion and the 2nd Battalion in that area because it was a different set up in Malaya, you know we knew each other, we were

23:00 we were all sort of cooperating and we were in company lots. There we were in a big... This is in the field I am talking about in Malaya, where we come to a big operation and run by the task force and we were just a part of it. So, it was a different type of set up over there. It was much bigger and much more

23:30 going on. Yeah, it was different.

Do particular instances stand out in your mind in your tour of Vietnam?

Oh, yeah, there was quite a few. The one that stands out in my mind that I would talk about was the... We were in this...

24:00 We were all going back from a 30 day operation. And it was right up in the bad part you know. And there was enemy around. Anyway the engineers were flown back to Nui Dat, everyone was flown back, the pioneers, everyone gone. And there was an Australian artillery complex, their guns and they dig in like we do, and sleep underground and there was no-one to blow it up.

24:30 So somewhere along the line they said, "You have been a pioneer." Remember. I said...? I said, "Yes, but I am not qualified. I can blow things up but not a ring main covering 400 metres." Ring main is one bang and they all blow up, you know I didn't have enough knowledge. And they said, "You are the only one we can use." so it didn't matter whether I was qualified or not. This is how peace and war changes. They won't

25:00 even let them blow a claymore now. I said, "I'll have a go. You'll have to bear with me. I can only blow about 6 up at a time." So they threw me more plastic explosives - it would have blown Nui Dat up what they threw me. Bags and boxes, must have been thousands of dollars. Anyway away I went blowing these bunkers up by sixes, threes, whatever I could get me hands on. And consequently it got...

25:30 Because there was choppers leaving and that, I had to stop. See, you can't blow when there's a chopper leaving. It was real hard, but I had them all wired up. I had them all in. That took me about 4 hours. Anyhow the darkness come and I got a couple of blows up. And then they said, "Right, we are going." So my company left. Just left me, now the CSM [Company Sergeant Major] helped me, the company sergeant major, before he left - they were going home. So, here I am

26:00 on me own. No-one. And I am running around blowing up, the ridge is going up, and I am getting it all over me. Thirsty. No-one around. Anyway the next minute an armoured personnel carrier roared up, it was some of 7 Battalion, the battalion I was in in Victoria, that was over there, a little bit before this. And this armoured corps officer, young guy said, "Get in." And I said, "No, I can't get in. I have got all these

26:30 pits wired." I said, "Look, I have got thousands... Cant' leave the..." He said, "If you don't get in I'll leave you." I said, "Well you will have to leave me because I can't leave this." Anyway, the infantry CSM said, "Hang on." he said "How many men do you need?" I said, "Give me one good one. Not the officer." So away we went, and we just run in clockwise

27:00 and I showed him what I wanted, and we just went along blowing them up. They had us on the APCs [Armoured Personnel Carriers] moving out on that whole ridge. It was going. She all went up. So I got me job done just before dark. And that was one thing that they put on me, and I did get a thank you over the radio from me battalion, saying, "You done a good job."

What was going through your mind when everybody buggers off and leaves you?

27:30 You know I didn't think it could happen until that young officer said, "Well, we'll leave you." "Well I will have to stay because I got all this." I said, "Do you want to give it to the VC do you?" But I think he was fair dinkum. And the company sergeant major pulled him into gear, the WO [Warrant Officer], and said, "You can't do this. Get on your radio and tell them we are going to be a bit late." So

28:00 something like the bus driver leaving the kid down - near Canungra on her own. Some people are like that, they follow orders without even thinking. But thank God the CSM said, "No." But that was one thing that stands out in me mind. I guess that wasn't a good trip. We were worked very hard and the

28:30 morale was bad in the company.

Why was that?

Oh we were only allowed two cans a beer a day in camp. We were worked, the company commander made us do all the camp up. The pits that 6 RAR left were not good enough so we had to redo them. The tents were no good, we had to move them closer to the wire where we would have been shot. We made them like boy scouts' tents. And I will never forget that.

29:00 There wasn't many highlights in that tour believe you and me. I got R&R [Rest and Recreation], back to Australia. My daughter had been born by that stage. It wasn't a high morale trip. It nearly ruined me actually. I got busted from corporal in that. But when I went back again, I went back with 8th Battalion. I am saying it was a good battalion too, 2 Battalion, but that wasn't an over battalion thing, it only seemed to be us

29:30 for some reason. But it's a part of leadership, but that was the man's idea on leadership. Some are like that and some aren't. You always get one like him in every battalion. So, you know. And he was never pulled into gear. But I think later on... I left a couple of months earlier, I got out. I had had enough. And I come back. And that was a couple of months earlier, so I think it got better.

30:00 They really had a lot of casualties in that company later.

How long after your daughter was born did you actually find out?

That was pretty much done. They told me in the field, it come over the radio, so that was pretty much done. But the next battalion I went with were different. It was a different atmosphere. But bear in mind, it was later in the piece, it was 1969,

30:30 November 1969. Things had got better. We'd got another task force commander, who was a good soldier's man, and things had changed. There was better ideas that had come with time and experience and we were sort of treated much better. We didn't have to rebuild the camp. He didn't do that to us. So everything was better.

Was Nui Dat mortared at all while you were there?

Not while I was there.

31:00 It was mortared when 6 RAR was there. Actually, some of 6 RAR that first tour, '66, I think they were there '66/67, they were mortared. A few blokes got killed in that camp, by mortar fire, I am led to believe. Then of course the enemy were going to attack, and D Company 6 RAR held them back, so everything up until then would have been...

31:30 After... When were there we had no... We had a few probes on the perimeter, but no-one ever got mortared. But we had seen evidence of base plates set up outside. So you know probably our standing patrols. I think the onslaught by D Company 6 RAR made it a lot more comfortable for us right through, because they weren't going to try again. So

32:00 I think we had 6 RAR - not only D Company, there was other companies involved. I think we had 6 RAR to thank for that. They didn't sort of get too much ...

How soon after that after Long Tan did that information filter down to you guys about what had happened?

Oh we knew back here, before we left.

Straight away?

Oh yeah. That was on TV straight away. TV coverage was high then. It was something

32:30 like the Iraqi war, TV. It was big. Big time, you could see it on the TV every night.

Of course we nicknamed it the first television war. Did you ever see correspondent teams and that around?

Oh yes, we had them round all the time. I can't remember with 2 RAR much, I don't think we had too many. But we had... on our trip with 8, we had a guy from Brisbane,

33:00 I think his name was Gibbons, and he was with the company all the time. He was a civilian, he had years there. He was that good he was giving the company commander advice. Because he knew. He used to stay with the company commander. We were always pleased to have him. We had a good company commander who was ex Special Forces anyway. And had been there before in the Training Team. But this guy was always welcome because he was up there with us, and he used to wear a

33:30 beard, and his name was Gibbons, I think. I can't really remember. He used to chat with us, take photos

of us. Yeah, we had a lot used to come out with us for a few days, but he used to travel pretty well all the time with us.

Can you remember your first shot fired in anger when you did your first tour?

Yeah I think so.

34:00 Yeah. There was so many incidents in our platoon – people were sentries were shot at, sentries were running in, you know, yeah, I can't specifically name it, but you don't sort of worry too much, it's not a big deal, it's sort of

34:30 you know, you trudge around so much and nothing happens, you know, yeah.

How had the equipment changed from your time in Malaya and Borneo to Vietnam?

Second tour, sorry the first tour, our packs were, would you believe was WW2, so the first thing we did when we got in-country was buy the Vietnamese army packs, with pockets on them. It all

35:00 changed a bit with 8 RAR because we were there later and we had packs, not much better, but Australian packs with pockets at least, small but not as good as the British, but you know a bit better than the ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam] ones and carry a bit more. But remember... See you don't carry much food, you might have 10 days' rations, but you don't put it all in, you throw most of it away.

35:30 See you just travel on one meal a day and plenty of (UNCLEAR) so the weight and the problem with the weight is the things you have got to carry you know. You have got to carry claymore mines, like we were in an ambushing mode in 8 RAR so we carried may be 6 to 7 claymore mines in the section.

36:00 You know they are fairly heavy. Trip flares. Det [detonator] flares for the claymores, they'd take up a lot. Then you have got your grenades, then you've got your ammunition, there are probably other things I have probably forgotten, markers for the choppers. Oh that's right, smoke grenades, they're heavy. And you had all these. You had to

36:30 divide out in the section. And sections weren't always 9 men, some sections were 7. Because someone was out sick or perhaps wounded, so you know sometimes you were travelling with 6 men, 5 men sometimes. Had nothing. If a bloke got wounded, they wouldn't take the ammunition back, you inherited all of his stuff, because the chopper wouldn't take his stuff. You don't blame

37:00 them, they just took the body and his rifle. So you inherited all his ammunition. You know.

What was the minimum strength you would go out on operations in?

Oh well, it varied, with 2 RAR because Long Tan had just ended. We used to go out battalion operations, work as a company if a platoon's moved away, they would only be a little bit away. 8 RAR was different, we would go out as a company, sometimes on our

37:30 own, sometimes we would send the platoons out. He... It was a little more tactically suited to being further away from the main... But we were always were close enough to have some reaction. You know, I have gone on sort of quick patrols for 2 or 3 hours with 3 men with 8 RAR, I think that was a little bit hairy when I look back on it, but never in

38:00 2. We used to tinker around with those sort of things a bit with 8 RAR, say if we had a platoon in harbour position, we would send little patrols out. But because of the tactical situation... They know what it's like in the area you know, pretty well.

What about listening posts?

Well, we had those too.

That would be one bloke on his own?

No, never one bloke.

38:30 Even on sentry of a night, never, never. Always two. And you know the good section commander would let the fresh bloke rest and the other bloke stay awake, and he would tap the other bloke if anything happened. Oh if there was noise coming you would always have that other bloke to wake up and say, "What do you think it is?" Most blokes just sat, one rested but just watched, the other was full on. No, no never just one. I

39:00 can't... In Borneo we used to, but I can never see in Vietnam ever doing it on their own.

39:10 End of tape

00:31 **You mentioned earlier that ambushes were conducted differently in Vietnam than they were in Borneo, and that?**

Yes, they were. Borneo we were sort of the same, we got more smart over there because of the reaction of the enemy. Now the VC enemy, what they used to do,

01:00 not all the time, they used to try and roll you up on the flanks. So most of our ambushes were what they called triangle ambushes. Where you would have your triangle with your three guns, one in front and one at the back, and one in a better position – you know another position – and you would have claymore mines interlocked all around you. So that if you were hit in one area, and if they flanked you, you could blow the claymores in the other area. And we had all

01:30 round defence and we would tighten up you know.

What strength was an ambush conducted in?

Well, usually platoon. Yeah, we didn't try section ambushes. Standard patrols might have been done by sections, but I think to a minimum. We were pretty careful on that tour, because it was just after Long Tan.

So was it quite noticeable this sort of

02:00 **edginess after Long Tan that you guys were under, I mean from a higher thing, when you were obviously very careful what you guys were...?**

No it was just the way worked. Obviously the commanders weren't going to risk platoons out on their own with all these forces that could have been around. They were still careful on that second tour too but things had changed to small enemy

02:30 groups in a lot of places. So we did a lot of ambushing in platoons, and that sort of thing. Things had changed. We learnt a lot. But our ambushes were very good. We learnt the art of ambushing from SAS. SAS had a big influence in 8 RAR's ambushes. They were much better than the ones we did in 2 RAR; they were really spot on. Because the SAS come over and

03:00 taught us, in the early days, and we were really good at ambushing. And you know like our flares, different type – the different way we set our flares up. You know, on loose pulls was the best. The other way, with the tight pull, it meant that if it went that way from the wind, it would go off. They were no good. That was the way we were doing it in 2 RAR for a while anyway. And that's the way they taught us at

03:30 Canungra, see.

So what was essentially the difference between the ambushes you did in 2 RAR to 8 RAR?

They probably weren't as good. The art of ambushing... I am not saying all companies, but some were you know, but some were... I am not saying all of the ambushes we were in we did it different in 8 RAR. We were

04:00 more smarter with claymores in setting up. That might be my company, I don't know. I am not saying they couldn't do it, because there was a lot of good soldiers in 2 Battalion too, but I noticed the different in 8. I thought it was much better. Because the SAS didn't teach us in 2. But they taught us in 8.

When you first got there with 2, where were SAS based in Nui Dat?

They were always on SAS Hill. There's a bit of hill in the middle of the camp, and that's where they

04:30 were; they were always there. I think there was an ordnance depot up there too, with all the ammo and that.

And what was the general sort of thinking amongst infantry guys about the SAS?

We had no... We liked them because they used to do our... Before you went on a landing to an operation in choppers, well you know, if they had the SAS they were always in and had the area checked out for us to

05:00 see make sure we didn't land in a hot LZ [Landing Zone] as they used to call them. Oh they were well thought of. SAS have never been any other way in my books. There has been a few stories jealous infantrymen have said about them, but I think they are pretty fruitless myself. I have never had anything but praise for them myself.

What about helicopter operations?

Yeah,

How many of them?

Most of it.

05:30 First trip was we used to work with the American Robin Hoods, and they would come down and they would lift a company at a time from Nui Dat. Put it down wherever they could. Very efficient. Very good. Bear in mind in that era the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] ours, were not in abundance over there. With 8

06:00 RAR our air force had more choppers and they were less touchy about whether they hurt them or not, and they were very good. But the air force always handled the SAS. Our air force always, well in most cases so I am told, put them in and they were very good too. Every one was pretty spot on. But the Americans were always more flexible, that's what I thought, but that's only my opinion. But I learnt more about that on me

06:30 second tour when I left the battalion and went to a training team.

Had you done much training in Australia before going to Vietnam with regard to helicopters, and learning how to do that?

Yeah, we did everything. We did bringing in fire artillery, corporals could do that. And even good privates could do that. We were taught helicopter drills, we were taught all about safety of them, what to do if they crashed. You know as much as they could.

07:00 Everything.

What was it like to go in anywhere in company strength in an Iroquois [helicopter]?

Well, it was... If you had time to look at it and film it, it would have looked good, because I have seen them put them down. And I reckon the company would have almost come in together, maybe split a bit, very

07:30 dynamic it was. It was like the Americans do things, you know, big. Plenty of logistics, yeah. But we did use armoured personnel carriers a lot too. And they were very good. Magic. And they were used as well as helicopters.

08:00 Tanks we used, but I only got to work with them once briefly. They did their job, but they could only go to certain places because they couldn't get through the jungle. But armoured personnel carriers could get through pretty well.

What were your main concerns when you would go out anywhere? Was there ever any...?

Personally, I didn't like mines. But you know, you had to live with it.

08:30 I was always make sure, you know, if I was on small tracks, and we were the lead section, make sure your scout was current with all the booby trap signs. More so mines. I think everybody was more frightened of mines than they were of bullets, although bullets are terrible things. And these people dug in well you know.

09:00 On my second or even the first tour you would be in a bunker complex before you would sort of realise that look at this. If we had have ever been caught. Well some of the battalions were, some of the companies, so. I wasn't, so I can't... Well I was lucky, but you know you must get killed, because it was that well done, you couldn't see a thing. It was

09:30 all interlocked.

So you would find yourself in your case in a bunker complex and fortunately it wasn't manned?

Sometimes.

What would happen in that situation?

Sort of we knew, we knew we were goin' in. Because what they used to do is... They would always give themselves away with chickens, because they would eat them I suppose. Food wasn't always readily

10:00 got I suppose. They always used to have chickens around, and if you heard chickens, you knew that there was something around. And of course the mine signs, you were always hitting these trees tied back, things like that, rolled up banana tree in some areas where there was bananas. Rocks on the ground. And so we went in pretty careful. But sometimes you... And they used to cut the

10:30 trees off. Outside their camps they had to have timber to make their bunkers, so they would cut the trees off low. And so the choppers wouldn't see it, they would cut them in. Not all at once, not all round, but in little bits, and put dirt on top of those trees so they wouldn't see the recon [reconnaissance] helicopters and planes wouldn't see the shine. And you

11:00 knew you were comin' to something. But you know you just had to go and search. And sometimes we hit, they were in there, and they fired at us and we put air strikes on them. The normal situation was that if you hit something, most commanders pulled back, brought artillery in and mortars in, and an air strike in maybe and clear it. But that wasn't always... It couldn't always be done. Sometimes

11:30 they would find themselves in the middle of it all or cut off, and they would have a fight. That was the

ideal situation to bring your fire support in and to save your troops on the ground, but it didn't always work that way.

Where did the Aussies get their air support from?

Americans. Yeah, most... See our, air force...

12:00 Like our air force was choppers on the ground and that, but we used to get our... The Americans used to have gun ships, and whenever chopper put in, there would be gun ships above ready to help you out in most cases. And if you were getting wounded out, you would always see a gun ship around. You know, keeping lookout, and they would just dive down and strafe them. I think they flew them

12:30 like Sabres some of them. Our big stuff, air strikes and stuff, was from the Americans because our air force from Phan Rang only had the bombers that went in and put the big bombs down, to my knowledge. Yeah, so, yeah, mostly American. They were very good to work with, good to work with. The pilots were excellent - they would just talk to like we are talking to you know. The Australians were a little bit more formal and they wanted everything done

13:00 right, but they were pretty good too. But I had a lot of experience with Americans in the Training Team. And they would just tell you, "Where's the fire coming at you from? How far is it away?" You would tell them, give them the grid reference you thought, and you just come in and do the work then. Just talk to me while I do it. Mostly they were young warrant officers. You know really young whiz kids,

13:30 and they used to make them pilots and go in. They were good.

Can you tell us about going on a 30 day patrol?

Yes well, 30 day patrol was obviously you had to get re-supped [re-supplied]. They would normally, depending on where they had to send you and how far you had to walk, they might give you 5 days' rations or 6 days'. If they wanted to put you in

14:00 unseen they might give you 10 days' and send you in with armoured personnel carriers with the tops down, so they didn't know you were hanging - because we used to sit on the sides of them. So sometimes they would put us into an area quietly and you would carry 10 days'. If it was a big operation where there was a lot of movement and that, Americans other forces, they would give you 6 days rations, you would get a re-supp. In the

14:30 old days with the 2nd Battalion when things weren't all...where they weren't too experienced, you would have to open the boxes, burn the boxes, separate all the stuff with the LZ [Landing Zone] - with the protection around you of course. With 8th Battalion they took a summary of what we wanted out of the rations, put them in sandbags, 3 days in sand bags. You just picked up your sandbag. But that was later when you got more expert. They used to send cold milk,

15:00 buns in with ham on them. You know, and as a commander, or as anybody I guess, you would walk off with a bun in your mouth, and milk in your mouth and a rifle here. You would get no time to eat it anyway. So, but then we'd get our mail, which was a big thing. The mail in Vietnam which the union stopped at one stage until the navy delivered it. That was a big,

15:30 big factor.

What did you blokes think when the posties and the wharfies started carrying on back in Australia?

I don't think it was the postmen. Wasn't it the wharfies? We only knew they wouldn't load the Jeparit. We started to turn off Australia, and I think all these... And I have post traumatic stress, it was diagnosed in 1997, 1996. I think that our problems, my problem

16:00 anyway, didn't stem from the war, it stemmed from the opposition of people back here in Australia. That's what my stress is about. I have never trusted too many people ever since. And you can't shake it, I am afraid. You sort of get to be more mature about it, and say, "Well it wasn't everybody." But if you get angry or something, it all reverts back to

16:30 them and us. And that's exactly what it was in the Vietnam War. They were either on your side or against you. That's the way we found it. Even the RSLs [Returned and Services League] were against us as well. In between tours to Vietnam, I personally went to the Gaythorne RSL to get in, in my uniform on, my ribbon, and I was rejected in an RSL, next door to the army camp.

17:00 "You can't come in here unless someone signs you in." It didn't happen in Sydney, they were better, but it did happen here. I have never joined an RSL since then. I know that's being a bit petty and immature, because there are good RSLs and their attitude has changed, but that was the way were in the old days. I did. I lied. I joined an RSL in Wagga, because that's where the girls used to go

17:30 when I was posted down there, so I had to, to get in with the social scene. But that's the only time I ever joined. But still, I am sure they are not like that now. One has to be a bit mature about it, but it wasn't everybody. But we did get a lot of flak and people were really hateful of us you know. It is terrible, and that's where all the post traumatic stress come from in my case. Worried about rounds and getting shot

and all

18:00 that, yeah sure that worries you, but you normally get through all that because you are trained. But your own people belting you, when you are there, and when you come back. There's good people that cheer for you, and there's always the mob the police have to take away. Of course now, all those people are all very pro military, believe it or not, they're all for the

18:30 military, that draft dodging mob. And you will find they will even say now, "Me brother was in it." or, "I was in it." But they are even more pro than the military are, which is good. It means they must have learned a lesson.

What did it do for a bloke's morale over there, to hear all this stuff going on?

19:00 We were that busy, I don't think they had time to worry about that. It wasn't... In today's... You know, being in the army until 1997, I found that politics played a big part in the army in those days, but in our days it didn't. The commanders were there to fight a war, and the CO was there to command it. And I don't think they had any

19:30 psychology sessions about... They kept us happy with... Well the first company commander made us dig to keep us happy and refurbish the tents. But they would send you down... The people from Australia would come, the singers, and the dancers and they were all beautiful in those days, Lorrae Desmond, she had a body beautiful. I don't know what she looks like now but she was a great entertainer. Came many times. Lucky Grilles came, and they give us

20:00 good... I only got to one by the way, in two tours. But they tried, they were there. And American entertainers sometimes. But we didn't get a lot, like the Americans got a lot. I have been on their bases and it was beautiful, but that was later on, on my second tour. But usually they worked us hard and you know, there wasn't too much counselling. There was none of this stuff after a contact they get a

20:30 psychologist up to talk to us. Actually on the second tour, they got a mob of American... I don't know what they were, but they were a unit of psychologists, beautiful looking women. And they came to our company. And they were trying to ask us questions and be nice. And they said, asked us questions, "That man in green..." And the corporal said, "You

21:00 stupid so and so, we are all in bloody green." And that went over very well. But there wasn't much of that. As a matter of fact, I never ever seen a psychologist in Vietnam. I don't think the corps went. It might've, it might have been in Saigon, but they did play around with us on the second tour. I can remember a regimental medical officer getting me down and quizzing me about another corporal in my company that was going

21:30 troppo [becoming unstable]. I am not sure whether he was trying to find out about me or the other corporal, but that only happened on the second tour. There must have been more psychologists over there. No everybody did their job. The culture wasn't in those days of holding your hands. And like they did before, I seen when they went to Somalia in Townsville, they were talking to the

22:00 soldiers' wives, that didn't happen to us. You know. Because it was bigger. And it's good that it happened. I am not saying it's bad and it should have happened I suppose. A lot of people probably hurt today because it didn't, but it didn't worry me too much. They used to have church services. And my biggest problem, I had a really religious guy in my

22:30 section, my biggest problem was trying to keep him out of the church when we come back off an operation until we cleaned all the gear. Because he wanted to go straight down, and I didn't like that. Because we had machine guns to clean we had everything. So that was one of my problems, and the other problem was I had as an NCO was giving them mail in the field, because they would take it out on sentry and read it. So I made sure it was confiscated before the sentries

23:00 went out. I didn't want a sentry being shot because he was reading a letter from home. And I caught a few doing it. It's pretty hard being out there and to have a letter in your pocket and being out there, and they read them, some of them did. Because... But all those things were humane things, they were... People do these things because they are human, and we understood that. And I was human. And I had a few problems

23:30 on my first tour. But I handled it all right. We all had personal problems. But I think it stems from being a little bit knowing your man as a leader, and finding out he's got a problem, and if it's going to interfere in the field, you send him as a driver or something.

Getting back to your 30 day patrol, what was it like getting towards the end of that, getting ready to come back in to Nui Dat?

24:00 Oh well nothing changed, we just did our job right up until the choppers landed, or the APCs took us out.

Would the blokes start to switch off getting towards the end of something like that?

Ah, this is something I think that should be clarified and this is a good point, Peter. Switching off is... When you are in a war

- 24:30 zone you sort of have to switch off a bit because if you are on 100 per cent alert. You would probably crack. But with the switching off you still had to sort of keep one eye up. So, it was the soldier that never switched off that usually had a breakdown. Soldiers would switch off. You had to
- 25:00 sometimes be very verbose with them, but usually they switched on pretty fast when they were in danger. I worked with Vietnamese on me second tour after my platoon got wiped out on the Long Hais [Hills]. I was in 1 Platoon A Company 8 RAR, and we had a terrible mine contact. And I went to the Australian Army Training Team,
- 25:30 and a lot of advisers used to say, "Look at these Vietnamese, they were switched off." Well they were switched off at times because they lived in the country. They knew exactly the signs of what was going to come, and I tell you they weren't switched off if they thought the enemy was around. You have got to learn to live with the... A lot of Australian soldiers say oh they switched off and that sort of thing. People switch off when they
- 26:00 know that things... If you are in a perimeter and you have got sentries out, you are allowed to switch off a bit and read a letter. You know what I mean. But on sentry, no. But they were pretty good. I have seen terrible things happen with people switching off, but you can't really get them to the side and punch them, they are only human and they are out there for 30 days and they are
- 26:30 slogging a pack and they are getting' wet and they are getting' dry and they are getting wet. And you know you gotta switch off. And in a lotta cases we were walking zombies because we were ambushing in the night, and ambushing 50 per cent awake, and the next day we would be patrolling, all day. That is a commander's... But he was pushed from the CO and the CO was pushed from the brigadier, so it
- 27:00 wasn't their personal... But on the second tour they didn't do that too much. I suppose everybody learnt as they went. But I know sometimes I was walking through the jungle, sort of detached from it, and I was a commander, but I knew if something was out of place. But it was tiredness in a lot of cases, we were so physically... Some of us were physically fatigued.

Despite being so

- 27:30 **physically fatigued, would blokes still have trouble sleeping out in the bush?**

I don't think many had trouble sleeping. I think that the minute... They didn't take their boots off, they just fell in... It was warm so you didn't need any blankets, so you just fell down and slept under your hootchie. No I don't think sleep was very hard, it wasn't for me.

Did you ever have blokes in the section that snored?

Yes. It was the biggest nightmare of the whole lot.

- 28:00 I have had snorers that bad I have had to get rid of them. And in an ambush, when there's one bloke awake in a group of 4, a big snoring sound, and you are not far from the track where they are, and they can hear that, perhaps, walking through that. But yes, many people threw little rocks at them. And people woke them up, and
- 28:30 it was something inherent. You couldn't stamp it out. You couldn't send them all to admin company to drive trucks. Yes. But bad snorers, chronic snorers. And I have seen a few after Vietnam in Australia, chronic, everybody moved on them, they had to be, something had to be done with them, and they had to be put somewhere. If you were a chronic snorer. And I didn't strike too many, and everybody
- 29:00 snores. Yes it was a big problem. On your back you'll snore, no matter who you are. Even the beautiful women.

So what was it like when you came back in, would you be wearing the same greens for 30 days?

No. No, no. When you got that re-supp, you got a clean... You just pulled your trousers off - you know you had protection - and you put your other ones on. No underwear, you didn't have clean underwear, but you washed that in the

- 29:30 creek. Sometimes we would stop at a creek and put protection out and have a wash, things like that, not very much, but we always did. No, we always got clean greens. That stuff was thrown back in a bag and they got it washed. Oh no. That was pretty well organised, the re-supp. You would get what you wanted, boots, whatever. There was no mucking around.

How many re-supps on a

- 30:00 **30 day patrol?**

Maybe three. They didn't have them all the time, but where they could they would. Depending on what we did. You can't patrol and ambush, and patrol and ambush without 10 days' rations. Technically we didn't carry all out rations. We used to split it up and throw it away, and on a re-supp in 8 RAR the company quartermasters would split it up. And

- 30:30 if you were getting five days' rations it would be in one bag for one man. And they took the stuff away we didn't want, like biscuits. You know things like that. But that didn't happen in the other battalion. We had to smash the cases open and it was American rations with the other mob. And American rations are quantity and quantity, and you can never carry them. Three days' American rations would be the same quantity as our seven days'.
- 31:00 They had chicken, they had bread in cans, they had everything. It was difficult, and it wasn't really for us in the field, we shouldn't have been getting that, and we would have to throw most of it away, or leave it. And then you can't leave it because it... Well they used to backload sometimes, but you would never get a chance to... Sometimes they had to open it up and dig it and bury it, and next time
- 31:30 they had it all organised and it was Australian rations which made it easier. American rations are okay, but there was too much of it. And not enough of what we want.

So what happened when you got back to Nui Dat after 30 days in the field?

Well what should happen is you should be able to go back have a shower, medic would come down and check you, you know, check the soldiers in the crotch, tinea,

- 32:00 all that sort of thing. If somebody got slightly wounded he would have to go to the RAP [Regimental Aid Post] and check it again. And, cleaning your machine gun. Everything had to be inspected, your personal weapon, the claymore mines had to be you know separated if they had been on two operations. We would fire them later, not that day. We'd shower, have a brunch at the mess and relax.

- 32:30 **Was that a hot shower?**

No, cold, we never had hot showers. Didn't need it over there. But with the first mob I was with the 1st Battalion we would have an hour off and then start our sandbagging again because we had to get this camp redone that we pulled down. We there wasn't much rest on that 12 months I can tell you. But with the 8th Battalion... But the corporals never had rest. The corporals would

- 33:00 be in orders groups with the platoon commander - the platoon commander would always be calling you in. You would live the M16 under your arm and a pile of maps in your hand. And then you would have the night sentry duties to do. You would have to man the guns on the perimeter.

Did all NCOs have M16s with them?

On the first trip they had

- 33:30 SLRs, and then they given them those F1s which were a disappointment, they're no good. And the only NCO that carried an F1 was someone that didn't want to kill anybody. Because they were useless. So if you saw an NCO with an F1 you knew he didn't want to kill anyone - he was a pacifist. They ended up by being used by trucks and all that, people that didn't need heavy firepower. They are

- 34:00 only a personal weapon. They weren't designed for that, but that's what they are.

Was there any stage where you kind of regretted having rank? Just the fact that you were on call 24/7?

No. I wouldn't want to be a soldier, because I wanted to make a career of it at this stage of the game, even though I got out after. No, I think it was better to be an NCO. At least you knew what was going on. But you still did your

- 34:30 pickets and all that, because there was never enough men to lie back and assume the boss role. You had to be a participative leader, in my case - in my opinion anyway. But that was the first trip. The second trip we become more sort of smarter, and what they used to do was have a duty platoon, and the platoon would just put their webbing on in the perimeter, sleep there all

- 35:00 night and the other two platoons would get on the grog. The next night would swap over. But the first trip we all did it, no-one could have a drink, and if you were on duty no-one could drink. But the second time no problems. We always... One night out of three you were on duty and the other two you could get drunk.

On your first tour, how many times would you go out on a 30 day patrol?

Not a lot,

- 35:30 it was pretty rare, most of them were... Now I am not talking about 1 RAR, who was with the Americans. I don't know, they might have been different. I don't know how they worked. But the battalion type soldiers, like in Nui Dat under the task force, you'd probably work on a 14 day probably be the longest. The longest in my opinion I had been out. Maybe sometimes things would happen and they would keep you

- 36:00 out there. That wasn't something they liked to do because it wasn't good for morale. But no, 30 days was a pretty unusual one.

Would they try and follow that up with R&R or R in C [Rest in Country]?

That's a good point. The first time I was there, I think there was a different... There would have been a different task force commander, and his idea was 5 days R&R Bangkok, Philippines, Baguio City where I got my house,

- 36:30 or Taiwan, Hong Kong, Taipei. Or Australia. 5 days. Followed by 5 days rest in-country in Vung Tau in the 12 months. 5 days in the 12 months at once. Now that was pretty difficult and it wasn't a good idea. The next time I went with 8 RAR it was all smart, you know, it was all souped up. We had a really
- 37:00 good task force commander, I think his name was Pearson. I am not sure whether he was the boss in Saigon or Nui Dat, I think he was Nui Dat. But what he used to do, he'd rotate the battalion and you would get 3 days in Vung Tau every 6 weeks or something. So with the R&C in Vung Tau, you came back off - you cleaned your gear, put clean clothes
- 37:30 on, you had to take your basic weapon and your ammunition, and away you would go down and throw your weapons in the armoury, you would go out in civvies, because Vung Tau, believe it or not, was where the VC used to go on R&R. And they used to keep a pretty low profile. And they were soldiers and we were soldiers, and they wanted the same things. And occasionally you would see an odd looking guy you knew was a VC. But he didn't hang around
- 38:00 and you didn't say much to him. You didn't talk to him at all. Vung Tau seemed to be an area where nobody fought. I would have loved to have been posted there, I would have had a ball. I would have got stress about thinking about which bar to go to every night. But however, it would have been... Some blokes broke down over Vung Tau. I wished I could have got there. I would live there for 2 years. Anyway, consequently you would just go off
- 38:30 and as long as you didn't get into trouble, they didn't care if you didn't come back. You just stayed over night for 2 nights and got drunk. And then the biggest problem then was to get the company together to go home in the trucks. And the minute you went home, the mongrels would send you out in the field straight away if they could, or the next day. And you would go to the field the next day and you would be sweating and sick, and that was the way it went. But things got better for us.

Tape 7

- 00:31 **When you were out on patrols did you come across VC using water buffaloes in any way to... tell us about that?**

We shot up once a water buffalo with a VC wagon, with weapons and that.

What had they done with the water buffalo though?

They were using it, oh

- 01:00 when we shot it, we didn't have much time, it just stayed there. Unfortunately. But we buried their bodies. We always buried the VC. And it was common knowledge; their soldiers would come along later anyway and rebury them. Now the Australian Army - that's all the units I was with - always had a policy of burying them. It was a quick burial,
- 01:30 they didn't get any prayers, there was no padre, just a work party, but they were always buried. And you took anything out of their wallet like information, but never took their...well I didn't anyway, of their wives or their... That was always buried with them in their hands. I made men bury them with their wallets in their hands. We never,

- 02:00 never well, I never anyway, seen anything untoward happen. I heard a few things, but...

So with the water buffaloes, did they use that as a bit of a buffer?

Oh no, they used to use them sometimes to go around, but that was only on the main road, not main roads, but tracks. I didn't see a lot of water buffaloes

- 02:30 used, but I did... I know that we... One of the companies shot up a water buffalo one time, and killed the occupants. Which were in VC country, so they were obviously... See you gotta realise that there was a few different enemies. There was the guy, the farmer that used to go out of a night and do his bit, clearing - picking up our mines,
- 03:00 and you know - you know doing something. Then there was the hardcore soldier that was you know, that was his job, he was there, but they had the flexibility of mixing with the civilians. Now you'll never, it's hard to win a war when you've got sons, husbands that are farmers and also VC, Viet Cong. But when they
- 03:30 come down and hit them in 6 RAR there, they were hardcore soldiers. Some of them were North Vietnamese with the pith helmets on, you know we used to strike them too, but basically these soldiers were, some of them were political officers. They were in the villages and they would then move out to the jungles to the camps with all the

04:00 information, with all the intelligence. And then it was a, you know a pretty hard war to win. They did it in Malaya with the communist CT [Communist Terrorist] who was the same, only it was smaller, and they did it by putting all the people in a compound. You couldn't do that in Vietnam, it was too big. So it was difficult.

Did you come across any villages when you were out on your patrol where you would find enemy?

04:30 **You mentioned earlier you burned some enemy villages?**

Oh yeah, they were enemy villages in the jungle, oh yeah. With the Training Team I was in incidents where the real built-up places they might find a house that was inhabited by the VC - the mother and father might have had a VC son. We didn't get involved in that. The

05:00 Vietnamese army blew that up or whatever they did. We didn't get involved with anything with the army with the Vietnamese in villages. We only did... If you were on an operation, it was fair game, it was enemy territory. But in a village and that, we would always use the Vietnamese. In battalions you don't always see that anyway, unless you got to fight someone in the village there's an enemy there

05:30 that's different. But when you live with the people like I did in the second half of the second tour, that's a different story again, you don't do anything; you don't physically touch your prisoner. Outside when you are on operations and you are the only one, that's different, but if it's in a village and the Vietnamese, you get them to do it, you just walk away. It's not good. You can have a melee or something.

06:00 **Were there times when the men would overstep the mark?**

No. No, no. Not in the field. If you were on operations as a company and platoon and there was no-one else there, and you got fired on and you would do your drills, put fire down into that area, and then sweep it, and whatever was in there it wasn't your fault, you know. If it was

06:30 a woman, she was a VC and we didn't go out to shoot... We would hate to shoot women and kids, but you don't know what it is and you do a sweep on a village and you are being shot at, you don't know who's in there, so you gotta clear it. But once cleared, no-one was ever touched, and no-one was every line up and shot. We don't work like that. They were looked after - they were given cigarettes, they were

07:00 sent back to the intelligence. We never did that. I have never seen any atrocities by the Australian Army in my time. I have heard of things, but I have never seen anything done like that. The commanders would stop it. No they wouldn't do that, never seen that. I have seen a few silly little things done, like an enemy's hand might be buried with his finger pointing like to Hanoi.

07:30 But it was never done in my units. I know of instances where it has been done. But it's not something that most people would do. Or pulling out teeth. I have heard of soldiers pulling the gold teeth out. But it has never happened in any unit I have been in. But it has happened obviously. But it would have been stopped straight away if an officer would have seen it. In my book I talk about it.

08:00 And I have got a bloke in there that did it and almost got chucked out of the company over it. But I have never witnessed it, it was told to me. No, no atrocities. Matter of fact lots of people have gone... You go into a village after you have swept it and there's a dead woman, you know. It wouldn't worry me personally, because that woman was a VC. But a lot of

08:30 people, that's why they have got post traumatic stress now, I guess. As they couldn't take that. If would be different if I went in and seen a kid shot. That might throw me. But it certainly wouldn't if it was a woman, because she's in there she's got a gun, you don't know, when you do that sweep of the jungle, you don't know who's in there, you can't see, so you can only see them when you are about 2 feet away. You know what I mean. But no we...

09:00 I am not saying we were good. We would shoot a wounded bloke, maybe if we had to if he was firing at us, if he was rendered useless and had no weapon, we wouldn't go up and go bang. In no unit have I seen that. We are pretty humane people. Most of us. There are fools. There are exceptions. But they were a very small minority. And they would have been kicked out. They would have been sent to

09:30 (UNCLEAR) or something where they couldn't do any harm. That's my experiences. Maybe someone else will tell you different experiences, but I have never seen anything untoward done. I have never let it be done. And none of officers would either, if they seen it.

When you were out on patrols, did you ever have any incidents where you would run into the enemy as such, where they would just slip through the sentries

10:00 **or something like that?**

I can tell you a story about an Aboriginal friend of mine. I believe he is dead now. Well I don't know if he was half Maori or half islander or what he was. But it was pretty dark, and when you are in the jungle you know, and you have been out there for 5 or 6 days, your uniform is black too. It's pretty hard to tell, your greens go black. And we have had the instance where the VC

10:30 come up the track and seen this friend of mine. And waved to them. And then this bloke looked at him and went bang, and they have started firing. And they got back out of the position and he got wounded because there was more men behind this guy. And they used to carry their RPGs [rocket propelled grenades], their rockets, and the minute a bloke fired in the front they put a rocket into the area and they used to get us with shrapnel.

11:00 And that's the way they worked. And this guy waved to him, and he almost waved back at him, because it's hard to tell. And it all broke out and they realised they were enemy. That doesn't happen all the time. This bloke saying they are all wearing black, pyjamas, yeah he's right, but you know when someone is out to get you because you are in an area and they have got a gun. And the AK47 used to stand out pretty well. You could see it was a

11:30 gun, with a big magazine on it. Yeah.

What kind of... Did you have much contact with the Americans?

Ah, not on the first tour. Oh yes, only the choppers, the chopper crews, they... We only had contact when they got on. They were all good to us, they never tried any smart stuff. No not really that tour, but the second tour I went to the

12:00 Australian Army Training Team and I worked under the Americans. Yeah I know quite a lot about them.

So how did you find their difference in attitudes and different approaches that they had?

Well, you know I worked with a battalion that was in my area. Officers were good, very flexible, very experienced, very good, take a chance,

12:30 none of this I can't do this or the book says that - they didn't play it that way. I liked their officers. Their men, well they, they were sort of... Their tactics were just conventional war. And one particular time I was with a mobile team, I was with my advisers on an operation with the Vietnamese.

13:00 I worked with the regional force, this is with my second tour, halfway through, and the Americans didn't know we were there. And there was a company of them, and I will tell you something, it was frightening. They rolled us up, they moved quick, and the only thing that saved it, our warrant officer, and he should have been decorated for this, but he didn't get nothing. He went out down the track, and yelled out, "We are Vietnamese-Australian

13:30 advisers." And he saved that. But these people rolled us up so fast. That's the way they work. One on one in the jungle, probably not as good as us, but however, they do have their different units. You can't sort of specify. A lot of Australians say the Yanks are no good. Okay some of them might look... The transistors and that. But that's the way they are taught

14:00 in a big war, you know, like in Iraq or somewhere. It wouldn't matter if you had a transistor or something. But some of their other units were very good. So I think it's a bit unfair what you hear from Australians about them. I don't think they really know. There are some good ones.

They don't have a particularly good reputation.

That's because Australians don't know. They haven't worked with them. You get their special forces and that sort of thing,

14:30 very good.

Speaking of Special Forces, did you ever come in contact with the SAS?

Yes. They used to secure our LZs, our landing zones. We never seen them much. They camouflage themselves pretty well. We have gone to help them in different cases when they were in trouble. I know I walked a very quick five hours because they were getting shot at.

15:00 They were good.

And what was their reputation?

Good. No problem with them. Excellent. Anybody that knocks the SAS are jealous. Any other soldier.

Was that ever something that you might have wanted to get into?

Yeah I did. That's how I come to get my Training Team. When my platoon got wiped out, in the Long Hai Hills,

15:30 there was none of us left, only about 3 or 4. And I was a corporal, and I was trying to go to SAS at that stage. I would have had to come home though. But they sent me to this battalion mobile training team, and then the Australian Army Training Team took over and that was a pretty good thing to get into, so that sort of stopped. And then I got too old. You gotta go when you are young for that sort of thing, you gotta be about 19.

16:00 **What about 'hearts and minds', did you ever come across that?**

Yes.

What was that like, what were they doing, what did you see them do?

The PHAM [Project Hearts and Minds] program was on all the time, basically manned by PSYOPS [Psychological Operations] people, probably intelligence. We didn't do it, but they used to drop leaflets, they used to go to

- 16:30 villages and you know treat the people, same as they are doing in Timor, you know, get the people on side, show that we are not going to shoot them or anything like that. The Americans did that too. We all did it. We were probably pretty successful. Unfortunately, I would have liked to have gone across on my third tour doing something like that, but I didn't get the chance - the war stopped. But that to
- 17:00 me would have been a very nice number. A nice ticket, doing something like that, because they went to villages you know. There wasn't danger in every village you went to in Vietnam. Some of these places you could sit down and have a Coke in the local village, cook up your rice from your pack, talk to the locals. Especially in the Training Team. They wouldn't let you do that in the battalions. They wouldn't let you in the village.
- 17:30 But when I go with the Vietnamese working. But as I say, battalions never went to villages unless there was an enemy there and they were going to get him. We were in the jungle, we were right out. There was no villages where we were.

Back in Nui Dat, when you had some time off, would you get to interact with the locals much?

Oh no.

- 18:00 Never met locals. We had no locals in our camp. That is why the Australian Army did well. They don't have locals working in their camp. Most of your information comes from the locals in the camps, that's where the Americans I think fell down a bit - they had civvies employees, it's not a good thing. We did it in Borneo, a girl used to wash our clothes. But we knew they were pretty good people. We had intelligence on them.
- 18:30 They were even carrying rifles and fighting the Indos [Indonesians] for us because they were getting raided. They were different. No we certainly didn't have any locals in our camps. The only thing we had to do with the locals was the girls in Vung Tau or Saigon if you got down there. And we didn't talk about war with them, it was love.

Tell us about love in Saigon?

Well I didn't get to Saigon much. Love in Vung Tau.

- 19:00 Love in Vung Tau was a series of bars with neon lights. They ranged from the Moonlight Bar to the Love Bar. They were filled with beautiful women, French extraction. The French were there for many years. Beautiful women, Vietnamese women. And they were
- 19:30 hookers, because that was a way of getting money of course. And we were let go to the bars, you know, you had to, soldiers have to go to the bars and drink. And basically they were con-men. I mean they used to sell Vung Tau teas for lots of money and there was nothing in it and it's only cordial,
- 20:00 but they do that everywhere so it doesn't matter. And, but the girls were pretty; they didn't try to take our men out and kill them in their houses or anything. Guys used to go... End up in Vung Tau in the middle of the night somewhere in a shanty town. Nothing ever happened because it was a sort of a truce area.

How did it work with the

- 20:30 **prostitutes?**

They were prostitutes.

How did the system work though, like would they just be in bars, did they have numbers?

Oh no. That's Thailand; they have numbers on in Thailand. I don't think they got it here yet. There's a couple, they just stand... No bar girls, girls that get drinks for you and that, waitresses. And there seems to be lots of them.

- 21:00 You could go to massage parlours I suppose, if you wanted to. But bars was normally where the guys went. Get drunk. There would be Korean soldiers in there. You know that were on our side. They didn't drink with us, we kept to ourselves. American Negroes hangin' around. There was everyone, because there were lots of forces there.

Did you find yourself looking after some of the really younger guys?

- 21:30 **No. What, on leave? No. I used to get away from them as far as I could, because it was bad enough me with them all the time. No, they were let alone. They just did what they did.**

Did you ever give them any advice especially regarding the prostitutes?

Oh yeah, I give them advice, but I didn't hang out of their pockets. You didn't need that after being

- 22:00 together all the time. You would say to them, "Be careful if you met them in the bar." You know, "Be careful of her." But you would probably know as much as them about the girl's character. But you thought you knew. But no it was on leave, you just did what you did. People didn't pull rank. The MPs [Military Police] were pretty busy. They used to check bars and that, but they didn't
- 22:30 do anything to us unless there was a fight. Local people were okay, only the cowboys, like young hoons that run around Redcliffe in their cars at night, you know what they are like – young and no brains. We all did it I suppose. They would pickpocket you, they would rip your watch off, they would change money and give you the wrong wad of notes. Those were dangerous people, but
- 23:00 you, you, they were robbing you, they weren't army or anything.
- Did you come in contact with many of the South Vietnamese young men who could have been fighting?**
- No, I didn't have anything to do with men. Never talked to one. Oh, in the... No, no. You never had any interaction at all. They couldn't speak English some of
- 23:30 them.
- Some guys have said that they saw them and thought they could be doing far more beneficial things?**
- I never thought about that, wasn't my problem whether they were working or not. I never even thought about that. I don't know what they did, but everybody was getting' a dong from somewhere, a dong is a cent, whatever. I don't know what they were doing. I didn't think like that. That must have been a guy that... He must have been an officer. No, I
- 24:00 never thought about that.
- So what about your R&C and R&R, where did you go?**
- I came back to Australia twice.
- How was that coming back to Australia?**
- Ah, it was hard, I wanted to come back. I had a daughter I didn't see. And the second time I come back she was a bit older than that then, but
- 24:30 it was very difficult to leave. 5 days went very quick, I can assure you. But I am glad I did it in case I got whacked. You know, you would never... You know if you had the chance to come back and you didn't... Some guys didn't, some married guys, and I can understand it, they felt it was better to stay away for the 12 months and to come back and try to do it all over again, you know to leave. There were people
- 25:00 that didn't do it, not many, but there were some. I did I come back.
- So what kind of things did you come across in those 5 days in terms of public reaction to you?**
- Oh, didn't have any interaction. The first time we went down the coast, for a holiday, with the baby. Just stayed together went out and ate, and stayed together,
- 25:30 walked and talked in civvies of course. The second time I come to me home, and stayed at me home and didn't go out. No, no. Never went to a pub, nowhere, you haven't got time.
- Was it strange going from you know, Vietnam and then within hours you are back in Australia?**
- Yes, it is, it is, very strange and you know
- 26:00 you wonder where you were. That's why I say the National Serviceman, he come back from Vietnam and he went, he just went back, he was out in a week. He's the boy who would have a lot of problems now. I reckon he should have more problems than a regular. Mentally wise.
- And did you talk about much of your experiences with your wife when you came back?**
- No. No. I didn't talk about anything to anybody.
- 26:30 I don't talk about any experiences unless it's to a friend who has been there. Unless I am instructing, which I did in the army, I teach them on things, use it as a teaching. But no you don't... There's nothing worse because if I was to tell people what I have done and what I have seen, they wouldn't believe me. So what's the use in
- 27:00 telling them? They would think you are a braggart or one of those people that wear false medals on Anzac Day. Most veterans don't talk much on Anzac Day. They only talk to their mates about things they like. No they don't talk. You will get the ones that talk who probably wanted to do something and didn't. You know.

So for your first

27:30 **block, was that 12 months?**

No. I did 9. I got out. Joined up again in 3 months.

So coming back from that first time, that was when you went to the RSL and all that kind of thing?

No, that was when I joined up in 3 months again. I was training again to go over. The only time I went to RSLs was on me way to Sydney going home from R&R, and I

28:00 had a night in Sydney, one each time, and I went about a bit. I went to the Kings Cross RSL, I know that. They were good. The RSLs were good in Sydney. It was only in Brisbane they were funny, what I struck.

Why were you only there for 9 months? Why was it cut short?

I took discharge, I was due for discharge. My period of 6 years were over. I'd had Malaya, Borneo and

28:30 Vietnam. And I was going to stay on but I had such a rugged company and the morale was so low, and I got busted back to private. So I thought I would go home and try to you know be a civilian. So I got out and 3 months I come back in again.

What happened in those 3 months?

I tried to get... I was a tram conductor.

29:00 I don't know what else I was, but it didn't last. I lasted 5 days on the trams. I just couldn't adjust.

Why?

It was different it was another life. They were not my kind. I was destined never to be... I was never any good in civvy street. I was never... I have had...

29:30 I mean I can keep a job, but I was never happy in civilian life. No never, could never do it. That's why I stayed in the military doing full time and part time until I was - for 35 years. And I just mixed it with security jobs. I could never get a job that suited me. I was never destined to be a civilian. I didn't like it. I have met some good people

30:00 but I just didn't like it.

So when that 9 months was up after the first time, what was the lead up to the end of that 9 months?

Well I just got dissatisfied with the company. I had been busted to private. I didn't think I should have been.

How did that happen?

Well it's getting' a bit personal now, but I offered assault to an officer, I

30:30 was going to... Well do you want to know the story? It was on the first tour - it's in my book anyway. We were moving from an area out on a route to get the armoured personnel carriers back to Nui Dat. It was a bad area. There was mines, there was everything. It was called 'The Light Green'. We called it 'The Long Green and the Light Green'. It's near Toi Tick.

31:00 The company behind us that was moving in our footsteps so to speak, were stepping on booby traps, one or two got killed and whatever. And he was... I was the lead section and he was, the platoon commander, was telling me to, "Go, go, go, go." Now go through that bamboo, bamboo is heavy stuff, it is not like the bamboo you know here, it's big clumps.

31:30 I have got a scar here now, probably gone. But if you get into it you can't get out of it. It's easy. We could have dodged it, because it's clumps. And he pulled me back, "I don't want you to dodge. I want you to go through it." Well the scout in front of me, he was ripped to bits and I was ripped to bits. And I went back and threw me webbing down and said, "No." I said, "You are a so and so." And then I said, "I should shoot you.

32:00 You can't lead men." Then they put me on open arrest in the field and... Probably about the first Australian soldier to go back from Nui Dat from an area with nothing. No weapon, no grenades nothing, no nothing. They put me under close arrest. I think I might have the dubious honour of being the only one.

Were you

32:30 **accompanied back?**

We were all in the armoured personnel. My men were told, "Disarm." And my men didn't want to do it because they knew what it was about. They didn't take my grenades, and I threw them at him. It's taboo in the army to throw a grenade whether it's live or not. I threw them at him and said, "Here, take these

as well." So he thought I

- 33:00 threw a live grenade at him. It still had the pin in you know. So consequently I went on open arrest, I went on tent arrest, I went on close arrest, all sorts of arrests and then they decided... I don't know what happened, but I started going out on... They put me off one operation and then they let me go. And I commanded the troops.

What do you mean they let you go, what happened when you got back to Nui Dat?

I come off close arrest to

- 33:30 open arrest, and then open arrest to tent arrest, and then I come off that and I was nothing. I was free. I was a corporal. So I still did me job and took the men out on patrol. They stopped me from one short operation and then they let me go. And that was at a time when they tried to get me

- 34:00 to blow this complex up. Because I did that because I was the only one left to do it, and they wanted to leave me in enemy territory. Possibly that's why, but I am joking. So anyway, I thought I was getting out of it, naive, and then they pulled me up about 4 months, 5 months later. It was a long time. And took me stripes off me. So that was the first tour. So I pulled me discharge.

- 34:30 I said, "I want to go home. I am leaving. I don't want to work with yous." So the day I left I abused the company commander and called him all sorts of things in the truck. They never did a thing. I come back and got out of the army. Joined up again in 3 months. Two hooks [stripes] back, go again.

Did it ever come back again, was it problematic joining up again?

No. It was all kept...

- 35:00 It was in my records, but I pulled them apart coming home in the plane. And threw it in the toilet. They give me my records coming home and I get all the assault and that, took it all out, because you know in Vietnam there was a lot of stuff not sent back. That's when people go for medicals and say, "I was wounded." They say, "You wasn't wounded. I can't find it." So I was smart enough to pull all the garbage out of me documents

- 35:30 and throw it away. Come back got out, joined up again, promoted to temporary corporal, and away I went.

So is it on your record or not?

Yes, it's on there but not the details. Just 'Reduced to private'. That's all.

So did you have to take a pay cut as well?

Oh yes. It involved a pay cut. It involved a bit of prestige. And

- 36:00 working me way up again, which didn't take long because Vietnam was still in full flight. They needed me. If it was peacetime they wouldn't have wanted me. They would have told me to go away, but it was wartime and they changed their minds in wartime. It's the government.

So when you had that 3 months out. How did it affect your marriage in that 3 months?

I don't think so, my first wife

- 36:30 kept pretty detached from the military. I don't think she knew what I was doing half the time. She lived her own life. She had to because she had my daughter...

But the fact that you couldn't see yourself fitting back in to normal civilian life, did that kinda go hand in hand with not being able to fit back into marriage, that was part of a normal civilian life?

No, no, she was... With me it was military. I was always in the

- 37:00 military. Consequently she just went on. We didn't sort of... We didn't discuss it every night with her. I just sort of made my own decisions. I mean we weren't broke, we had money in the bank, everything was all right. I was getting me DFRDB [Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Scheme], I was getting' it paid to me. So when I joined up I brought all that back and so consequently after 25/24 years I got a good

- 37:30 pay, got a superannuation.

When you were working as the tram conductor and the other jobs that you were doing, did you face any prejudice from people against Vietnam veterans when you went to work?

Oh, yeah, all the... I don't know if it would have been out there, they... Yeah, I think because Vietnam went on so long, 10 years you know, I think people were desensitised with

- 38:00 the television, I don't think they really worried about it any more. Most people, even yourself, even ex military, you still get to forget about the poor guys in Iraq, you know. You live in your own world; you

can't blame a civilian for that. I believe there was circumstances where people were told they shouldn't have done it, they were mongrels. No-one ever said that to me. No-

38:30 one ever said that to me. But I joined up again and away I went.

Was it a bit of a sigh of relief to kind of reach the decision to join up again?

I think I only got out because I wanted to prove a point. And I did, I got back in again, and got promoted. And then I got out again, I did

39:00 another trip to Vietnam and I got out in 3 years. Which was the time period, 3 years, so it was 9 all up. And I got out again, because I didn't like the way the system treated me. and I beat the system again and come back with more qualifications than I got out with. I beat the system a few times. I like to do that. I am still beating them. Because I worked hard for it.

So were you pretty keen keeping an eye out watching TV every

39:30 **night, reading the papers about what was happening over there, or did you try and ignore it?**

No, no, I was still there actually, I had mates there, that's first time, in between training to go again. Well we never got much time to watch TV because we were always away. So you

40:00 are always there with them all the time. I guess I just wanted to do that and that was it.

Tape 8

Is there anything that stands out as being different to your first tour?

Well, the thing that stood out on this particular tour was possibly the whole scene had changed; we had a different task force commander. Things were now designed for a better morale with the

01:30 troops. It was all more organised, but bear in mind there were three battalions there then. There was only two on my first tour, three towards the end. There workload was a lot more intense. It was just after Long Tan. The situation was more intense. Where on the second tour we had that problems pretty well cleared, and thanks to 6 RAR they sort of got their butts whipped

02:00 and they weren't going to come back in like they did. So they probably made it easy for anybody that ever followed them.

Can you tell us about what happened at Long Hai Hills?

No. I'll tell you why. What happened and the reason I am sitting here now, is, and this happened to me on the first tour too. At the last minute, I was

02:30 pulled out. I'll tell you what happened in the Long Hai. We were there in November, it happened on the 28th February. I had not had a rest. They used to pull a corporal out of the sections and his forward scout, in rotation to look after the internal camp when everybody went out, so he could advise the people that weren't up to everything,

03:00 the inner details. They'd get him up and say you know, "Make sure the claim..." You know, all that infantry type stuff. The others were infantry but some of them were not as... And his job was to sort of keep an eye on the camp and you know in that role. So that happened. I was going out, I had my section lined up, packs on APCs there, ramps down, CSM come over and said, "You are not going

03:30 out. Get your forward scout. It's your turn to have a rest." I said, "Why?" He said, "The corporal that was going out has got into trouble. We want him to go out." What had happened the night before, in the officers' and sergeants' mess, was almost burnt down. So they thought this other corporal had done it, and they wanted to interrogate him and keep him out of the field. Sorry, they wanted to send him into the

04:00 field to make sure he paid for it. That's right, and I was released. So I didn't go and my forward scout didn't go. The platoon sergeant was a guy they brought from another company, a support company. He got killed. The platoon commander wasn't there - he was on R&R. The platoon sergeant wasn't there. And the platoon was... Had all the reos [reinforcements] from

04:30 5 RAR, been in-country for 6 months or so. The battalion went home. All landed in that section - that platoon. So they had almost... They had a pretty... My section was run by the 2IC who got very wounded, wounded very badly. A guy called Tony Kingman, I believe, was running my... And he got wounded very badly, and I felt bad about that. But you know, I mean, I didn't say I wasn't going out, I was told, you know,

05:00 "You don't go." And they were only about two days, and they got hit with the mines. So I can't say what happened. So I am not goin' into it, because I wasn't there. I have read what happened - virtually they were in a mined area, the engineers that were the sappers that were mine clearing,

- 05:30 wasn't their fault, but they were sent into this mined area anyway. It was the hierarchy's fault. But we don't know – I don't know. I can only talk about what happened. They stepped into the mine field, people got wounded, there was 12 killed and 16 wounded. The chopper come down to lift some out, the corporal bringing the chopper in stepped to the right, stepped on another mine, nearly blew the chopper out of the sky – didn't, luckily.
- 06:00 Wounded and killed a couple more. It was terrible. And the bloke that wrote the foreword for my book, (UNCLEAR) Asher, was an Asher, he was mentioned in dispatches. A bloke by the name of Dan Casey. Now these young blokes were really knocked around, and I wasn't there. But, what happens in a war zone, if someone gets killed gets killed, what you have to do, the platoon left
- 06:30 back there, or the company commander and his (UNCLEAR). They have to make sure all the personal possessions are gone through. You don't do this on your own; you do it with someone else so you are not pinching anything. All the valuables have got to be recorded, all the love letters if he's married has got to be thrown away, if he's writing to another woman. His uniforms have gotta be thrown away, he gets a brand new uniform, the hat everything.
- 07:00 Brand new, badges on it, you rig it out for him. And what comes home to the next of kin is all his presents for them. His letters have to be vetted to save embarrassment for him, if he's married. But that didn't happen much if they were goin' with other women or something. It can happen. And then one of the guys
- 07:30 who was a sig [signaller], infantry sig, a bloke by the name of Gary West. He had head injuries and was sent to the Long Binh Hospital, which was an American hospital. Anyone with head injuries went to the American hospital. He died. So consequently, he had to be identified. So they sent me and me scout to Saigon. And we identified the body. That was very difficult
- 08:00 because he was a good little bloke. And most of the 5 RAR blokes that come over were killed or wounded badly. They got the brunt of it. They were reos, reinforcements. And a few of our blokes too. And the platoon was wiped out, so I missed that.

How did you find out about it?

Radios, they tell you straight away, nothin' was a secret over there you know. People tell you, especially us because

- 08:30 we were in the platoon.

So what could you and your forward scout do when all this is coming across on the radio?

We weren't told, we were too busy, we weren't listening to the radio. But they called us up and told us what was goin' on. What can you do? We immediately went down and started – got the 12 dead people with the trucks, laid them out on the lawn, or the grass, wasn't a lawn, and

- 09:00 strip their trunks, made inventories up of their gear. Threw their old gear away, burnt it. New uniforms, the right sizes, slouch hat, get it all ready, vetted the letters, and then it was finished.

And then what happens with you two guys that are ...?

We went to Saigon to have a look at the body. So I said to my scout that night in

- 09:30 Saigon. We were supposed to catch the plane back, Wallaby II comes back in the afternoon, from Saigon, so I said to me forward scout, "We'll get drunk. And we won't go back." So what we did, we was drinking in the Canberra Hotel, everyone seconded a hotel and called it – you know. So this was our HQ [Headquarters], our Australian Embassy was in there. I think. It was close. Anyhow I didn't know Saigon much, so we said, "Well what we'll do
- 10:00 is you ring up and tell them in the Free World Building, that you have lost me, and I'll ring up on the same phone and tell them I have lost you." So the plane will go. So we did this, anyway, you wouldn't believe it, we were looking out for MPs but they sent a guy that was posted in Saigon to check the Canberra out, they weren't silly about it. They found us both drunk, and he said, "You are the blokes that are lost."
- 10:30 And I said, "Now you are not going to say anything about it are ya?" He said, "No, mate. I am not goin' to say anything." He was a decent bloke, and no-one said anything.

Did he know the situation, about the story?

Oh yeah, he was sent to get us. To look for us. So he said, "You're all right." So consequently, the next day we give ourselves up at the Free World Building. They treated us like lepers, put us in the arms (UNCLEAR), cleaned all the weapons. I am a corporal. I am cleaning weapons. Goes back to

- 11:00 Nui Dat, no-one met us, we thought the regimental police would be there. No not a one. So I said to Billy, "It can't be too bad." So anyway, goes up to the commander in admin company, because our company was still out see. It only took one day this one. And he called me in, he was an old WW2 bloke, 8th Army, British army, good man. He said, "What happened corporal?"

- 11:30 And I told him. And he said, "Mmm." I said, "Sir, charge me." And I said, "Don't charge the soldier, because you know, he was lost." I didn't tell him we did it. He'd have to charge me. I told him the story about being lost and it was too late, so we got on the grog. But, "Don't charge the digger." you know. "It wasn't his fault. I got lost. He didn't." He looked at me with and said, "A very dubious
- 12:00 story." But he said, "Admonished." So he didn't, he just let it go. If he'd have been a young officer he would probably have charged me. I would've lost me hooks, they would have lost a section commander, but he didn't. And that was the officer I take me hat of to. His name was Pritchard. A great officer. He later took the company over and did an outstanding job. But I was gone. This was after the Long Hais
- 12:30 he took that company over. But I had gone. The RSM took me up to a mobile advisory team. The battalions were running these teams training the Vietnamese. And I had me name in for SAS at the time and the company commander said, "This would be a good job for you." So away I went. He was a good company commander. He said, "There's no use in your platoon, they're all gone."

So that was just a coincidence that everything happened the way it

- 13:00 **did, timewise and everything?**

Yeah, yeah. So the company commander your platoon's going to be brought over from D company, they're going to halve the company or something. So your platoon is null and void, you know, so go up here and have a bit of a look at that. And I did, and it was great, and then the... I was... We had a guy killed in the rubber

- 13:30 in a vehicle on this team, and I was lucky again because it was my... I was always out on patrol, and we used to go with the Vietnamese, and the RSM said, "It's your turn to stay today and go out and take the food out." You know they had picked up this American idea of feeding us in the... Like the Vietnamese, like American trained. We were in the area. So I said, "No." because I didn't like this sergeant.
- 14:00 I said, "I want to go with you walking." And he said, "Well fair enough, the engineer is goin' home in a couple of days, so you come out then." The engineer got killed, he had two days to go. The sergeant got his ears blown off. Out. Run over a land mine. Initiated land mine, so there was someone on the other end of it. And
- 14:30 consequently, we rolled the body up and sent him back on the chopper. And we were sitting there and havin' lunch, and because the world doesn't stop, you've got to move on. And we were havin' lunch in the same area, security out. And Major Beale, Pat Beale that I served with in
- 15:00 Ingleburn, Borneo, Malaya, comes walking down the track with his green beret on, straight from upper Da Nang, or Pleiku I think it was, where he won his DSO [Distinguished Service Order]. He come down and he said, "Do you like it here?"

He knew who you were?

Oh yeah, he liked me see, and he said, "You like this job?" And here we just dusted a man off there was still a bit of bone around. And I said, "Yeah, I like this job." He said, "Well you are the first

- 15:30 corporal in the Training Team, we'll fix it up. You stay here at Binh Ba. He walked off. I still don't know how he got there. I didn't see any armed guards with him. But he was that sort of guy. So, that was it. I went to the Australian Army Training Team. I did a couple of extra months with them, on top of the 6 months, and loved it.

Was there any training you had to do initially, to join those guys?

Yeah. Everyone that was on it was doing a

- 16:00 course in Australia. But they wanted me to stay there, because that team was off the ground. They knew that was the first team. So, yeah, I didn't do a course, but he knew me, and I did me training with the Americans at Zion, a big American camp. I did the advisers' course down there, which was very good.

Were you the only Aussie there?

No, there was a couple from Australia, that had been over there before,

- 16:30 warrant officers, and there was a couple of sergeants. I wasn't the only one, but there was only about 3 or 4 of us. Lots of Americans, Thais.

Before we go into the AATTV [Australian Army Training Team Vietnam] stuff, what sort of grieving process is there for soldiers who lost half their platoon in the field?

None. None, because there wasn't time, mate.

- 17:00 I don't know you know, everything I have ever been in, the CO will come out and he'll sit down with you. The padre comes out and says a prayer. But there's no time to bring psychologists in and people to hold your hand. I mean, like that's the way it is. In the field on that tour, you know I had a bloke wounded one night by shrapnel, and they were bringing the mortars in too close because that's defensive

- 17:30 fire task so that if the enemy hit you, you got the mortars to bring in. They brought it in a bit close and it wounded a bloke. And you know the whole platoon wanted to go in and help him. I said, "No, you sit down on your..." And I went in and I got the medic in and I walked off. That wasn't my job. I didn't want to hold his hand. The medic was holding his hand, he was giving him morphine. No good me hanging around patting him on the back. He didn't even know who I was anyway. And a lot of people didn't like me over
- 18:00 that. They said, "You should be with your soldier." I said, "I got eight other soldiers here to lead. I want to make sure they are not switched off on the other machine gun." you know. On the machine gun. "This bloke's right, the medic has got him." And you can't, you haven't got time to take it personally. You have got to move on, you have got to... That's why they're... Maybe their psychological make up is not strong
- 18:30 enough to handle that. And post traumatic stress comes on at a later date. And post traumatic stress to me was completely forgetting what I was doing. Post traumatic stress for some people is alcohol, losing it all, thinking about the past. But I don't dwell on the past,
- 19:00 I don't ever dwell on the past. It's sad, when I get drunk sometimes; I dwell on the past, but not much. Because everything that happened to me wasn't my fault. It was the same on the... If I had a bloke killed with my negligence, maybe then I would feel bad. I wouldn't like to have that on me shoulder. But nothing ever did, and it wasn't my fault if anyone got wounded. On the first tour,
- 19:30 again I was lucky, we were at a fire support base, called the Horse Shoe. We were there for 6 weeks, we rebuilt that one too. We must have been called the engineer company I think. But we rebuilt that and we did our jobs. Patrolling, ambushing, out on the VPs [vulnerable points], checking ox carts and all that. Had a bit of fun on that. But
- 20:00 we were slotted to go down to this route 3 check point. The company came in, C Company. We were stopped. They said, "No, C Company were going out on it. You can go back with the others." We were going to be relieved at around 10 o'clock. C company said, "No, we are comin' at first light and we are going to man it." Because they had checked it out, got hit, killed two guys,
- 20:30 stood over the driver, the VC took his rifle, shot him to bits. And put ox carts between the vehicles so the poor old section commander didn't know what was going on. He was in the second vehicle, which he should have been. What could he do? He did what he could, he reacted his section, did a sweep, but it was too late, because they put the cattle in between, the buffaloes. Now that rightly should have been my section,
- 21:00 but it wasn't. And I believe they knew that. The drivers were all told, they had been there a while. I believe that we had created a bit of rapport with them, because I didn't go in for calling them nogs, and treating them like dogs. I used to treat them pretty decently. Never give anybody a hard time. Stop people if they did the right thing and I think it saved our lives. Because they know, they talk to one another,
- 21:30 the VC are their sons, their husbands. So that's what happened to me there, it was close. They hit the new mob. They didn't hit us. So I was lucky.

So what was the gist of the sort of training you did when you first went into the Team?

Oh, we did all booby traps, Vietnamese course, we did a language course. It was

- 22:00 about a month I think. Had a ball, you know, they had strippers on the camp, massage parlours, never seen that before. Beer flowing, looked after well, what soldiers should get. The training was very good, most things we knew, like how to set claymores up in banks and
- 22:30 how to set booby traps up, rocks in a bin and blow it, all sorts of good stuff. Taught fire control, getting artillery in, all that type of thing. But knew most of that. But it was a good course. I ended up having a bit of an argument with one of the American officers. I went to sleep in one of his lectures. I was playing it pretty hard, 1 o'clock in the morning getting home from all this night life.
- 23:00 I never seen it before in me life and I thought it was great. Anyway I went to sleep in one of his boring lectures and the young officer bounced me and I said, "I am not in your army anyway." So after that I lived with the Thais and ate their food. The Thais are good. So I virtually didn't eat with the Americans, I ate with the Thais. So, but it was no problem, no-one ever said anything, or put a report in. The Australian warrant officers sort of looked at me a little
- 23:30 bit, didn't say much. But,

So once you were with the Team, where were you placed?

At a place called Binh Ba. About 5-6 kilometres from the Australian base.

Can you tell us a bit about the sort of work you did with the team?

Yeah, well what we did... We went out on all the operations. Basically there was two warrant officers, not necessarily infantry.

- 24:00 One was a transport guy, but he had been in the infantry, he had a Military Medal from his first tour. He

come down off the DMZ [Demilitarised Zone] or something, he was our boss. Then there was a second (UNCLEAR), there was a medical corps corporal, there was an engineer corporal and there was two infantry corporals. But I don't think we ever had two infantry corporals, I think I was the only one. And we had split up and every night go out on an ambush with them. Any operation

24:30 we would always have a couple of blokes with them, advising them, getting fire support for them, getting illumination in a contact. We used to carry all the illumination rounds and the radio. I virtually carried a radio and a shotgun with illumination, and also me pistol, me 45. Sometimes an M16. It was good stuff. Vung Tau every month whether we liked it or not. Not every 6 weeks,

25:00 I think they said every 3 weeks. We were looking at one another, Vung Tau every 3 weeks. This is good. First I go to a big American party, and now I am getting R&C in Vung Tau every 3 weeks. This is good living. I wanted to stay on but they sent me home.

What did you think of the South Vietnamese soldiers when you first come across them? Because in the support they did at Nui Dat they didn't have a very good

25:30 **reputation, did they?**

No, because soldiers didn't understand them. What I tried to tell Australian soldiers was you come here for one year, and you switch off, and a lot of people did, they switched off in Vietnam, they had to be hammered, some of them got wounded because they switched off. You lived there, you are born there you got war around you for 24 hours day and you are 22 years old. Of course they switch off, they know exactly

26:00 when something is goin' to happen, because they are not silly, they have got local intel [intelligence], they know the villagers. I used to go on ambushes with them, and they'd all go to sleep, and you know, you would wake up, no-one awake. They knew, they knew nothing was goin' to happen that night. Other nights you would go on ambush with them. Not a one was asleep, you knew that there was something was goin' on, they knew because

26:30 they were locals. And that's what the Australians soldier didn't understand. I mean these people weren't even regulars. They were regulars, they were doing it for 24 hours a day, but they were a low class regular, they were what you called regional force. The regional force is only the regional soldier; he just goes in that area, that's why they know. Then there's the PSDF [Provincial (?) Defence Force].

27:00 They are the Provincial, they're nothing, they wear black pyjamas. On an ambush with them, you got a straw hat next to you and he's manning a machine gun, you know. Really, a little bit worrying, and then you have got the (UNCLEAR). Well they're hardcore soldier; they are the regular soldier. But, I think some of their

27:30 methods were good.

What sort of methods did they have that differed to those of the Australians?

Well, if a bloke had a problem, if there was a soldier that had a problem, they would belt the section commander in front of the company, not that I would do that. I wouldn't like to be belted with a stick. But they used to... The commander would come out and belt the section commander for his man

28:00 so it never ever happened again. If a guy had stole, or did something like that or went to sleep on sentry duty, they would bring the company out, bring the soldier out, give him a grenade, take the pin out of the grenade and say, "Right, go out to the wire and see you in the morning." 6 o'clock he'd come back shivering with the grenade. If he threw it in the night, he went out again the next

28:30 night. You know what I mean. He never ever did that again. I don't mind it. It wouldn't work in our army I don't suppose. But it worked pretty well there. Good methods. But, basically you know a lot of people run them down and they're slack and all that. They probably were, but I think people lose sight of the fact that it was their country, and they were doing it 24 hours a day. It's like a policeman I suppose. A

29:00 policeman goes out every night on duty, and he really doesn't know if he is going to get shot or not, but he does it. He has to do it and he just takes it in his stride and he probably knows the circumstances in the area that well, he knows when to switch on. I equate them with that. There was good ones among them.

Was there initial problems when you first went there trying to win their trust and that sort of thing, or them being suspicious of you?

29:30 The biggest problem was the thieving. When they didn't respect you, they would thief off you. And they stole off me and I was almost shot over this incident. I probably did the wrong thing. Instead of goin' to the company commander and quietly telling him a bloke stole a raincoat, I

30:00 had a go at the guy wearing me raincoat, very silly, and he pulled an M16 on me. And before he could do anything he was smashed around the head by the... We had a bodyguard; we were always assigned a bloke to watch us. And he was taken down. But that probably put me off on a wrong footing. I shouldn't have done it that way. But I didn't understand and I..

30:30 But once they get to know you and know you are okay they don't thief off you. But they are thieves.

But remember, bear in mind, you know, they didn't have much. They had their wives in the camp. Their wives were in the camp, we got tents up for them, and every night they would wash their kids. Very clean people. And of course it was

- 31:00 taboo to look at their wives. Only a fool would do that. You know, that's a quick way to get shot. None of us did that. I looked at a few, but I didn't look too long. But, they are not bad people when you get to know them. I got to speak the lingo and I made some good friends.

Was it a hard language to learn?

I think... It's not a hard language to learn, but the tones, the guttural

- 31:30 tones is hard. I try with Vietnamese around the place here and they can understand me, but my tones are wrong, but they can understand what I am talking about, but the tones are wrong.

Can you say anything to us now?

[Spoke in Vietnamese here.]

- 32:00 But my tones are wrong. Where with dialogue in the Philippines, it's like Malay, so you don't have that problem with the tones, but it's a Malay type language where this is a

- 32:30 Chinese type language. And you have got to get those tones right.

Did you learn more politically being in the team about the Chinese thing that was going on in Vietnam?

No, we knew... Yeah, I suppose when you sat down and had a few drinks, I see what you are getting at. Yeah, well it was pretty well cut and dried what was going on. You know the south didn't want the

- 33:00 north. The Americans come in to help the south. We come in to help the south. And we were asked by the Vietnamese government - unlike what a lot of Australians think the Americans asked us, they didn't. And I have the signals in my book from the government. No, I... You know the south would have probably crumpled quicker if the Americans would have stayed out of it, and consequently even though I

- 33:30 fought in the war there, I am not sorry I went there, because luckily I come back all right and I have still got everything attached. Maybe if I didn't I would have a different slant on it. But I am glad we went there. I think we stemmed the tide of communism. I think we... Probably the way that communism has gone now we sort of helped in our own way to change it around a bit. They are going well now I believe under the communist

- 34:00 rule. That's good.

How real to you, before you went to Vietnam even before the first tour was that threat of communism for Australia?

Ah, well I believed in the domino theory, and I don't any more and I think the reasons we went in... You know went with the British into Sarawak, and we followed the Americans into Vietnam, I think all that paid of

- 34:30 to stem that domino theory. I can't practically give you an example why, but that's my thinking, like Iraq now. They are losing a lot of people, but they went in. But I think in the long term it's going to be a better world because of that, and he's shown he's going to let dictators get involved with these conspirators and people that blow you up in the middle of the night and basically that's the way it was

- 35:00 going or gone.

How did working so closely with these South Vietnamese, how did that change your view on the war? Did it change your view on the war?

No. I was a professional soldier, I went to the war. If it would have been in Africa I would have gone to the war. I like to think I was on the right side. We didn't win it, but at least that we did a lot for it, I think.

- 35:30 They are all home, they've been home for a while, they have been nice and quiet. So, anyway... No, I still reckon we should have went. I still reckon the nun in the street shot in about 5 o'clock in the morning in Dat Do with specks of blood on her forehead, made me assured that I was doing the right thing. Because that's what they were doing to nuns. I am not a Catholic, but she was

- 36:00 trying to do her job and she was shot.

Did you see any other atrocities in your time in Vietnam?

No, I didn't. I didn't see it because I walked away. But I seen the Vietnamese Army do a lot of things we wouldn't have done. But it was nothing to do with us. We were advisers and we were told to walk away and we did. But was their country and they did it.

Was that just considered to be the Asian way that did those

36:30 **things?**

Well that's the way they worked. And to get information, they went and thumped them in the bush or whatever. That was their problem, that wasn't ours, and it was, no... They didn't kill them or stand over them and put a... I am sure they put a gun to their head to get the information, but they got the information. As long as they got the information, I am not interested. It wasn't my part of it.

We've heard stories about

37:00 **how a lot of even the South Vietnamese quite liked Ho Chi Minh?**

Yes, I am quite sure they did, and we liked Ho Chi Minh, during the war, because it was Ho Chi Minh that fought with us against the Japanese, fought long and hard, but after the war it all turned sour and we changed. It's the same with this Saddam

37:30 Hussein. He was showing the Americans the right way, but he become a dictator and he went bad. Friendships change. It changes in families.

So how long did you spend with the Australian Army Training Team?

About 7 to 8 months.

Right up to the end of your tour?

Yes. I went over my tour.

You went over?

Yeah, just a month or so.

How did that sort of transpire. Like did you know

38:00 **that you were going to stay longer or did you...?**

Yeah, well they had to get a replacement for me. And that was good, there was no problem. They got me home as soon as they could.

So how did that happen towards the end of your tour, what was happening there, when you were ready to come back to Australia, training up a new bloke and everything?

Oh no, I didn't... I might have seen him, yeah, it wasn't too much.

38:30 He went out on ambushes with me. That sort of thing. It was all pretty easy. He had done his course. But you will find that the people in the Training Team or the MAC team, you will find they talk differently about the Vietnamese. Your average Australian soldier that was in Nui Dat, all they sort of look at them and they say, "Nog." You know, even now there are people that really embarrass me.

39:00 The fighting Vietnamese outside, or they say they do, but I don't think they do. But you know, that's only because they were fixed in that environment. They didn't get out to meet the people and they thought everyone was a nog and a VC and there wasn't any good people. These people that come here, believe you me, they must have put up with some terrible misery to get

39:30 in those boats to get here. And a lot of money was paid for a tin boat. So good luck to them. They are good people, they are okay. My attitude... You will find every training team guy, and I mean I was a very low type of training team guy, I wasn't up the DMZ and done what some of these guys have done, I mean it was low key. But, you will find that they will all talk like me, they are pro,

40:00 they never call Vietnamese nogs or anything like that, because some of their lives have been saved by these guys. And some of them were valiant soldiers. But they knew what was goin' on and sometimes they run away because they knew they couldn't win. And the adviser had to run with them. Not in my case, but up north. But they would stop and fight when they knew they had to, you know what I mean. They know all this because it was their country. That's what a lot of people don't understand. But

40:30 all the advisers understand it.

So how do you compare your second tour to your first tour?

It was a good tour. I tried to go back again. 9 RAR was going, and I asked to be posted not back to 8 RAR but to 9 RAR, who was in Enoggera. I was posted there to go back with them, that's not probably where I wanted to go I wanted to go to Saigon, but I was goin' to go back with them and do the same thing.

41:00 Or you know in a battalion. But I was only back two months and they stopped the war, and I couldn't see the writing on the wall so I went back to 8, to me other battalion, and soldiered with them until we were combined to 8/9. And after that they sent me to recruiting and I started to get farmed around the area on a career jaunt to become sergeant, warrant officer or whatever.

Tape 9

00:31 **So you are back to Australia after your second tour and you said you tried to go again..**

I tried to go again, and they... The war had stopped. I tried to go to Saigon - they didn't want me there. I tried to go back to the Training Team and my commanding officer... Sorry, I went back to 8 RAR and I tried to go back to the Training Team, and my commanding

01:00 officer endorsed that I should go back because I was good at it, but they wouldn't send me because people were coming home you know. It was over.

Can you recall watching the television and watching the fall of Saigon?

I watched it.

How did that make you feel?

It was a bit sad, but the writing was on the wall. You can thank the do-gooders from the United States and Australia, and all over the world for

01:30 us pulling out, because we could have won it. Politics stopped it.

A lot of blokes say we stayed south of where we should have been going to fight the war. What did you feel about that sort of thing?

Oh no we had a province to look after and we cleared it. I don't think we should have went anywhere else. We had a province. It had to be maintained and we did it pretty well. I

02:00 think that you know if they knew they were going to win, that's the patience, they knew that the foreigner as they called us, that would get sick of it. They knew that the politics of the foreigners would get sick of it, so the soldier would go. It was very sad to hear that the company I worked with the Vietnamese, when the north come down,

02:30 I am led to believe, they shot that company commander in front of his soldiers, they shot his wife in front of his soldiers, they shot some of the officers and senior NCOs in front of the soldiers. I have also heard that anybody that had any interaction with the Australians or Americans were shot. I have also heard that every kid that was mestizo, mestizo is a

03:00 Filipino word, but who was mixed blood, was dug into the sand, and the waves come and did the rest. Whether that's true or not, I don't know, but a friend of mine who is a policeman went over on a trip to Vietnam and was told that, and he had been to Vietnam in the war, and he was told that by people.

Have you ever been back to Vietnam?

No.

Would you like to?

Yes, but I just haven't had time with the Philippines. I would love to go back to

03:30 Vietnam. I wouldn't go on a tour, and I wouldn't cry in front of the monument in the Binh Ba rubber, and wear me RAR badge. I would like to go back and go silently round on my own, and look at the old places on my own without a team of people around me, but that's me. Yeah.

You mentioned the RSL sort of thing when

04:00 **you first came back home. What about marching on Anzac Days?**

Yeah, I march on Anzac Days. I have never been one to withdraw myself from the system like some of them do. Lock themselves up, it's unhealthy. I have gone through periods when I haven't marched, but you see I was sort of involved with the army right through until 1978,

04:30 so it wasn't a situation where I could divorce myself. I think a lot of people who says they don't want to know anything about it is fooling themselves. And they're making it hard on themselves.

What about Long Tan Day, Vietnam Veterans' Day, when that first sort of...?

Well I still believe that Vietnam Veterans' Day should be 6 RAR at Long Tan

05:00 and all the attachments that served with them and no-one else. But I do go to Vietnam Day to sell me books. I don't go to 6 RAR because I don't think it would be right. I believe that 6 RAR and all their attachments, engineers whoever was with them, armoured corps, no outsiders.

You mentioned earlier about talking to people and how you could talk to...you mostly talked to other veterans, what about talking to your family and that sort of

05:30 **thing, have they ever asked or have you ever...?**

No.

The thing I am getting at there is how did the book thing come about as a result of...?

I always wanted to write a book, and there's no good writing a book and researching things you don't know, so I wrote it with things I do know. And I wrote it because most of these books are written by these waffling old officers, who have a very good education, but

06:00 they talk on officers' terms and you cannot... I don't think a book can be written about a soldier when he's not far away as a platoon commander, he's on ground with him, but he still doesn't think like a soldier. And that's one of the reasons I write books. I write it in my way, which is a colourful way and I don't sort of talk like an officer. And I think people are enjoying that, but maybe not the officers. I do have officers buy my

06:30 books. Only a few. But a few good ones.

Some of the criticisms are that some of the blokes bottle everything up inside them and don't get it out, did you find that writing those books helped you?

Yeah. Yeah. I had a... As I say, my post traumatic stress was because I came back with an attitude of not liking... I have never gone into a public bar in a pub since Vietnam.

07:00 If I go to a bar, and I don't any more, drink here much in Australia because I have got kids and I don't any more. But if I do go out it's a private bar, or it's an RSL or a club. And I could not drink on a Saturday morning with the average people in a pub, because they are Pauline Hanson's group. They listen to everything they are told and repeat it. They'll strike that out of

07:30 it. But anyway, no I think that personally, people that have trouble, should get a life, they should get a different attitude on life, they should get up and start living, forget Vietnam. It was something we did, but they have got to bear in mind that the WW2 soldiers did

08:00 more. And there wasn't too much... They didn't get all the help we did. The Korean War veterans didn't get any help at all I don't think, certainly not from [Department of] Veterans' Affairs, and didn't either until we got doctors on our side to help us. The only reason we are getting anything from Veterans' Affairs now is that the Vietnam veteran is much more vocal than the other veterans. He's a little bit better educated than the other veterans. And he's

08:30 not frightened to get up and have a go at Veterans' Affairs. The poor old fella in WW2 would get a rejection, and you always get that, that's the first letter back. And he would say, "If they don't want to give it to me, they can stick it." We are a little bit different. We are fighting because we know the system can be beat. It's the same as the Vietnam War. The Vietnamese, the North Vietnamese knew they would win it. We can beat Veterans' Affairs

09:00 if we keep on persevering. I think a lot of soldiers have got a lot of problems. I have got problems, but I think a lot of them bring them on themselves because they keep thinking about it. If they wrote a book, if they tried to get it out of their minds they would be 100 per cent better off.

Did you have any problems initially when you first came home?

09:30 Yes. With civilians. I had problems with civilians all the way up to 1997, until I got out. And, got a pension. Not every civilian, you know I have got nothing against the average civilian, but there are a lot of civilians that I can't even stand listening to. They don't know what they are talking about.

So when the army first put you in recruitment, did you...

10:00 **Must have freaked about that a bit did you?**

No, no, I welcomed it with open arms because I was smart enough to know what to say when talking to school teachers and things like that. And I like the job. I liked the kids I was talking to. I liked the kids I was recruiting. Obviously I toned my attitudes down on politics. I didn't say too much because everything you said was recorded and

10:30 sent to Canberra. Every newspaper article you were in was sent to Canberra and back to recruiting. And you had to be careful of what you said. But I enjoyed the job, it was a step up, I was promoted to sergeant. It was away from the battalion for a while. It was away from footslogging. A car to drive, living out of a suitcase all the time, and I liked it.

You mentioned several times how the

11:00 **wartime army, Australian Army is so different to the peacetime Australian Army. Can you tell us how you saw that after Vietnam?**

Yes, I will. I seen it vividly. I seen units in peacetime, good units, you know really good units, being hampered in their training by the government cutting money. I have seen governments, and

- 11:30 it's both governments, they are doing it now. I have seen them take the money off the soldiers, let them fire five rounds at the range, all this you know. They can't during Timor, they have got to open up their purses, but when it's no war, they don't even want to give you toilet rolls. They check how many ballpoints you use. And then you've got some senior officer, telling you, as a warrant officer,
- 12:00 "We can't do that because we're over spending in our budget." And I used to say to these officers, "Don't tell soldiers that. I don't want to know that. I don't want to know about your budget. I am here to train these people. You work your budget out. You have got your degree. If you can't spend that what they've given you wisely, because it is enough, because it is enough, without telling us we are going to fire 5 rounds
- 12:30 on the next range practice, you shouldn't be here. But we don't want to know that, we just want to train." And here they are telling corporals about it, telling diggers about it, and the diggers are saying, "We are in the army and we can't even train." And that was the way it was getting. And I worked with the reserve; they were getting nothing. And I worked with the ready reserve for two years in Enoggera. They got a little bit more
- 13:00 because they had to, but not much, everything was on a restricted basis. And it's no good. If you are goin' to have soldiers, you have got to look after soldiers. And bean counters in the army, colonels, they've got them, they should be politicians, they are in uniform. They are watching every cent. Then you've got people controlling units that's got the pot of gold who haven't got the ability to spend it wisely.
- 13:30 You know, then they ended up in recruiting one year, they wouldn't let us fly anywhere, we had to drive. At the end of the year they ended up with something like \$70,000 they didn't spend and the officer was very happy. "I have saved \$70,000." You know what happened next budget? We were minus \$70,000. That's the morons that are running the military.
- 14:00 I am not sure whether it's the same now, I don't know, but that I cannot stand. And that is one of the reasons... That broke my heart in the army. When you can't train a man.
- You spoke earlier about how valuable it was to have blokes from the British Army that had actually done stuff, leading you guys, how did you see that after Vietnam with Vietnam veterans within the Australian Army?**
- Well most of those guys had come
- 14:30 across had come across in the late '50s, '60s, and did Vietnam. There was lots of them in Vietnam as well.
- But how valuable was the Vietnam veteran to the Australian after the Vietnam War to teach new blokes coming through?**
- I see what you are talking about. Well we are nearly all gone now, and I think that... Well I can give you an example. I served in 8/9 RAR.
- 15:00 8/9 RAR was a wonderful battalion. It didn't go to war, but we might be upgraded on the Butterworth. We got our... I didn't get it because they don't give two out. But they give us an ASM [Active Service Medal]. I had been there 3 times, there was a real reaction in Butterworth in Penang, and now they have upgraded it to an Australian Service Medal and they are talking about upgrading it to an Australian Army - an Active Service Medal.
- 15:30 Now if that happens that is good for those guys. I think our potential was great, because we trained all those people, and those people have become RSMs, officers, all sorts of things. They have gone on detachments all over the world. We were very valuable to be able to put that in to the Australian Army. And any veteran, if he's got any brains
- 16:00 and he's got a bit of rank, because some guys don't want to do it and they have got the brains, and they don't want to be an instructor or something, but anyone is valuable. It doesn't matter if he's a cook in a cookhouse, he's valuable because he's able to cook in the field. He knows what it's like, you know. He'd be getting too old. They wouldn't be in from Vietnam now, but say, Somalia, any of those veterans
- 16:30 are really valuable to the system. And if the system doesn't look after them, they deserve things to happen to them. Like the business when they first went to Timor, the accidental discharge, the corporal being shot. That was caused by commanders not knowing to check those soldiers at all times. When you lead men with one up the spout, you've got to check those safety catches all the time, that's what you are being
- 17:00 paid for. You don't let them throw them in the back of a vehicle so a safety catch can slide off and you can pick it up and shoot yourself. That's your job. Those commanders wouldn't have the nous [knowledge] to know that's because they have never carried live rounds before. On the range, but they never walked around with it. That's where experience comes in. We need all the experience we can get. Timor, Somalia, Rwanda, anyone that's been overseas
- 17:30 should be helped to stay and given things in the army, incentives to stay on. They are not doing that.

Did you get to any other countries in your time in the army?

Yes, I got to Malaya, Borneo, Singapore of course, Thailand, Vietnam, Hawaii, New Zealand

18:00 and back again in Butterworth three times in Malaya.

So when you think back to the young bloke who wanted to join the army and see the world, do you reckon you accomplished that?

I haven't seen the world like some of the guys who have got to England, I did as much as I could do, but I missed a few things. I missed Rhodesia. I put my hand up but I got a trip to Butterworth instead. I would have liked to have gone to Rhodesia.

18:30 I would have like to have gone to Uganda. They sent a few to Uganda. They took them 5 or 10 years to give them a medal, but they got an Australian Service Medal. I would have liked to have gone there but I missed it. I would have liked to have gone to Timor but I was too old by army standards. But you know in all fairness, the army is a young man's army, and I think

19:00 you know, veterans of Somalia, Rwanda, although they wasn't really veterans, they have seen a hell of a lot. Timor I think they're still young enough to contribute so much to the army, and if I was a politician, I would be giving them incentives to stay in. But they never ever handed any incentives out to me to stay in.

Besides, you must mention any

19:30 **places you would have liked to have gone but didn't go, have you had any regrets about your career in the army?**

No regrets at all. I would have done everything the same. I got to Warrant Officer Class II without being a sportsman. I got to WO Class II without sniffing to officers. I got to Warrant Officer Class II for being a soldier. I can still go out and talk to my soldiers; I have no-one punching me when they're drunk. I think I have done a good job. I got

20:00 respect. In the reserve I got respect. I've got respect everywhere I went. I have upset a few officers, good. Some of them liked it, but I wasn't there to impress the officers. I could have been a WO Class I. I was offered it to do the course, but I got out of the regular army. So no regrets. I haven't done that much really in my military career. I haven't got no military medals. I have had no mentions in dispatches. I was no

20:30 hero. I did my best. I was there. I commanded men, I didn't get any killed, so I reckon it's fair enough. That's all I can do.

When you look back on your army career, is it one big thing or do you separate your Malaya, Borneo, Vietnam?

Separate them.

All different chapters?

All different chapters, separate each chapter. Sometimes they get mixed up with the units and what happened, but not often. I can still separate them in my mind.

21:00 And I think if you talk to WW1 guys, I have heard them on the radio can do that too by gee, and they're what, they are old men. And they will still talk of it like it was yesterday. Because time doesn't really mean anything to a guy, because years go so quick. And, you know, these Korean War guys, they still remember the battles in the Korean War and they can tell you

21:30 where they were and everything, and they are 70 years old now. Yeah, I don't think... I know some people forget because they can't they are knocked around in their mind, whatever they did after their war experience. They must have done it hard, they must have drunk a lot of grog or they must have knocked themselves around or the war has affected them. And it affected me, but I am lucky, I am not affected like some of them. Because it all stems back

22:00 to the way you are. If you are a tender sort of a guy you might be affected for years of seeing something like that nun in the street. Shot in the head. Well you know I have a few bad dreams but it don't worry me to the extent that I blame myself. I didn't shoot the nun, I picked her body up. That's the way I look at it. I have got no blood on my hands.

When you look back on your army experience, does Vietnam sit above

22:30 **everything else as far as...?**

No, no. I think my highlight was Borneo, Malaya-Borneo. Butterworth, ready reaction. No Vietnam doesn't sit that high. Second tour might. Some of my achievements in the reserve sit high. Recruiting, you know. I have got... Well you see what me soldiers said there. They

23:00 give me a table and said it's 100 years old. I think they were having a go at me, but they gave me a table. That's what I feel about the military. I will tell you what does upset me though, grossly, Veterans'

Affairs. I know this is run by Veterans' Affairs, and I would like to tell me if anybody is watching this. They fight the soldier; they try to stop the soldier getting a pension,

- 23:30 they do not have the common sense to vet it and see what's going on. Their first reaction is a no. If you have got enough brains and drive to go back, they'll say no again. Then when you get a psychiatrist to back you they'll still say no and they will try and con him. And they are definitely on the wrong track. They think every penny is their penny. It's not the government's fault. The government are doing well. The other government did well with Veterans'
- 24:00 Affairs. It's the people they have got running the show. Most of them aren't veterans. Most of them have never been a veteran and they have never been in the military. And I feel they are starting to be a bit better with the way they treat you on the phone. Back in 1995, they treated you like a dog. Now they speak to you nicely. They need a lot of work done in
- 24:30 Veterans' Affairs to stop harassing the ex veteran. Whether he's army, navy or air force, they all did their bit. They've all got a problem. They should stop hassling him. It's causing them more money in the long term anyway, and they drive the man to more post traumatic stress with this DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs]. And whilst there are good people in the
- 25:00 DVA, only about three or four I have met, maybe one, there are some people in there that really need retraining, and they are the people that make the considerations, they are doctors that are the worst I have ever seen in my life. I am going for a compensation claim on a DVT [deep vein thrombosis], in peacetime. It's took me 3 years. They have
- 25:30 changed my vascular surgeon's state...his hypothesis of what I have got, and put it to a lesser one, so they wouldn't have to give me any money. They sent me to another one, who give me same rating as my vascular surgeon, and now we are at the stage of where they have got two vascular surgeons saying I am right, against their doctors. And I don't know what trick they are goin' to pull out of the bag next. Now that
- 26:00 is not necessary. A 13-year-old school kid could see I have got what I have got - a deep vein thrombosis. But that is not good enough, they are trying to put me off until I die, or until I give up. But I am like the North Vietnamese, I won't give up, and I will win the war. That's the last thing I would like to say

INTERVIEW ENDS