

Australians at War Film Archive

Barry Seeley (The Phantom) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 3rd March 2004

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1398>

Tape 1

00:30 **We will start with where and when you were born?**

I was born in England at a place called Isle of Wight in 1943. The whole family lived on the Isle of Wight, I have a younger brother and also a sister and my parents are still alive and my brother and sister are still alive in England.

01:00 I went to school on the Isle of Wight, I left school at the age of fourteen, we then moved over to a place called the New Forest which is in New Hampshire, the whole family. After I left school I became a farmer on a dairy farm and I worked on a farm that was next door to Lord Louis Mountbattens's property, which was in Romsey in the New Forest. At the age of seventeen I decided to immigrate to Australia

01:30 by myself, again this was a decision that I made on my own, it had nothing to do with the family at all. I came to Australia on the SS Oriana in 1961. I landed in Brisbane and spent one night in Brisbane and then I was taken out to a place called Redbank Plains and worked on a farm at Redbank Plains. I remained there until about late 1962

02:00 and I saw an ad in the paper for people wanting to join the army. In those days there were only three battalions and if you joined the army and if you signed on for about six years it was guaranteed two years in Malaya. Being a bit of an interest I decided to join the army in November 1962. After I signed on I went to Kapooka in New South Wales to do my recruit training, stayed down there for six months,

02:30 did the recruit training and from there I was selected to join the infantry. I then went to Ingleburn in New South Wales to do my infantry training. From there I was posted to the 2nd Battalion in Brisbane. The 2nd Battalion had just come home from Malaya, so I was with a battalion that had already been to Malaya. I remained with the battalion for approximately twelve to eighteen months and then I requested a transfer to the 4th Battalion that was in Woodside

03:00 because they were the next battalion to go to Malaya. I wanted to go to Malaya and Borneo. From Brisbane I got posted to Adelaide and I remained with the battalion in Adelaide for the training and then we embarked to go to Malaya with the 4th Battalion. I stayed with the 4th Battalion in Malaya and did a trip to Borneo, we did four months up in Borneo confrontation against the Indonesians.

03:30 After about eighteen months in Malaya they then called for volunteers to re-enforce the 2nd Battalion that was due to go from Brisbane to Vietnam. I volunteered with a group of my friends to come back to Australia and join the 2nd Battalion before it went to Vietnam. We came back from Malaya and we had three weeks leave

04:00 and went straight on the [HMAS] Sydney and went over to Vietnam. I did a tour of duty to Vietnam and after Vietnam we then came back to Brisbane and I remained with the battalion in Brisbane. Then the whole battalion got moved to Lavarack Barracks in Townsville when Lavarack Barracks first opened up. I remained with the 2nd Battalion in Lavarack Townsville, again we were on for duty to Vietnam

04:30 and I again went back to Vietnam for a second tour, which was 1970 to 1971 and remained with the battalion in Vietnam. I came back from Vietnam, back to Townsville, the battalion then became the 2/4th Battalion, because the army was down grading in size because national service had stopped and we then became the 2/4th Battalion. I remained with the battalion in Townsville and then I got posted to the Infantry Centre which

05:00 was at Singleton. I went down there as an instructor in the sniper wing and small arms wing. While I was there I was also selected to do exchange duties in England, to the School of Infantry in England again with the sniper wing. Also while I was in Townsville with the 2/4th Battalion we did a trip to Butterworth, a three month turn away trip in Butterworth to Malaysia and Penang. Also a couple of exercises overseas, one in

- 05:30 Singapore and another one in England. I remained with the 2nd Battalion and then I went to the Infantry Centre, when I was at the Infantry Centre I was promoted to warrant officer. From there I got posted to the 3rd Battalion which again was at Woodside and I remained with the 3rd Battalion, they got moved from Woodside up to Holsworthy, a military barracks and they then became a parachute battalion
- 06:00 and I was a company sergeant major with them. From there I went and did my RSMs' [Regimental Sergeant Major] course I was then posted back to Brisbane to Wacol as a training officer with OCTU [Officer Cadet Training Unit], which was an army reserve unit. In 1983 I got married which changed my life a bit and we had a son Nathan that gave me the influence to leave the army
- 06:30 because I wanted to give my son a steady sort of an upbringing in a suburb where he can grow up with all the other kids. I did that and a job in the State Government Protective Security Services came up and I applied for it and got it and that's what I'm doing at the present time. The role involves looking after the premier of Queensland and also all the public servants in the particular buildings that I'm in at the moment.

We will go right back to the beginning

- 07:00 **where we go more into detail. Tell us your first memories on the Isle of Wight?**

It was only a very small island, probably the size of Magnetic Island in North Queensland. It was a great life because we were right on the coast. There weren't very many people on the island; it was an ideal life for young kids to grow up in.

- 07:30 In those days there wasn't any violence or anything like that, and everyone knew everyone else. On the particular island everybody seemed to be related. Even now on the times that I have gone back, all the guys and girls I went to school with they did their apprenticeships on the island, they actually run all the businesses on the island, but it was a great life, really good.

Tell us about your family life there, what was your father doing?

- 08:00 My father served in the Second World War and he served in the Middle East and also Burma. My mother she was in the Land Army, in those days the women sort of looked after the farms. My grandparents farmed on the Isle of Wight. We just had a great time. We had a great family life, it was a rural
- 08:30 type of life, like farming. My brother and sister again they had a great life. It was an ideal situation living on an island, there weren't many cars, the only cars we had on the island were a couple of taxis. They had a bus service, the weather was ideal. It wasn't really cold
- 09:00 like the northern part of England, because it got the sea breeze from France. For a family to be brought up on the island it was an ideal situation.

I know you were pretty young but were there any memories of World War 11 or the end of it?

Yes. On the island they used to have dummy ships built out of concrete around the island and of course we used to go down and play

- 09:30 on these later on in life. I can always remember as kids, these days they play cowboys and Indians but in our day it was the Germans and the English and everybody wanted to be the Germans. I can remember one distinct thing, we never saw it but it was a Messerschmitt and it crashed on a hill
- 10:00 and there was a bit of the tail of this Messerschmitt up in the tree. As kids every weekend we'd go sit under this tree and look up because it had the old black and white cross that used to be on the tail of their planes. We used to go up there as kids and watch that. I always remember my grandmother telling me,
- 10:30 they were farming and she was out in the paddock one day and she was so used to seeing the Spitfires going over to France or Germany, she used to wave to the pilots and they used to dip their wings. One day this plane came over and she waves to it and it dipped its wings and it wasn't until it had gone and came back that it was a Messerschmitt and the German pilot had actually dipped its wing to my grandmother. It seemed so strange because you'd hear stories
- 11:00 of the different things that happened during the war it was quite possible that he could of machine gunned my grandmother you just don't know. My mother she was in the Land Army, but she also used to work in a laundry place and they used to sew rank on military uniforms and she was telling me how the young
- 11:30 pilots used to come in with their rank to be sewn on and they never came back to pick up their uniforms. She'd tell you how she felt about it, you'd see these young pilots and knowing full well if they didn't come back it was because they might have lost their lives on bombing missions or whatever over Germany. It was good over all.

What kind of memories do you have of your Mum and Dad going away or having to work for the war?

- 12:00 I don't have too many memories of Dad going away, I could remember him in uniform in his packs and

him sort of going and Mum was always working on the farm. I can always remember my Dad coming home and we were all excited and Dad used to bring little things like a bar of chocolate only small but they meant so much to us especially in those days.

12:30 Everything was rationed in England, we had ration books and it didn't matter if you had all the money in the world even when we were kids going to school we used to take a little stamp out of our ration book and with a penny to go and buy lollies [sweets]. Unless we had that stamp we just couldn't get the lollies. It was the same for butter, cheese and all that type of stuff. I think that went on for a few years after the war,

13:00 probably up until the every early or late 1940s, I remember Mum giving us the ration books to go and pick up meat or whatever we had to get.

What other stories did you hear about the Germans coming near the Isle of Wight?

Not really a great deal, people wouldn't talk about it a great deal.

13:30 Dad didn't say anything about it; it's only since the time when I went home with the Australian Army that Dad sort of opened up to me. I hadn't even realized that he had been to Burma. I knew he had been to the Middle East because he used to speak about Istanbul, he used to talk about that but he used to never talk about Burma at all. As kids we used to play the games like war

14:00 but nothing was really explained to us, what it was all about. It was that people just didn't like the Germans. I can give one typical example of that we went to school with a young guy and after the war his father married a German and brought her back to England. I can remember even as a kid my parents and the people where we used to live used to completely hate her and treat her

14:30 with contempt, it was unbelievable. We didn't realise but they might have had reasons to do it, we don't know, it's very hard to say. It never went through to us kids; we never ever treated the Germans any different later on in life.

Were there any memories of the island being under threat itself, being invaded?

No not really.

15:00 I can remember we had the air raid shelters and being taken down into the air raid shelters. I think there was one time where they thought they'd take all us kids away from the Isle of Wight and take us up to the northern part of England, but that didn't eventuate. I can remember Mum and Dad talking about that. I don't think I was old enough when the war was won because it started

15:30 in 1943 and finished in 1945, only what was going on.

What about island life there, how would you receive entertainment, supplies?

We used to have ferries that used to come across to the island. On the island there was a prison called Parkers Prison where the top security prisoners from England go, that was on the centre of the island. There was a hospital in the centre of the island in

16:00 Newport, there was an aircraft factory there called Saunders Row and they made the first flying boats. At one end of the island at a place called Cowes that's where they used to do all the yachting, and all the yachting fraternity used to go down there for the yacht races and things like that. There were a couple of castles, the old Norman castle used to be on the Isle of Wight. A couple of lighthouses and things like that, but it was very rural,

16:30 a lot of farms, a lot of orchards. If you had a bike you could pedal around the island in a day, go for long walks. Most of the little villages were all teed up with paths. We had an old train line there when we were kids but that got disbanded, but the island was so small there was no real requirement to put people on trains to go to the

17:00 next village because you could just ride your bike or horse.

What were they growing on the farms?

Wheat, dairy and vegetables that's about it.

What time of rumours or talks would be said about the prisoners on the island?

There was always a fear that someone was going to escape from the prison, but it never happened when I was a kid.

17:30 It's like everything when you are growing up as a kid and like in Australia your Mum and Dad would say "I will get the local police onto you." on the island they'd say "You will all end up in Parkers." there was always the threat that if I didn't do the right thing I'd end up in Parkers. We didn't have a great deal to do; we used to go to Newport to the markets about once a week. It was a big thing as kids because we'd go and have a feed of fish and chips,

18:00 the whole family would have fish and chips in Newport and go to the markets. We used to drive past Parkers on the bus and all the kids with big eyes "There's Parkers Prison." Other than that we didn't

worry about it too much. Because it was an island it was very hard to escape from the island, they did have a couple of people

- 18:30 who did escape but they never got to the mainland at all because of the currents. The other thing that I can remember on the island is there was a plane crash, I don't know if it was a DC3 or something like that in the late 1940s, but everyone got killed on the plane.

Tell us about moving to the mainland

- 19:00 **of the UK [United Kingdom]?**

My family made the decision, Dad was a motor mechanic and he got offered this job in the New Forest, which is Hampshire on the mainland so the whole family moved over to the mainland. We got a house just outside the New Forest and at that time my brother joined the British Army as an apprentice

- 19:30 and my sister she joined the air force, so it was just me and my parents at New Forest and that's when I left school at fourteen and I got a job at New Forest on a property there. It should have gone into the family because all our family are farmers,

- 20:00 my grandfather and my great grandfather before, so I became a farmer. I worked on this dairy farm until I decided to immigrate to Australia.

What was the work like there?

It was good. A dairy farm in England is completely different to a dairy farm in Australia. You are solely doing dairy work,

- 20:30 when you milk a cow they put you in white gowns and you have got a white hat on and all this type of stuff. After coming to Australia and working on a dairy farm it seemed to be a lot more controlled in England, whether it was because of the outbreaks of TB [Tuberculosis] they had in the 1940s late 1950s, it was very controlled. We used to have a great life.

- 21:00 As a part of my wage we used to get so many bags of potatoes to take home, we used to get our milk supplied free. It was more of a career type atmosphere with in England when you worked on a dairy farm. You went in there as a dairy hand and you went up to be the top dairy man within the farm. You could

- 21:30 make a complete career out of being on dairy farms over there.

What about mates and friends your own age?

When I left the Isle of Wight it sort of broke my heart, I had grown up with all the kids, we went to primary school, then secondary school on the Isle of Wight. As I said before all the jobs and apprenticeships went to the people who were actually born on the Isle of Wight. We were all born

- 22:00 on the Isle of Wight so naturally I would have gone into an apprenticeship. When I went over to the New Forest all of my friends were still on the Isle of Wight, it was a bit of a lonely time there for a while. Like I said my brother and sister had gone away to join the forces. But having said that I got a job I was on a dairy farm, as you know the villages over there are very small, it doesn't take long to

- 22:30 get into the village life and get people to accept you.

What was the lead up to your decision to immigrate?

Again I think Steve my brother had left home and Di had left home so I was the only one at home. I thought that I would remain in farming and I had seen a couple of shows on TV about Australia

- 23:00 and I had read some magazines particularly about sheep farms, you have sheep farms in England but they are very small, and you'd see the big properties in Australia. One day there was a big article in one of the Sunday papers saying about come to Australia, immigrate to Australia so I wrote for the information and I started the ball rolling from there. Then they put me in contact with some organisations

- 23:30 like the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], the Big Brother Movement, they were the people who brought young boys out to Australia to work on properties. The one that I choose was the YMCA and I had a choice I could either go to Canada or Australia, with the assisted passage where you'd paid ten pound and you could come out to either Canada or Australia. The reason I chose Australia was I didn't have any

- 24:00 relatives in Australia and I had relatives in Canada and I thought that if I went to Canada I would be relying on the relatives and I wanted to do it by myself. I decided on Australia with the YMCA I went through half a dozen interviews and they came and met your parents and everything like that. They said "Yes we will accept you and place you in Queensland and you can work on a property and we can take it from there."

- 24:30 **What impression had you built up from newspapers of Australia?**

It's very hard, as you know in England if you went five miles in England it was like the end of the day to you. I couldn't come to grips with the size of Australia. Still even when I saw it on TV it didn't give you the impression that it was a big place. The properties looked big,

25:00 the sheep farms they look big but it still didn't give me any idea exactly how big Australia was until I arrived.

What hopes did you have for yourself?

I was convinced I was going to come out here and continue farming and maybe get my own property in Australia and start a seedling clan

25:30 in Australia with farming. When I came out I initially started in dairy farming and I didn't know whether I'd remain with dairy farming or go into sheep or grain. I think initially that was my idea to come out here and remain in farming, in the long term to have my own property. Because in England it's very difficult to

26:00 get property, most of the farms in England are handed down in the family. My grandparents did have a farm on the Isle of Wight but that was sold off after the death of my grandfather. I think if the farm had of stayed in the family on the Isle of Wight I'm sure that I would have stayed on the Isle of Wight and farmed that land, kept it in the family.

How did your parents feel about you leaving?

26:30 They never really showed too much emotion. I can imagine Mum but Dad, because he had been overseas himself, Dad never had a sheltered life whereas Mum did. She spent her whole life on the Isle of Wight, the furthest she had ever been was probably over to the mainland whereas Dad had been to Burma and the Middle East,

27:00 but Steven was away in the army and my sister was in the RAF [Royal Air Force]. I don't think Mum and Dad wanted to stop me from doing what I wanted to do. I think it was a bit of a shock that I wanted to do it miles away. They probably thought that I could have still continued on farming in other parts of England, in northern England, Midlands or wherever, but I think it was a

27:30 bit of a shock that I wanted to go so far away. Having said that they gave me all the encouragement, they never ever put any barriers in front of me. I look back now and think that it was fantastic, but I could have imagined how they must of felt. It's not as if you were just going down the road and you could slip home for the weekend, to see if everything is ok. They gave me all the support and all the backing and

28:00 now they reckon it was the best thing they ever did for me.

Take us through the journey to Australia?

We left South Hampton on the SS Oriana, it was her second voyage, and her previous voyage was her maiden voyage. We came out and went through the Suez Canal but before that we dropped into Naples and we actually stayed there for a day. We went ashore at Naples and had a look

28:30 at everything there. You could imagine to me, the furthest I had been in my life was to London and here I was standing in Naples, different people with different cultures, the climate. The same when we went through the Suez Canal, I just couldn't believe it. We went through the Suez and then we called into Colombo, again I've never seen anything like that, the little kids and beggars in the street

29:00 in India. I had never been exposed to anything like that in my whole life. Not even on TV in England at that stage, it just didn't happen, we didn't know anything about that. It was a real eye opener just the trip that far. From there we went over to Western Australia and spend a couple of days in Western Australia and the representative from the YMCA met me in Western Australia and they took me around

29:30 Fremantle and the areas there and showed me a bit of Australia. Again it didn't strike me as being a big place because we were just on the coast. We went down to Melbourne and spent a couple of days there again the YMCA people met me and showed me a bit of Melbourne . From there around to Sydney and spent one day in Sydney again having a look around. From there they put me on a train

30:00 and I came from train from Sydney up to Brisbane. The YMCA people met me there and we went out to Yalangur, which is underneath the Storey Bridge. It's underneath the Storey Bridge it's an old building and it's about to be redeveloped anyway. Spent one night there and the next day a guy called Mr Sentanella

30:30 came up from Redbank plains and introduced himself. Said that the YMCA had contacted him and how I would be employed by him. I said "Ok" and I threw all of my gear on the back of the ute [utility truck], the old ute in those days and put me in the back of the ute. I had never been in the back of a ute in my life and here we were going down the Ipswich Road to Redbank to work. That's how the trip started and ended.

How did it feel being a young bloke, how were

31:00 **you coping?**

Great, I had no worries at all. Everything was an adventure, everything was new. As I said everyday was an eye opener to me, I was meeting different people, different cultures and things that I had never seen before, it was a great life. I didn't have anytime to reflect, on

- 31:30 'should I of come out' or 'shouldn't I of come out', 'do I miss my parents', naturally you are going to miss your parents and miss home but I didn't have a great deal of time to reflect on it because everything was a new world to me and it was great.

What were the farms like to you coming from England?

After England where everything was so controlled with regulations.

- 32:00 A farmer on Redbank Plains it was unbelievable, it was an old shed virtually in the middle of a paddock and in England everything was built by concrete, everything was so clean and tidy. As I said you had to have a white gown and hats on to milk cows and all this sort of thing, you were in fear of inspectors coming in to inspect you and the properties. There was always fear of foot and mouth disease in England too,

- 32:30 so everything had to be spotless. Coming to Australia it was completely different. It's completely different now but in these early years like I said it was an old tin shed in the middle of a paddock and the cows used to come in and you'd just milk them and throw the milk in a churn and away you used to go. It was still a great life, there was no difference, you were still milking cows and looking after cattle,

- 33:00 the daily chores which you virtually did in England it was just the different standards.

Were you working with other Poms [Englishmen]?

I was the only one. Eric's property at Redbank Plains he started in dairy and he bought one of the first Fiat tractors in Queensland and the only way that he could make it pay for itself was he used to hire us out to the other farms in Redbank Plains. So we would have finished milking the cows late

- 33:30 in the afternoon and then we'd keep the tractor going all night. There were two other guys on the farm with me and we used to do it in shifts with the lights and just drive the tractor throughout the night. That was the way that Eric made his money and also paid for his tractor. Again it was an eye opener for me after coming from England I couldn't imagine them over there having the headlights on

- 34:00 ploughing of a night time.

Is it difficult to do?

Yes, I found it very difficult to do for a while just getting the focus, it's bad enough ploughing during the day without doing it under the lights of the tractors. Again it was an experience that I will never ever forget.

Did anybody give you like banter coming from England, called you any names?

No, not at that stage in the farming community,

- 34:30 they realised that I came from a farming background and my family were farmers, they had a lot of questions about England, what we did over there. They'd sometimes say "You are not in England now you don't do it like that." but it was nothing like "You Pommy bastards" or anything like that. It was great, the kids in the families, our social life was virtually on farms.

- 35:00 I can remember my first trip away from the farm was at a place called Warwick and there was a rodeo up there and Eric every month he used to give me a couple of days off and he said "We will put you on the train and send you up to Warwick and you can have a look at the rodeo." I had never been to a rodeo in my life so I went up to Warwick it was fantastic. I booked into this hotel and they had all the jackaroos and jillaroos

- 35:30 from all the properties and all the cowboys and they took me under their wing and they showed me what goes on in a rodeo. It was fantastic and it was a really good experience, again seeing different people. You also saw a different side of the Australians; the old cowboys are a bit rough and ready.

You mentioned briefly your social life but what was your social life?

- 36:00 The dances in the local hall, that was about it. All the farmers used to get together on market days, we used to go to cattle sales, but everything revolved around your job. There wasn't a great deal of sporting activity at that stage, as I said it was all about cattle and growing crops and driving tractors. I think they took me

- 36:30 to a koala sanctuary at Lone Pine, again that was an experience because I had never seen koalas, Eric and his wife took me up to see the koalas. On the property at Redbank those red kangaroos were everywhere and that was a thing that surprised me too. It was a strange thing because when you left England you got the impression that when you come to Australia you will see kangaroos as soon as you get off the boat,

- 37:00 you were expecting to see a kangaroo running up the street, but never did.

What about girls, were you able to meet any girls?

The country dances the farmers used to bring their daughters, just normal teenagers growing up, nothing serious at that stage. A lot of the girls used to work on the farms and they used to work as hard as the guys,

- 37:30 driving the tractors exactly the same as us. It was more of a friendship like a mateship, with no other concerns with it. There were certainly some good friends.

How long all up were you working on the farm?

About eighteen months.

- 38:00 I can remember I used to get twenty pound a month, five pound a week. It was good; I used to live on the farm naturally with all my keep. It got harder, it was solid work, there were no hot showers and
- 38:30 long hours, but everyone did it. It wasn't just a selected person, it wasn't just me because I was the worker, everyone that worked there did exactly the same. think you had a feeling that you were putting something back into the property. I think in the long run I would of stayed with Eric, at Redbank Plains at the present time there are no properties there, it's all houses now.
- 39:00 I think in time I might have been in a position to have gotten a couple of acres myself there.

What lead you away from the farm?

Again it was a bit like why I had left England I was reading a paper and it said, "Join the army and see Malaya." and as I said to you before there used to be only three battalions

- 39:30 in the regiment there and if you signed on for six years you were guaranteed two years in Malaya. I had itchy feet and I was a bit adventurous, my brother was in the British Army and we were writing and he was telling me about the British Army, and my sister being in the RAF, I thought that I might have a change, a different direction. That's what I decided I said to Eric "This is what I want to do Eric"
- 40:00 and he said "You are young, even if you go away for three years you are quite welcome to come back." he said, "You are young and you decide in life what you want to do." and that's when I decided to enlist in Brisbane.

Tape 2

- 00:30 **Just another quick question about Eric. What had your relationship become like with him, it sounds like you were pretty close?**

It was like I was his son, he only had a young son but he treated me very much like an older son, and his son treated me like

- 01:00 an older brother. It was a great working relationship. I was very sorry to leave Eric but like Eric said, "It's your life, you decide what you want to do and you are always welcome to come back." He was of Italian decent so he was very family orientated, his name was Eric Santinella [?] and he was very family orientated. In other words it was a great time.

Did you keep in contact with him?

- 01:30 Yes and I am still in contact with him now, he left Redbank Plains, like I said it's a built up area now and he's on the other side of Ipswich, he's got a property and his son has got a property and married with kids. When I drop in and see him occasionally and have a bit of a laugh and 'Do you remember this?', there were a few incidents that happened on the farm and we still have a bit of a laugh about it. One of the particular incidents that I will always remember is I had never been on a horse in my life.
- 02:00 When we had to round up cattle out here it was always on horses and I can remember getting on this horse one day and away the horse took off and I couldn't stop it. It wasn't until he got to a barbed wire fence and it stopped but I kept going, I wasn't hurt. Every time I see Eric now he says, "Haven't been on a horse lately have you?" it was really great.

You mentioned this family tradition with the military,

- 02:30 **what did it actually represent to you when you decided to join the army?**

When you were brought up in England you have these two different classes of people, there are people who serve and the people who have been served. We were the people to serve and I just always had the feeling that that was my

- 03:00 thing in life. I think it was probably from my grandparents and my father who had a military background. It was just the impression that I had in life that it was my part to serve.

You mentioned that in relation to a British heritage did that feeling change in Australia or was it a British way of life here?

03:30 Yes a British way of life. It was slightly different here in Australia. Australians are fairly laid back, a lot to do with mateship in Australia, why you do things, as I will probably talk to you later on in my war service. It's not so much for serving your country it's serving the people that you are with, and making sure

04:00 you are all together and all part of a team, as mate you are looking after each other. Whereas in England I think it would have been for Queen and Country in the military 'yes Sir, no Sir, three bags full Sir', where as in Australia the Queen and Country is there but the mateship and everything is there.

You mentioned that in the

04:30 **newspaper you had seen the advert [tisement] about seeing Malaya, what did you know about the situation in Malaya?**

Nothing at all, it was just another country. It showed a picture of a soldier that was it, in Malaya in the jungle background; I knew absolutely nothing about Malaya at all.

What sort of things did you know or pick up generally about political things

05:00 **going on at the time, communism?**

Prior to joining the army, nothing at all. On the farms the farmers didn't believe in that sort of thing, it was the price of wheat, milk or are they going to get their quota. Eric had the radio, he didn't have TV but it was the country air or something like, everything that revolved

05:30 around us revolved around Redbank Plains. We were just isolated on Redbank Plains as far as we were concerned and Eric was concerned. I had no idea about communism or anything like that, no idea what so ever.

Did any other parts of pop [popular] culture come into Redbank Plains in terms of music or lifestyle changes?

No not really it was again Redbank Plains, the farm, the hall

06:00 down at the old wooden school on the hill and that type of thing, again everything revolved around there. Pop music did start coming in, but fashion, the girls still wore jeans and the riding boots, nothing changed, again I wasn't exposed to any of that. The only trips I made away from Redbank was up to Warwick with the cowboys

06:30 and we went to Lone Pine Sanctuary to see the koalas, there were no big issues with clothing or fashion. Hair, a guy just up from our property he used to cut our hair, and he used to sort of put a basin on top of our head and snip around it. None of us were really fashion conscious whatsoever, Eric's idea of it was if you wanted to have a haircut just go and have a haircut.

07:00 **Tell me about the procedure of going to Brisbane to volunteer?**

I told Eric I wanted to volunteer to go into the army and he said "Ok." he whipped me down to the railway station and I jumped on the train and I came into Brisbane and I went to the recruiting office there. I said, "I want to join the army." he said, "You just can't do it like that, you will have to fill in forms." So I filled in the forms

07:30 and got the information and they said that they would get back to me in time. I went back to the farm and worked on the farm for about five or six weeks and then I got a letter to report for a medical in Brisbane. This time Eric said "I will take you in this time." being a bit like a father. So he brought me into the city and went through the medical and they accepted me. They said, "We will call for you when we are ready." I went back to the farm and a couple more weeks and I was told to report

08:00 back to Brisbane to get on my way, and that was it.

Were there any issues with needing any parental permission?

Yes. I sent the forms home to Mum and Dad and they signed them and again they backed me and said, "No worries, is this what you want?" I think deep down inside Dad reckoned it would be great. Like Steve and him being in the army and like my grandfather

08:30 being in the First World War and other members of the family had been in the Boer War, I think Dad must of thought that this would have straightened me out. It wasn't until later on, probably during the Vietnam conflict I could have imagined what they went through then but initially no worries at all.

09:00 **What was the situation in terms of citizenship?**

In those days you didn't have to be a citizen, I didn't become an Australian citizen until 1976 and I think it became law then to re-engage in the army you had to be an Australian citizen. When I was in the Infantry Centre I was due to re-engage and even after being in Vietnam, everywhere they still wanted

me to be re-engaged.

09:30 I remember I went to a place called Cessnock in New South Wales, I had to be interviewed by the Immigration Department why I wanted to become an Australian citizen, at that stage I had been to Vietnam twice in the Australian Army. It got my back up a bit to think that I had to justify to this guy why I should be accepted as an Australian citizen, I was a bit cranky with that. Having said that what they did

10:00 in the army there was the mayor of Singleton, I was a sergeant at that stage and they brought him to the sergeants' mess and we had the ceremony in the sergeants' mess, we had photos in the local paper. Also at the same time there was an American exchange officer, from the American Army and the American Ambassador to Australia he was actually in the mess that night too so that made a bit thing of it so it was really good.

10:30 After having a bad interview to decide whether I should become an Australian citizen to having a fantastic ceremony to accept me formally as an Australian it was great.

What was the situation when you arrived here in terms of, you had immigrated, and this didn't mean citizenship?

No, I just stayed a British subject. Even on your application

11:00 for the army it just said "Are you are British subject?." but I think now on the applications even in the public service it says "Are you an Australian citizen?." in those days no, as long as you were a British subject you were in.

Going through the process of joining up, take me through things like the medical, what sort of things were they looking for?

Just the normal thing, they weighed me, measured

11:30 my chest, height, took your heart, had x-rays, a blood test, they'd give you a normal physical type test. An interview like this, "Why do you want to join the army?" and this type of thing, nothing hard it was over within a couple of hours.

12:00 I can always remember the guy who interviewed me, a guy called Captain English, it seemed strange being English and being interview by a guy called Captain English. It was very basic, it wasn't really hard.

What were your expectations of army life?

I had been involved with it with my brother Steve as he was in the British Army

12:30 and we went up to his barracks a couple of times, so I had a bit of an idea of what it was all about. In England I can remember as a kid and we were in the cubs, everything was sort of regimented, even in the schools. A lot of the schools in England had ex colonels as headmasters and we used to march into the classroom and your names

13:00 were called off and the flag would be up. So your whole life virtually was very regimented even as a small kid in England. That didn't really worry me in the military at all, a regimental type situation I didn't have a problem with that. Initially I came into Brisbane and that's when they got a group of us together I think there was about fourteen of us, from all walks of life of course we were all still civilians then.

13:30 They put us on the train and took us down to Wagga Wagga and Kapooka and we started our training down there of a platoon of thirty or forty of us.

What was this group of fourteen people like?

All different, there were farmers, ex-policemen, one interesting guy called Bobby Edwards, he got out of the army about the same

14:00 time as me. He worked in the meatworks through out Australia, it was like seasonal work and he was a real hard nut old Bob. In fact he sort of took me under his wing; he was in his late twenties and he sort of initially through my recruit training and the infantry training sort of kept an eye on me. I was only a very small guy, I was about

14:30 nine stone dripping wet in those days and I looked very young for my age. You could imagine coming from England and your skin, you tend to look a lot younger than you are. Bob took me under his wing and introduced me to all the facets of Australian life, which was great.

Give me some examples of how Bob looked after you?

15:00 I had never had a beer in my life until I joined the army and you were allowed up in the canteen and some of these guys from the old school would get up and I thought that if they can do it so can I and Bob would say, "No, you have a shandy, you don't." The same with smoking, I had never smoked a cigarette and of course the guys smoked he said, "No, don't smoke."

15:30 he was like an older brother to me, there were some things. I can't really remember what they were but there were some things that were typical Australian that I didn't really understand and Bob would explain to me what they meant or what someone was getting at. It might have been something that someone said that I didn't quite understand. Not only language but it might have been slang.

16:00 The same with exercises Bob would always be there and make sure that everything was right. If someone would start to give you a hard time and that's when you got "You Pommy bastard." but Bob was always there to say "Hey, that's enough." but it was good.

You mentioned that you had seen Redbank in Australia and that was it,

16:30 **what sort of things made your eyes open when to travelled to Kapooka?**

On the train again this was when the area got to me, how big Australia was. To get on a train up here and I forget how many hours it took us, but it seemed to take us forever and a day. I had visions when they said that I would be going to Kapooka and that would be down the road but on the train and then you'd have to get off the train and then on a bus

17:00 to get to Kapooka. The Riverina area down there as you have seen the open area and it was unbelievable and the different types of country you went through from dry to greenery, opened to closed.

What was the camp like at Kapooka?

It was a real old camp; it was all dust, hot,

17:30 flies everywhere it was the old Nissen huts, the old tin huts. I suspected to this day there was asbestos in the huts, they had funny type of asbestos walls. The showers were about two hundred meters away from the huts and the toilets if you got short at the night time you had to go across and go to the toilet,

18:00 very, very basic. I think the only modern building they had there was the picture theatre and the gymnasium, but all the others were just tin city, as I said very hot and the flies were unbelievable. You'd go on parade and you'd be hot and the flies would be all over your face, but very basic. It was the first place where I had ever struck

18:30 Australian mateship, real mateship as we understand it today. It was hard but everyone pushed for each other to get through, to get through the training so that we all remained together in a military career. There were areas where you could get back squadded if you couldn't do press ups or push ups, ropes but everyone gave everyone encouragement. I can always remember

19:00 there was what you called chin ups, and it was bars but you had to swing your legs back so they'd come up and touch the bar, I could never ever get that. It wasn't the strength, it was a matter of getting your body weight to come up. It wasn't until a couple of the guys in the platoon, they took me up there one weekend and all the physical training instructors they couldn't show me how to do it. "Barry come up and we will show you how to do it." They'd put you on the bars and say "Do this." and it went straight up,

19:30 but it was the fear of getting back squadded out of the platoon and not going through, that made us all work together as mates, it was great.

Tell me about this back squadded?

If you didn't achieved a certain standard you were back squadded to another platoon and you'd never leave Kapooka until you could achieve those standards. It could be rifle shooting, physical, education you had to do three subjects in education there,

20:00 Geography, Maths and English. Again that was the first time I've been exposed to education in Australia, I could remember in Geography they gave me a map and said to mark where all the states were. I thought there was only Queensland, I passed but again it was only because of the guys and the coach and they told me where it was. Maths and English

20:30 I had no problems with but Geography and it all revolved around Australia, all the questions. I did get through but it took a lot of coaching from the other guys.

In Geography would they teach you anything about the situations that the army was involved in?

No, just about the states, the capitals of the states, what industries were in

21:00 the states, nothing about overseas at all, it all just revolved around Australia. The Australian flag, the prime ministers.

Take me through what your memories are of your first few days in that initial training?

Again because everything was going along so fast, they took us to one area

21:30 and gave us boots, hats, greatcoats, pants, the guy would just look at you and say, "They'll fit." We'd all go back to our huts and we'd all have to swap and mix and match to make our uniforms fit. Our hats

were over our eyes, it was just a mad rush. We had to get our uniforms and get our inoculations,

22:00 you'd have rows of guys and of course guys were fainting getting their needles. We had to go and have psychological tests, but it was generally the first couple of days you doubled and ran everywhere the instructors used to hassle you. I think it was their way of breaking you down to see what you could do, whether you were going to retaliate against what you were going to do. Later on I became an instructor in the army so I knew

22:30 exactly what they were doing to us because we used to do exactly the same thing to people. It was the way of finding who the people are you need watch or look after.

Tell me about that, how did they do it to you and how did you do it?

You keep people on the go, they haven't got time to think, to miss home, maybe they might be missing their parents or their girlfriends, don't give them time to think about that, just keep

23:00 them moving and on the go. Getting them thinking military "Yes Sir, no Sir, three bags full Sir." First they make sure their gear is right, their clothing is right, their beds are made right, lockers are right, they know what the ranks are and who they have got to call sir and who they don't call sir, all this type of thing. Usually you can see the pecking order

23:30 within the platoon, you can work out who is going to be the leader in the platoon and who is going to be a follower, you might see a weakness there that you might pick up on or they might pick up on us that you can work on later on. You might have a situation where someone has got a problem. That they are in the army and they do not really want to be in the army. Some of the regular soldiers didn't really want to be in the army

24:00 maybe through family or even the court system given the opportunity to, 'join the army or the other'. I think it was good in a way as I said it gave you an idea of how you could look at the instructors, why they were weighing you up you were weighing them up. Can I talk to this guy, will he listen to me or is he just going to be bombastic,

24:30 it was good.

How did you respond to discipline?

No worries at all because I had been brought up again like in the traditional British way, working on farms. There isn't any discipline on farms but everything you do is mapped out, you just don't decide that you aren't going to milk the cows today. You work long hours and as I said before we didn't have hot showers

25:00 when I was on the farm. The food was very basic, which again brings me to a point even in the army the food appeared to be pretty bad for a lot of the guys but I reckoned it was great. A lot of guys would say "I can't eat that!" and I would say "Well, give it to me." It didn't worry me because my whole life being on farms and especially at Redbank Plains it was so basic the cold weather didn't worry me, the fact that you might get cold showers in the army.

25:30 You might get hassled about getting up early in the morning, my whole life was been revolving around getting up at half past four five o'clock in the morning to milk the cows, so it didn't worry me one bit.

Tell me about how your platoon, or at least the men you were housed with. How did you start to bond together and get to know each other?

I think the instructors encourage

26:00 you to do that. There were six of us in a hut, they sort of said, "When you get into your hut and work together and if someone is having a hard time." maybe just putting the equipment together even during the stage when we used to do weapons training. They could be brilliant with figures but a practical thing, could not strip a weapon down. I was always brought up to use your hands on

26:30 farms fixing tractors, so I had no problems with weapons, again we'd help each other. If someone is a bit behind we'd get to him at the night time and then while they were stripping down the weapons because they had to go through test on that. We became very close in the huts, it became that way and there were four huts and you'd have competitions between each hut. All driven by competition and beating the next

27:00 person. It was healthy type competition not bastardization or anything like that, it was healthy type competition.

What ways would the instructors behave to encourage or re-enforce bonding between the men?

We were very fortunate in those days because all the instructors were infantry. There was something about infantry, everybody wanted to go to infantry.

27:30 They would talk about Malaya, they'd talk about the places they had been to in Malaya, the good places and the not so good places and this type of thing. The infantry guys and the instructors seemed to be so

close, it sort of rubbed off on us guys too and you do get a choice at the end of the your training. They'd ask you

28:00 "Where would you like to go?." you'd get three choices in which corps you would like to go to like sigs [signals], gunners, infantry or whatever, but everyone put down infantry I think. Looking back these instructors were good, they must have been the best of the best. They had achieved their aim, they had us thinking that they were Gods and they were the best of the best. Even later on in life I sort of look back at that and thought that if I ever become an instructor I would do

28:30 it exactly the way they had done it, to get us all geed up [excited] and onside.

Tell me about the differences between the recruit training and the infantry training?

Recruit training was you were just a recruit, you weren't an infantry soldier or anything like that, and you had no corps so you were just a number.

29:00 You were a recruit, so they treated you exactly the way they wanted to treat you but as soon as you went to infantry training, the instructors there again the best of the best. Most of the instructors at recruit training were corporals, when you went to infantry training they were sergeants. Again fantastic, I think they were the best of the best but they treated you with a bit of respect.

29:30 They said, "Hey these guys are no infantry soldiers. They want to be infantry soldiers; they want to go to places like Malaya and want to get in the thick of things." It was still hard but it was laid back. They would talk to you as an infantry soldier, not as a recruit. You were the same as them, you were the guys that were going to go in and dig a hole, or maybe get shot at, and it was good. I think the three or four months I was at Ingleburn was really good and I really enjoyed it.

30:00 Not only that we could get leave there and we could put civvies [civilian clothing] on and go into Sydney and go to all the places. There were lots of places and again completely different to me because places like Kings Cross, in England it was Soho in London but again I had never been to Soho, I had read about it in the Sunday papers about the places of ill repute but to me this was the first time that I had ever been exposed to that type of thing.

30:30 I think it's the same now I went back as an instructor to the Infantry Centre at Singleton. When you go through the gate of the Infantry Centre it's the feeling of the spirit of the corps, 'We are infantry, we are the best, we are tough'.

Tell me about an infantry soldier?

He is the best of the best, he is

31:00 the guy who can adapt to any situation that you throw at him. He's a guy who can laugh, cry, he is physically very fit, he's a good mate. He can do almost the impossible

31:30 and he's always there. He is the type of guy that you can rely on, he's the type of guy that never bludges [lives off] on his mates. It's very strong in the infantry over the years like medical problems you'd never ever see infantry soldiers at the RAP, the Regimental Aid Post because they considered if they were there the other guys would have to work twice as hard,

32:00 because they weren't there. Particularly in places in Vietnam, which I will talk about later on, it was very evident there. It's even very evident now even in DVA, [Department of] Veterans' Affairs, you go to DVA and they say "We have no record of you being sick." because the infantry guys didn't report sick. I've seen some guys that were really crook [sick] who would still do patrols. It might have a skin rash but they'd never go to the RAP,

32:30 whereas non infantry guys I'm sure would, 'Here's my chance, here's my outer.'

Tell me about the role of the infantry in the Australian army?

He is the front line man, he is the guy who closes with and destroys the enemy, that is what he does. He lives under all conditions and all terrains, all weathers, eats all

33:00 types of food, he is the soil of the earth. Regardless of what type of warfare that you'll ever have, whether it would be nuclear warfare or whatever, the infantry guy would still have to go in after it is all over to clean it up. It wouldn't matter what computers or what systems you've got or electronic warfare the infantry guy would always be the guy who has got to go and do that, the hard yards at the end of it.

What is the relationship like between the infantry and the other corps in the army?

Again because the infantry consider themselves as the 'best of the best' it's a bit like the SAS [Special Air Service] they consider themselves as the best of the best and the infantry consider themselves the best of the best, I won't go into the argument of those two. The infantry guys tend to look down on the other corps until they get to a situation like

34:00 what we are going to talk about in Vietnam. Where you have the gunners supporting you and they are going to get you out of a lot of trouble, the guys who drive the APCs [Armoured Personnel Carriers], helicopter crews. You have got the people who have to bring the rations into you, you've got the medics

they are going to look after you and keep you alive. When you get into that situation the infantry guys don't mean to give them a hard time but I think it's just

34:30 a bit of a battle between, it doesn't get down to physical violence or anything like that. It's like you come back from an operation and you see the cooks and you give the cooks a hard time about the food, things like that. Deep down inside the infantry guys know it takes at least ten of those guys to keep one infantry guy in the field. When you ever get into a situation where your life is in the balance and you know those guys are going to get you out of it,

35:00 that's good.

You'd say that sort of thing in peacetime or in Australia the difference between the corps?

In peacetime the soldiers these days, the guys haven't been overseas, they don't see it, they say to them, "You guys haven't gone on long marches like we had to, we had to live in the holes, rains we don't get showers, you guys you can go back to base camp every night."

35:30 Even the APCs, as an infantry soldier you are carrying your house on your back, carrying pans and weight and the APC comes up and they have all the tucker [food] in the back of the APC, the armoured personnel carriers, they have all their tucker in the back and they don't have to carry anything. But again unless you have been in a situation where those guys, again in actual combat

36:00 the APC guys they come to the front too, they can see those poor infantry guys they are having a hard time and they might throw us some extra rations, they would give us some extra water that they were carrying, this type of thing. The same with the helicopters, the helicopter crew guys if they were going to come in and ration they'd get some soft drink cans from somewhere and they'd throw us some soft drink. All those things never come out until

36:30 you are in wartime. In peacetime everyone has their own little system to run and their particular worry. Even exercises in Australia nothing compared to in a conflict situation.

You mentioned that the instructors in Ingleburn and also at Kapooka had possibly been to Malaya, what sort of things would they tell you?

37:00 The patrols, about the places they could go after hours and this type of thing. They were all professional soldiers, whatever they told you it seemed they were talking about professional soldiers being in Malaya. They used to go on border operations onto the Thai border,

37:30 the training they used to do over there. The bar girls, the places they could go and visit. Over there they used to have boot boys and they used to polish your boots, you didn't have to polish your own boots in Malaya. You'd leave all your boots outside and there was an Indian guy and he'd look after a platoon so you'd leave your boots in a pile. Your uniforms were all laundered for you and left on your bed.

38:00 To give a typical example in Australia we used to man formal guards and you'd have to spit polish your boots and it would take you hours and then they'd inspect you and the officers used to give you a hell of a time. In Malaya your boot boy was doing it for you so all you had to do was front up and put it all on. The mundane things as a soldier were gone and you were concentrating on actually being a professional

38:30 infantry soldier. Don't get me wrong, I think there is still a place in the army for you to do all your gear and everything like that to make sure of discipline and you know how to dress. Later on in life you can usually pick out a military guy even though he's been out of the army for years just by his dress. These guys would tell us all about Malaya, and were young guys about twenty three, twenty four, twenty five

39:00 and they looked the part, they looked fit and they dressed very royal. In the infantry it was great.

Within the training that you did was there anything taught about Australia's military history?

No not at that stage, it was just field craft, map reading, and weapons

39:30 and that type of thing. Physical fitness, obstacle courses not a great deal about NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation] or these type of organisations. In fact we got more from just the instructors, just by sitting down and talking to the instructors. Again the guys at the Infantry Centre they were sergeants then and they had been around for a while.

40:00 There was one guy there and he had gotten a military medal in Malaya, so to us as young soldiers to see this guy with a Military Medal was a big thing. He was so professional, he is still alive today, but to look at him and the way that he spoke. He was not really a typical Australian infantry guy, all blood and guts,

40:30 swearing and this type of thing. The way he spoke to you the way that he explained things to you. It was very hard to understand how a guy with sort of background personality gets an MM [military medal]. You really think when someone is going to win an award, bayonets and blood and guts up the middle, this guy was so softly spoken and he explained everything

41:00 Even though he was a sergeant instructor I never ever heard him raise his voice not once to anyone. He could cut you off at the knees by just whispering to you and he was incredible, yet this guy had won an MM in Malaya. They were the type of guys that they were.

Tape 3

00:30 **What about some of the weapons training were you receiving in infantry training?**

We had the SLR [self loading rifle], the rifle and the OMC [Owen Machine Carbine - Owen gun], the M16 machine gun, again this was the first time that I had ever been exposed to weapons

01:00 outside of the military. Even coming from a farming background I still wasn't exposed to weapons. We threw grenades, you had to qualify to throw grenades, basically it was the machine gun, and you had to qualify with a machine gun, OMC, SLR and your grenades.

Was any of this pretty dangerous?

The weapons weren't too

01:30 bad but everyone initially with grenades, the first grenades we had had a detonator and it came separate from the grenade. They would put you in one bay and you had to take the detonator out of the box and actually put it into the grenade and screw the base plate of the grenade in. Imagining all these thoughts of this grenade going off, they were perfectly safe but initially as a recruit. Later on when I was

02:00 an instructor I used to watch recruits and people do it and to see them shaking to put the detonator in or the primer. They were completely safe and then we'd go into another bay and prepare and pull the pin out and prepare to throw them. But the instructor would hold you up until they said "Down." a lot of people used to throw it and straight down behind the wall because they were frightened it was going

02:30 to go off straight away. I remember a couple of the big burly sergeants would just hold you there and they seemed to have it right down to the last second, because they'd say "Down" and just when your head and your helmet seemed to get below the brick wall, the grenade would go off. It was very interesting.

How proficient were you on some of the guns?

I had no problems with weapons at all, we all qualified. Later on

03:00 I became a machine gunner. When I first went to the battalion even for my size I was very small but I had no problems carrying a machine gun and I became very proficient as a machine gunner. The other weapons were no worries at all, again it was through good training and we spent a lot of time at the ranges and we had good instructors so we had no worries about that at all.

What was the newest equipment that you were receiving?

03:30 It would have been the M16, we used to have the Bren guns before that but they were introduced in the early 1960s, so the M16 was the latest machine gun. The Bren gun was magazine fed for the rounds on the top, as you know the M16 is belt fed with the rounds coming in through the side and it's an American weapon. We also got all the American equipment, all your basic webbing and prior to that we used to have very old Second

04:00 World War stuff that was called 37. It was all ex-British like packs and belts and every thing like that. Once we joined our battalions that's when we had our gear and it was all American gear, all our basic weapons, packs, trenching shovels everything, it was all American gear.

Was there any talk about this transformation from British to American for you?

Not really I think it is

04:30 human nature as it is, I think everyone likes to have a bit of American stuff even in those days, everything American was the best. Even down later on in Vietnam you saw certain units who used to wear American camp greens, it made them feel better that they were in American stuff, it was no different to when we were young soldiers, you like to have the latest

05:00 and what they considered to be the best equipment.

Did any of the men or yourself think that this is a transformation for Australia politically?

No, there was nothing political in our way at all. We were soldiers and that was it, politics didn't even come into it. Anything at that stage, what we were doing. Our idea was to train and get to Malaya; we wanted to go to Malaya and to be a part of it.

05:30 Like I said before about the instructors, the way they spoke about it, we just wanted to be a part of it. Policies, treaty organisations or the politics of the thing didn't even enter into it. We just wanted to be a part of the Royal Australian Regiment, we wanted to be part of the battalion in Malaya as mates in the platoon.

Did you receive any briefings at all about what the purpose of the

06:00 Malayan campaign was?

Very little about it, we were over there as a part of SEATO [South East Asian Treaty Organisation] or ANZUS [security treaty between Australia, New Zealand and United States] but that was about it, nothing in depth. To really sit down and have a lecture and think 'That's the reason why we are over here', it was something else, nothing really in depth, to make you change your mind that 'Maybe I shouldn't go there',

06:30 more of a reason that I am going, nothing like that.

What were they briefing you on, what exactly were you going to do when you got there?

We would be doing exercises; we would be mixing with the local people. We got more about the way of our behaviour with the local people. We are Australians and we are representing Australia and our country and they would judge Australia by our conduct.

07:00 We would go over there and there would be a Kiwi [New Zealand] and British battalion with us, and that's about it, that was virtually what we got. We would go over there and do exercises in Malaya and we may go up into the Thai border and if need be we would go to Borneo.

What kind of things were they warning you against doing?

07:30 Our conduct, the things that culturally we might be different, the way we treat the different type of religious people, the way that you talk to people, your hand gestures. Things that we do might mean different things in Asia,

08:00 like patting people on the head and this type of thing. To treat them with respect, we would see things that we normally wouldn't see in Australia, that's the way that those people do things; you have got to accept that they are different from us. Not so much Malaya and Borneo but particularly in Vietnam there were some incidents in Vietnam

08:30 that I will talk about later on that showed the differences in culture, which I still can't come to grips with today what I saw. That was virtually what we were told, that we were representing Australia and we conduct ourselves exactly the same way that they'd expect us to do, and that we were visitors and we don't own the country.

Tell us about your journey over there?

09:00 We flew over by Qantas into Singapore and then we were flown up by light aircraft up to Malacca. Went into the camp, got introduced and got about seven days orientation, again all our uniforms were different over there because you used to wear shorts,

09:30 puttees [leggings], long socks. Our boots were different, we used to wear British jungle boots over there, green canvas type boot that came up to about there but it was all green and they were made of canvas. Different things that we could and couldn't do, the curfew, there was an acclimatization period because we left from Adelaide

10:00 we needed it because it was cold in Adelaide and we had to go up to Malacca so we had an acclimatization period. They showed us different areas around the camp. The camp at Malacca was like a little village, we had our own picture theatre, swimming pool, and all the married quarters were there. If you were a single guy you weren't allowed in the married quarters at all even after hours. If we needed to go

10:30 to the married quarters to visit a friend's place you had to have a letter of authorization from those people and also an officer to allow us to go into a married quarters. It was just the first few days that was orientation and briefing and what we could and couldn't do. In the camps there the locals used to look after the messes. In Australia

11:00 we had mess duties to do, the dixies [dishes], to peel the spuds we used to have duty companies. Every couple of months we'd do a week of mess and guard duties. The only thing in Malaya that was different but we still did all the guard duties, was all the mess duties things like that, they were done by the locals, all our washing was done by the locals.

What was the feeling amongst the men

11:30 having finished training and being sent over?

Great, the spirit was really good. It was called the 4th Battalion then, what I would consider one of the most professional battalions to serve with, they had no national service in then and I'm not saying anything about national service. When 4RAR [4th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment] first formed there were only three battalions and then they decided to form the 4th Battalion.

12:00 They took most of the experienced soldiers from 1st, 2nd and 3rd to form the 4th Battalion, most of the NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] were ex 1RAR [1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment], they had all been to Malaya before. I can remember all our section commanders in our company, they all wore

the ribbon from being previously in the emergency, so they were very experienced. The commanders in the battalion were very experienced,

- 12:30 very professional the COs [Commanding Officers]. Every thing that you did, they gave you a reason why you were doing it, it was a very professional unit and we were ready to go. We wanted to go and they were going to send us, we wanted to get in and say "This is the 4th Battalion and we are the best."

What were your first impressions of what you saw, smelt and heard when you arrived in Malaya?

- 13:00 To see the local kampongs [village compounds], we'd be driving through the kampongs again you'd see all different things, the vehicles with pigs in the back and buses with pigs on the top of them and chickens in the back. The smell, once you have smelt an Asian country they all smell the same. It's a mixture of cooking, the smell of cooking and the
- 13:30 rice paddies, that type of thing. It has got a smell of its own. Everything was a bustling type place, everyone was in a hurry, you'd go through a kampong you'd see water buffalos and cars all mixing, people blowing their horns. No one seemed to worry about us too much, their life just went on. We used to do nine milers
- 14:00 and actually go through camp and through kampongs and we'd all have our weapons and full of sweat but the locals would continue on as if we weren't there. It was a magic feeling to be over there, wanting to get in and mix with the people, find out as much as you can about the local people and what they did. This is not only at the kampongs, I was single

- 14:30 and there was the bar girls and this type of thing so life was a bit of a breeze.

What were these bars like?

Just outside of the camp area we used to have the main gate and the Malaysian police used to do all the security on the main gate. Then about two kilometres down from the main gate there was another gate and that's where all the bars used to be. There used to be the Sydney Bar, Sheraton Bar,

- 15:00 the Cyrano's I think it was, they were the main bars. You had the British and the New Zealanders there, the Kiwis would take over one bar, the British would take over another and the Australians would have another bar and of course if you go into one another there'd be fights and things like that. There were fights but that's just natural, that's just part of life. The girls were very nice, very well educated
- 15:30 and a lot of them were only bar girls to help their families. We used to have good times in the bars particular after we came back from Borneo because we had been to Borneo and had had a fairly sort of rugged sort of a time. We spent nearly all our spare time in the bars. As I said we were single and we didn't really worry about saving money. There were guys that didn't even leave town the whole time they were over there because they just stayed in camp
- 16:00 and went to the movies, they had the pub there. They saved their money, they came back and brought houses, we came back and probably bought a push bike, not all the guys were like me. We had a great time, we'd go to the bars and the girls would look after us, they are very honest, there was no taking of your money. In those days we used to drink by bottles, say
- 16:30 there were six of us, one would buy the bottle of Bacardi and then we'd share it and if you left the bar that night and you still had half a bottle of Bacardi left, the girls used to mark the bottle of Bacardi and you'd sign it and they'd put it behind the bar. Three weeks later you could go down there and say to the girls down there, "It's Barry, can I grab my bottle of Bacardi?" and the guys would sit down with you and it was good. They would feed us,
- 17:00 a couple of the guys married a couple of the girls in the bars and they still live here in Brisbane and they are great. The girls, after a while they started looking after you. Especially if you were drinking and you weren't eating they'd say "Make sure you have something to eat!" and this type of thing. They were very nice people.

Were you close to any bar girls in particular?

I took one girl out and her name was Shirley and we had a relationship, no different

- 17:30 to a relationship that you would have in Australia, we used to go to the movies. I used to go to the Buddhist temple, I'm not a Buddhist but she was a Buddhist and she'd take me to the temple and burn the sticks. I'd go around to her family's place and we'd go down to the market and buy the veggies and they'd cook it all up. It was a pretty good friendship.
- 18:00 **Being close to a local girl what were you learning about the local culture through her?**
- It was fantastic, like I said we went to the Buddhist temples. Her family, she was Chinese but the Chinese family are so close-knit. Things that I couldn't understand was if you went for a meal all the elders would eat first
- 18:30 when they finished then the next lot would eat and then the kiddies, it wasn't that everyone sat

together. Whether it was a Chinese tradition I'm not too sure but that struck me as different. The prices, if I wanted to buy a shirt then Shirley would go and buy the shirt because she would get it at her price. In Malaya and most Asian countries they have three prices, Australian,

19:00 American and British prices. If I put on my Pommy accent I'd get a shirt cheaper than if I was an Australian, and the Americans would pay the higher prices. In Malaya there were three prices the Australian, the Kiwis and the British and the locals knew where you came from and who had the most money. The Australians were the highest paid followed by the Kiwis and then the British.

19:30 If I needed a shirt Shirley would go and buy them for me. Same with gold bracelets, if we wanted to buy a gold bracelet to send home or take to someone in Australia we'd get one of the girls to go and purchase it for us. The price would just skyrocket. They are very heavily into gold in Malaya and by getting one of the girls to do it you knew that it was exactly gold. Whereas if one of the guys would go and

20:00 buy something other than gold.

How did you fit in with her family and her friends?

Initially very standoffish. Having European I think it was a bit strange, but I think we sort of grew on each other and they could see that I wasn't any threat to her; it was a friendship that we had and that was it.

20:30 I'm not sure whether the Chinese could understand the military as well as the Malays. To be quite honest the Malays are a very lazy race, the Chinese and the Indians are the ones that really run Malaya. But as I said

21:00 they came to accept the relationship with no problems.

What happened with you and Shirley?

Towards the end when Vietnam came up and I was still single they called for volunteers but it was 'You guys are single' 'You guys are married' and 'You guys are going to Vietnam'. We spoke about it and she understood the situation

21:30 it wasn't a good time but I had to make a decision in my life at that stage whether to continue with the friendship and get married. It was very hard to marry one of the local girls, we had one guy that did it but what they had to go through was horrendous. Some of the guys, the way that they were treated with the friendships

22:00 with the locals. As I said because Vietnam came up the choice was made for me and at that stage I considered myself to be a professional soldier so the decision was already made that I was going to go to Vietnam.

Just out of curiosity what would you have to go through to marry a girl?

The girl's family would go through all sorts of security checks, very stringent and they wouldn't just be done by Australian authorities

22:30 they would be done by the Malaysian authorities too. If you know anything about Asian authorities I think they are very thorough in what they do. Whether you were willing enough to put the girl through that and or the family again would have to be a decision that you would have to make and certainly for the family. The family may not want to go through that the prying completely into

23:00 their background and imagine if they had any sniff of communism or anything within the family it could change the whole situation. I had one of my friends who I served with over there, he married one of the girls and he was single at that stage but he stayed with the battalion. He did, he went through it and I've spoken to him on numerous occasions about it but he did, he went through a fair bit.

23:30 It worked out ok but it could have gone either way.

Before you went to Borneo what kind of tasks and operations were you doing?

Before we went to Borneo and because the Borneo situation was on, 3RAR [3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment] had already been over, we did beach patrols because the Indonesians from the previous 3RAR had actually landed in Malaya

24:00 and 3RAR got called out and they captured them in the swamps. We had to do beach patrols; this was the first time for the guys to actually carry live ammunition. They did beach patrols around Terendak itself. We did patrol exercises within the area, we were on standby platoons, that meant that we couldn't leave camp at all.

24:30 All our gear was packed on trucks, we used to have two trucks parked on each side of the company with all our gear ready to go anywhere, close to the camp if need be if we were called out. To give you a funny example with the beach patrols, because they had live ammunition one of the Scot guards got a bit full [drunk] one night and ended up down on the beach and he refused to leave the beach and one of

the Australian guys had to fire a shot over his head and they reckoned that was the

- 25:00 first shot fired by the 4th Battalion in action in Malaya. The CO actually got the cartridge that came out of the gun and had it mounted on a board and put it in his office. Just readiness, general fitness, keeping our gear up to scratch. They would call us out at say three o'clock in the morning and say, "Grab all your gear." they'd put us
- 25:30 out on parade and make sure you are ready to go, all this type of thing. Our armouries, where they used to keep all our weapons, at that stage what they used to do was they were frightened that people were going to break into the armouries because all the weapons were in there. They used to have what was called 'Armed Cote Duty', and two of you used to get locked in the arms cote of a night time, and you would be actually locked in there with all the weapons. The only way that anyone could get in was to put their ID [identification] card
- 26:00 under the door and then we'd open the door. All the weapons in there had a chain through, like with the pistol grips, every weapon there had a chain through it, but that was one of the tasks during the confrontation while we were in there, a couple of us would be locked in the arms cote of a night-time with all the weapons. The security of the place was very tight,
- 26:30 they'd have beach patrols and they'd also have armed patrols around the garrison the whole time. We were a bit spoilt we used to play sport, that was the way for the CO and the OC [Officer Commanding] keeping us fit. Rugby league, union, we played a lot of volleyball just to keep us fit and active, to get out in the sun.
- 27:00 We did a lot of swimming but all the activities was to just keep us focused on what we were going to do in the future in Borneo.

What were they telling you about the confrontation?

We were starting to get to know a bit more about the confrontation with the Indonesians, we knew about the Indonesians landing just outside Malacca. We knew 3RAR had been in Borneo and they had had contacts

- 27:30 with the Indonesians, some big contacts with Indonesians. We knew the Indonesians were coming across the border, and we also knew there would be a requirement for us to go across to their border, although it was totally illegal. This has only just come to light because it's the thirty year period so we can talk about it. We certainly went across the border and we were told there would be a requirement for us to go across the border,
- 28:00 you had a choice. We had a couple of guys from 3RAR who joined because they hadn't completed their two year service in Malaya, you had to do two years so they had already joined 3RAR and they still had twelve months to go. They went back up and there were a couple of those guys that didn't actually go across the border.

Tell us about going to Borneo

- 28:30 **and what you first saw?**

We left a place called Port Dickson on [HMS] Sir Lancelot, Sir Lancelot was one of the ships that was in the Argentinean confrontation and I'm not sure if it was the Sir Lancelot or the other one but one of them got sunk in Argentina in the Falklands war. We went over on the Sir Lancelot and it took us about four or five days

- 29:00 and it was roughly around Anzac Day but I can't remember if we landed on Anzac Day or whether we were on the Sir Lancelot on Anzac Day. We got onto the Sir Lancelot and we got to a place called Kuching and we disembarked to Kuching and we were taken from there to our areas of operation. The area of operation, we went to a place called Mukah first
- 29:30 I think there were five: Mukah, Sembulan, Stass[?], Gombang and Bau. Bau was the main headquarters, there was a big lake there but that's where the Australian battalion headquarters was. In the other places like Stass, Gombang and Mukah they were company positions, they were all underground positions so we lived in bunkers underground.
- 30:00 Stass was fairly close to the border, Mukah was fairly close to the border, Gombang was right on the top of a hill, a real pointy hill and there was just enough room for the camp on the top of it. Bau was the headquarters of the Australian battalion, it used to have an old tin mine there with a huge lake and the companies used to rotate through those areas.

- 30:30 **About how many people could be situated in one of these camps?**

Company plus, at Stass two companies could be in there so you would be looking at over two hundred people, probably close to three hundred with the guns because you had your artillery support. Mukah was only a company position but we had a platoon of Ghurkhas [Nepalese soldiers serving in the British Army] with us

- 31:00 part of the time, you were probably looking at about one hundred and fifty. You had a helicopter pad

there completely surrounded by wire closed in. You had observation towers but you actually slept underground but your eating areas were above ground, for meals you were actually above ground. Outside Mukah there was a kampong and they used to do our washing for us.

- 31:30 But at Mukah we used to get re-supplied by air, by parachute. That was pretty hilarious because the girls were outside doing our washing one day and they had a couple of what they called candlesticks, the parachutes don't open and all the stuff, all food, meat and drink went straight through the tent, where all the girls were doing the washing. No one was hurt but you could see the funny side of it.
- 32:00 All the parachutes were silk, they were all different colours and the local tailors could make us up pyjama suits in silk, or hammocks and whenever we could, we'd say that the parachutes were damaged, because if they were damaged they'd write them off. So if they weren't damaged we'd pack them up and send them back. Conveniently they were damaged, so we'd get the local tailors to make up these hammocks for us.
- 32:30 It was a black parachute, like a tracksuit, but we used to put them on of a night time after we had our showers instead of having greens on we'd put this thing that was like a tracksuit.

What was the surrounding environment like in these camps?

It was clear; we cleared it out to about two to three hundred meters. From then on

- 33:00 it was thick jungle, very, very thick. You had your kampongs with your local Ibans and Dyaks [indigenous peoples] in the kampongs, it was pretty thick jungle. When you moved up onto the border there were two ways of getting to the border you could walk up or we'd get choppered over. Most times we'd walk up to the border and once we got up to the border it became very thick up there but the border was actually a
- 33:30 mountain range. Once you got to the top of the border you were on our side but as soon as you stepped over the down slope you were on their side. They had helicopter pads up on the border. I think our battalion was the first battalion to introduce what they called an instant helipad and our engineers or pioneers would go up and put explosives on the trees and blow them, and that would blow the trees in
- 34:00 and the helicopters could come in on top and drop you off, so it was an instant helicopter pad.

How long of a walk was it up to the border?

It would be about eight hundred to one thousand meters. There were tracks going up to the border but it was up to us whether we used them or whether we went through the jungle it just depended on the situation.

- 34:03 We had two Iban scouts with us, they are the guys that have tattoos on their necks and they have tattoos all over their bodies. They were the original head-hunters from over there, they had tattoos on their ears. Some of them had teeth but their teeth were all gold. Where their teeth were they'd cut it and put a coloured stone where the hole was.
- 35:00 We had two with the platoon and they used to carry shotguns, they'd carry virtually no food at all, just a bit of rice. They'd find the food and they introduced us to all sorts of things, we weren't sure if we were eating fungus or mushrooms. They'd go off and come back with leaves or stuff off the bark of trees. Even with water, if we were short of water they used to find water.
- 35:30 The strange thing about them was we thought they had permanent malaria because we used to take tablets for malaria, they seemed to be born with it and that it was a permanent thing. Very, very nice people but again different, the difference between these people, the Ibans and the Dyaks. The Dyaks are the actual village people in the kampong and the way that they treated us
- 36:00 it was completely different to the way that the village people in Vietnam and the way that they treated us. The things that they used to do for us in Borneo, they'd give us fruit, they were always happy to see us, we used to give the kids chocolates and things like that. I remember one incident and we were going up to the border and they actually watched us go across this creek, it was only a small creek but
- 36:30 fairly deep so we had to get into the creek, you get all wet and get on the other side. Coming back they had actually built a bridge in the area that we walked over, that was the type of people that they were. A couple of the villages that we went into up onto the border and all the girls were bare breasted in the rivers washing but there weren't any smart remarks on our side,
- 37:00 they felt comfortable with us. We could sit down and have a brew [a cup of tea] and they would continue on with their work. I can remember one local village we went into the old head hunter there and they were telling us about their fingers, didn't have a couple of fingers, down to the tips. He explained to us that if you chopped off so many heads
- 37:30 then they'd take so many of your knuckle fingers off so anyone looking at your hand knew you had cut so many people's heads off, particularly with the Chinese and the Japanese during the Second World War. To prove a point he took us into his old hut and in the loft of the hut there were actual skulls there of Japanese, incredible. It was a real eye opener. These people again

- 38:00 were so good to us, you just had a feeling that you could trust them. If you were in the area and the Indonesians were coming in they wouldn't tell the Indonesians, they would be more inclined to tell us, and it proved so time and time again. If they did see the Indonesians then they'd come into the camps and let us know that the Indonesians had been spotted. They were very onside with us, a bit different from other areas
- 38:30 like in Vietnam.
- Why do you think this was?**
- I think probably in Borneo the war in Borneo hadn't been going on for so many years, and it wasn't a constant thing, it had only just sort of started. The fact that the Ibans and the Dyaks didn't trust the Indonesians,
- 39:00 they didn't have any time for the Indonesians and plus the way that the Indonesians used to treat them. They knew the British forces were there to help them, and they did, they gave them certain things. The British and the Australian engineers actually built roads into the area so they could get out of their area to go to other areas. They built different things
- 39:30 like water tanks. All their hearts and minds were spot on in Borneo, really spot on. The way that the Australians conducted themselves too in Borneo. I never ever saw anything that would suggest any other way, that everything was straight down the line, nothing said or done wrong to the village people at all.
- 40:00 As I said it wasn't a prolonged war, also the distrust that the Ibans and the Dyaks had for the Chinese people, they didn't like the Chinese people. After we left Borneo a few years later I believe that there was an uprising with the Dyaks and the Chinese people and it virtually ended up with the Dyaks going back to the old days with cutting heads off. I think in Vietnam where the difference was, the Vietnam War had
- 40:30 been going on for so long and the people, they had the French, the Americans they had us and I think always we didn't understand what they had gone through. We didn't understand, to us the war would be over in twelve months or two years, if you went back for a second tour. But the people in Vietnam it had been going on for years and they had seen it all before,
- 41:00 had seen troops before and we didn't know what they had gone through before, that was the difference. Maybe if we were told a bit more of what they had gone through and understood the complete history of the Vietnam War and particularly the villages, what the particular villages had gone through I think it might have been a bit different.

Tape 4

- 00:30 **In Borneo how were the patrols organised and made up, what was the makeup of them?**
- A typical Borneo patrol was a platoon sized patrol, compared like in Vietnam where you had company sized patrols, we never had company sized patrols in Borneo, it was platoon sized patrols,
- 01:00 like section sized patrols. The patrols went across the border on border operations and the border operations that we went across, we went across on three separate ones. Each platoon did one each. They were named after James Bond movies, 'Casino Royale', 'Gold Finger' and those sorts of things, but they were called Claret Operations by the British.
- 01:30 They were secret up until a few years ago because we weren't supposed to be across the border. When we did go across the border we went up to eighteen to one thousand meters across the border. We couldn't take letters across the border; we weren't allowed to wear our dog tags across the border. We were told that if we were captured at all then they would disown us because we were across the border.
- 02:00 If we were wounded across the border there would be no helicopter support then, you'd had to be carried back across the border. Company commanders didn't go across the border, they were the company sergeant majors, they didn't go across, and it was only platoon sized patrols that went across the border. These patrols, the border itself it was sort of a mountain range and as soon as you got on the top and went down the other side you knew that you were in enemy territory there.
- 02:30 It was always the thought that if you were going to get chased there was that last bit up the hill coming back. Again these patrols were very professional. You didn't know what you were going to expect across the border, we actually saw the Indonesians across the border. There was one incident where we actually saw them playing volleyball across the border.
- 03:00 It was the thought of something happening or somebody making a noise and being in contact but we didn't contact the Indonesians at all, we didn't fire on them. The time that we saw them the peace talks were going on, so we were just there as a recce [reconnaissance] patrol and getting information. All the signs were there of the Indonesians, the old camps, actual telegraph wires up

- 03:30 in the jungle trees, marks on trees. The Indonesians we saw were some of the biggest Indonesians I've ever seen in my life and they actually had a tiger's head on their uniforms. We stayed over the border for a few days and we either walked back to our bases or got picked up by helicopter and taken back. The border operations you were on edge the whole time because one,
- 04:00 you were somewhere where you shouldn't be. Two you knew if you were to get contacted there was a fair hike back, to get yourself back up at the border. To tell a good example and to give you a good idea of the Ghurkhas, when they were across the border one of the Ghurkha soldiers got a Victoria Cross, and the actual contact that he was actually in was across the border. I believe the report was changed to reflect that it was actually
- 04:30 on the friendly side of the border. That's no secret now that is in the history books, you can see the difference. The difference about Borneo you knew you had a border whereas in Vietnam there were no borders, you didn't know where you were supposed to be and where they were supposed to be. In Borneo it was quite clear that if they were on this side of the border they were in the wrong
- 05:00 and it was easy to have a fire fight. Again if you were on the other side of the border you knew you were in the wrong place too.

What was the feeling like knowing there wasn't the support when you were across the border?

I don't think it was the feeling that we were going to be let down by the government or the company commander

- 05:30 is not coming or something like that. It was again an adventure it was still, you were a young soldier and you were professional soldiers and we felt that we had each other. If we were going to get into problems and I'm sure that if the company commander thought that we were going to get into some big trouble then he'd have another platoon come across to give us a hand. We had artillery support but whether it could
- 06:00 reach us that was another point. I don't think there was ever a thought of 'Oh my God I'm not going across the border because you guys are going to leave us there'. I don't think it was like in the Second World War it was out of the trenches and away you went. Blind obedience or anything like that, we all realised it was a situation and it was a dangerous situation but we were trained well enough to overcome it. If we did get into problems then the
- 06:30 company commander would make sure and pull out all stops to get us back across the border.

Tell me about the way that your patrols were structured, how did you move through the jungle?

Because the jungle was so thick it was single file, you had forward scout, second scout and section commanders, you had machine gunners, rifle men you had ten guys in a section,

- 07:00 nine or ten it just depends whether you were all there or not, or whether someone was away crook. We had a platoon commander and you had a platoon sergeant. With your weapons you had M16s, automatic weapons you had SLRs, which was just normal rifles, you had machine guns. We didn't have the M16 in Borneo because it was supplied by the British, it was a general purpose machine gun, the same thing, it was
- 07:30 bolt fed, the same weight as a M16, you'd have one per section. You'd have a sig [signaller], you'd have claymore mines to put out, the medics used to carry morphine over there just in case you did get wounded. We used to get a rum ration over there believe it or not. It was an old British tradition, only at certain times you'd
- 08:00 get a nip to put into your cup of coffee at night, it wasn't a great big bottle just a little nip and it was a tradition because you'd get wet and cold and the rum was just enough to warm you up before you got into your tent. Apparently it was a tradition and the Australians used to get it. The Ghurkhas used to particularly like their rum and they really enjoyed it.

08:30 How would you communicate during these patrols?

All with hand signals, very rarely talked it was all done by hand signals, that was the enemy sign, friendly sign, the different things we were going to do was all done by hand signals. The communication back to the base was done by radios back to the base camps.

- 09:00 There was a thing that you could never get over in the jungle is talking in whispers and we even found particularly in Vietnam you'd go back to base camp and they'd still be talking in whispers. If you were out fourteen or thirty days or whatever it was only a whisper, you'd talk in a whisper, there was no loud talking. Certainly in Borneo it was all done by whisper or hand signals.

What was this experience like on your first

09:30 patrol over the border?

Fear of not knowing exactly how you would react to who you were going to see. Not fear that you didn't want to do it, fear that you didn't know what was going to happen, we were quite prepared to do it. You

had adrenaline running through you and that was the thing that kept you going.

10:00 I'd say excitement and still an adventure, nothing to do with saving anyone or the Queen and Country, it was just the adventure of getting in there and being a part of a platoon, being a part of the best battalion in the regiment, being in the infantry. This is what we trained for, we didn't train to paint rocks and do gardens around like you do in Australia, peel spuds [potatoes] in the mess.

10:30 You were actually here doing what those instructors told us they did and being a part of it and it was good. It was tense but it wasn't so tense that you weren't focused; it made you more focused on what you were doing.

Tell me about the times when you actually saw the Indonesians?

They were in a camp and we were up on an embankment and we were sort of looking over the embankment

11:00 and they were just down there playing volleyball and they had their weapons up against the posts, the heart was going there. Again it wasn't fear, if they had spotted us it would have been on but thinking to yourself 'How is this going to pan out?', 'Are we going to contact them?' or 'Are we just going to go away?' The whole time you sort of was thinking. The whole time that you are looking down on something

11:30 you are not quite sure what is behind you, you put your sentries around, not everyone is looking the same way, still that feeling is 'I wonder if someone walks that way into us?' It was again excitement and in the back of your mind you were thinking 'I've seen them' 'I know what they are like' 'I know that that is them'. I think it would have broken everyone's heart even in Vietnam and I have known guys,

12:00 they went through situations in Vietnam that never fired a shot in anger, and it would have been the same in Borneo, guys never got the chance to see them, we didn't fire a shot in anger in Borneo. The fact that we actually saw them then all that training was worthwhile, we actually saw them and they were there, and it was good.

What were your impressions of the Indonesians

12:30 **and what they were doing?**

Again we didn't really understand a great deal about it, they were there, we didn't think it was right, especially after we had met the Ibans and Dyaks, the village people they were so nice. The thought of the Indonesians coming across and start giving them a hard time, that sort of got up our noses a bit.

13:00 You tended to feel that you were achieving a lot more over there than over in Vietnam. We were there, we stopped them, they lost, they had to go, they had finished and it was over and we did have a win. The people of Borneo had a win and the people of Malaysia had a win. Everything we did we achieved everything we went there for. When we left we felt that we had achieved it, even though the peace talks

13:30 were still going on but we achieved what we went there for. To keep the Indonesians on their side of the border and stopped them from infiltrating amongst the local people and trying to put their way of life onto the village people.

You mentioned earlier that it was part of SEATO, what was your interaction

14:00 **like with other members like the Gurkhas?**

The Gurkhas were great and we had a platoon of them with us and they went out on patrol. They were different soldiers, very professional soldiers and they are close to what we call the 'blind obedience', like the British platoon commanders. I think

14:30 they would have followed that guy to the death and that sort of thing. Virtually a Gurkha soldier is a mercenary, people don't like to talk about mercenaries but they were paid for by the British army to be in Nepal, the Indian government, they virtually belonged to the Indian government those troops. Virtually they are mercenaries but excellent soldiers.

15:00 Again having said that they had their discipline problems. There was a situation where a young Gurkha soldier had too much to drink and actually tied him to his bed that night, I'm not sure what happened but the next day he was choppered out. Having said that a lot of people say that the Gurkha is a great soldier, they are professionals but they are no different from any other army or any other unit

15:30 they do have their disciplinary problems. They are excellent soldiers and they used to love their rum. If you wanted an ally to be on your side it would be the Gurkhas.

How about any other members?

We had the Kiwis and the British with us. We didn't see too much of the Kiwis or the British

16:00 in Borneo, we had a Kiwi field battery with us, the artillery. We saw a bit of the British, we saw the British SAS and they are all marines because the SAS used to come into our camps they wouldn't stay long but they'd come in with information about patrols and we'd react to their information. Again we

wouldn't see a great deal of them actually in Borneo, we saw more of them in low keyed

16:30 exercises back in Malaysia, and also socially with sport and things like that. But we certainly didn't have a great deal to do with them in actual operations.

What was your relationship like with the British troops, given your British background?

Probably no different, I think they still considered me as an Australian.

17:00 My brother was over there the same time and he was in the Royal Green Jackets and he was up at Penang. This is getting off Borneo but I went up to Penang and spent a few days with him in Penang and we got caught in a brothel in Penang by the British military police. Because I was an Australian they said, "We have no jurisdiction over you, you can go but this guy."

17:30 I said "But he's my brother", they said, "No, but you are Australian he's British." and they took him away and he was charged with being out of bounds. I think they considered me as an Australian they didn't even know that I was brought up in England. I did a Malay language course in Singapore and I was the only Australian on it and the rest were British but they still considered me Australian they didn't say "You are one of us" or anything like that.

18:00 Tell me what it was like seeing your brother in Penang?

It was unbelievable but again it was slightly different in the Australian Army, you had your different rank but it wasn't so regimented as it was in the British Army. Like if you are a lance corporal in the Australian Army you could still call him Barry or Bob or whatever but in the British Army you can't do that. I couldn't believe it when I went up to Penang and I went through their

18:30 barrack area and I went to the guard house and my brother was a corporal and I said, "Is Corporal Seeley here?." they said, "Yes, what's your name?." I said, "Private Seeley." and they said, "Right we'll call Corporal Seeley down." They brought him down and there was a private on sentry there and he stood to attention to my brother, completely different to the Australian Army. You don't stand to attention to the corporals in the Australian Army, but in the British Army you do.

19:00 Having said all that it was great and it was completely different and seeing each other. Me being Australian and getting more money than my brother I wouldn't let that go astray, we weren't doing the same job and I was getting more money in the Australian Army. It had been the first time I had seen him since I had left England, it was a good three or four days.

19:30 Did you make any comparisons between the two of you about the differences?

Yes, he couldn't understand, he didn't really see it until a couple of months later he then came down to Malacca because he hadn't had a great deal to do with Australians. To see the regimented side of the British Army it's completely different and when he came down to Malacca and saw the way that we reacted. The corporals

20:00 were actually drinking beer with the diggers and this type of thing, it would never happen in the British army, they'd have their own messes. The corporals in the British Army have their own messes, and then he came down and saw the Australians and all the mateship and this type of thing he couldn't get over it. I think he was a bit disgusted sometimes with some of the antics but no, he reckoned it was great.

Is there anything about the Australian

20:30 troops that other countries really respect or admire?

I think what the other countries respect about the Australians is an Australian calls a spade a spade and he would tell you as he sees it. If he sees that something is wrong, say a platoon commander, say I was a platoon sergeant and my platoon commander made a decision that I didn't agree with

21:00 I would say to him "Don't do that, I don't think that is right, I don't think it's proven that we do it that way." I think in the British Army, I don't think they do it that way in any of the other armies. If a platoon commander makes a decision because he is seen to be educated and he's done all the right things in life, then he makes the decision. Whereas in the Australian Army it's not that way and particularly in Vietnam I think a lot of the platoon commanders

21:30 took a lot of advice from the senior NCOs and I think other armies could see that and got a lot of respect for the Australian soldiers for that. The willingness of the Australian soldier to do anything and to look after each other. Particularly looking after each other in all sorts of areas, not just in combat areas but socially, after hours, looking

22:00 after each other's back and this type of thing. Sticking up for each other, sticking up for each other's rights, very evident in the Australian Army compared to other armies in the world. I think that's why we didn't have and particularly in Vietnam where a lot of the American forces had a lot of problems with officers getting shot, grenades thrown at them and this type of thing. I think with the Australian Army

22:30 the soldiers could say what they wanted to say either to NCOs or officers without being disrespectful but getting their point across. Not just saying "You are going on patrol." but tell them why they are

going on patrol, "Why are we going to that village?" not saying "You are going to that village." the more that you can tell the soldier or the platoon commander. Particularly on our second trip where we were all

- 23:00 experienced and most of the platoon commanders were just straight out of training, their first trip overseas they needed to have someone that they could sit down with and say "Am I doing the right thing?" instead of them saying "We are going to do it this way."

I've heard stories before about the Australian uniform that other nationalities....?

The hat, you could never leave your slouch hat anywhere.

- 23:30 In fact I lost one in Singapore, I was over there on exercise and I went into a mess and I made this silly mistake of leaving my hat outside which you have got to do, you can do it in Australia and leave your hats there. Not realizing that I was in a British mess and of course after I had a couple of drinks my slouch hat was gone. The slouch hat, the bush hat, the floppy bush hat we used to wear in Vietnam because we never used to wear steel helmets. The Americans used to wear steel helmets

- 24:00 and they used to like our bush hats.

Why did they like the slouch hat?

I think it's tradition with the Australians with the slouch hat and particularly with the Americans everything Australian, as soon as you talk about Australians you talk about kangaroos and the slouch hats. You could get a couple of pairs of American

- 24:30 boots for a slouch hat, you used to swap gear, it was unbelievable, they used to like anything typically Australian. I think you could of made a fortune, if you had of taken one hundred slouch hats over to Vietnam I recon you could of made a million dollars I'm sure.

Just going back to Borneo a little bit, tell me about the time frame that you were there for?

- 25:00 Four months. We went there in April and came back in August. In that four months it was solid a four months, it was solid patrolling. We did have a period of two days and they found an island somewhere I forget the name of the island but they took us there on little boats just for a couple of days rest. Where we could let our hair down and get completely blotto [drunk] and go to sleep on the sand.
- 25:30 We cooked our own food on barbecues; it was just an old tin shed on an island. I think the British RAF used to have the island and then they went back and our guys the administration people found out about it and said that they needed to give their guys an area to go and let their hair down for just one night. We went down there just for the night and the next day. At a place called Baja [?]
- 26:00 that's where the headquarters were and there was a lager there and if you were there you were the support company and when the other companies got into trouble. We could go swimming there and they had a pontoon and we could jump off and all that sort of thing.

During that four months what were the tension levels like?

The tension was high,

- 26:30 you just didn't know where you were going to get called out, you couldn't say "We are definitely going to be here tonight." or "Tomorrow we will definitely be at that location" you just didn't know if you were going to get called out to go back up to the border. They used to come in and show us movies, they used to have the old projector and show us movies in the camp. In fact it was funny they used to invite the Ibans and the Dyaks in to show them movies
- 27:00 and Tom Jones was on, I can always remember this movie was on. They didn't have a clue, but every time we laughed they'd laugh, I'm not try to belittle them or anything but it was fantastic and the movie Tom Jones it was hilarious, a bit bawdy. Every time we laughed the Ibans and the Dyaks would laugh.

What other sort of things would they do to

- 27:30 **entertain you or help you to relax a bit?**

That was about it. We spent about four months and that's not a great deal of time to spend in the camp, it was just back and re-supply and go back out again on patrol. If we were we in we'd be lucky to be in for the movie and then back out again. That actual four months is very solid with patrols.

Tell me about ways that this patrolling and being

- 28:00 **in action changed your relationship with the other men in your platoon?**

You get a lot closer to the other guys because you know that you are watching out for each other's backs all the time. Just the simple thing of actually stopping for a smoke stop, if the guys are told that he's the sentry it would be deadly serious.

- 28:30 When you are on exercise in Australia and you're put on sentry you know that nobody is going to hurt you it doesn't matter what training you do there is nothing that can hurt you in Australia, but over there

you realise that that guy is your ears and eyes when you are at rest. The respect we had for each other knowing full well that we were going to do the right thing by each other. We kept our weapons clean to make sure that if we did get into a situation they did work. We carried the right amount of ammunition.

- 29:00 You carried the right amount of medical supplies to look after each other. Everything revolved around the team effort that we were going to look after each other, we couldn't do it by ourselves. It was an on going thing, the commitment to each other never ever wavered, it never ever stopped, even back at camp in a relaxed type of atmosphere, there was even commitment there that if something could happen
- 29:30 in our base camps, anything could have happened. The Indonesians could have gotten a bigger force we don't know, but our commitment to each other never wavered. Even when we went back to Malaya and I think we then became the band of brothers.

What sort of jungle diseases or illnesses were you exposed to?

- 30:00 With water there's leptospirosis if you didn't filter your water and make sure that it was boiled, that's from the rivers and creeks. You had malaria; we used to take tablets against malaria. You got rashes, bad tinea, a lot of people used to get really bad tinea because your feet were constantly wet.
- 30:30 The boots we used to have over there were green canvas ones, they were very comfortable and a bit like a pair of running shoes. They were actually laced up to there, but they were wet the whole time. Even if you weren't walking across creeks the fact that condensation with your socks and everything so your feet were constantly wet. You had to watch out for
- 31:00 tinea and any body rashes. You had the snakes and spiders, we had big scorpions. It never used to worry me too much until the night time when you actually went to bed and you could hear something in the night and you started to think. Particularly when you had your mosquito nets up, if there was a spider on your
- 31:30 mosquito net you didn't know if it was on the inside or the outside of the net, not know whether to jump up and hit your net and knock it off. As I said you grew up with those things so they didn't particularly worry us at all. We had monkeys and they were really noisy and they were a dead giveaway because as soon as they would see us they would start
- 32:00 and of course everyone would know we were there so they were a bit of a nuisance the monkeys. They said there were elephants in Borneo and an SAS guy got killed by an elephant, in fact he got charged. I never saw an elephant in Borneo but they said there were elephants in Vietnam but I never saw one. I have seen actual photos, guys have actually taken photos of them but I never had a chance to see them. Apparently the guy was on the border there
- 32:30 and he got charged by an elephant and he got either stomped on or gored.

Are there tigers?

Yes there are tigers, never saw a tiger but one walked through our camp of a night time. The reason being a tiger smells of urine, a real strong smell of urine and as soon as you smell that smell

- 33:00 you know that the tigers are in the area. This particular night we were all camped up on the border again I never saw it but one of the guys reckoned he saw one but he just laid there and he just went straight through. The smell, the smell was definitely there.

Just going back a bit to where you saw the Indonesians can you describe for me in a bit more detail about what their camp was like?

Just the same as our camp that we had,

- 33:30 it's sort of a bamboo type wooden construction. Nothing fancy, when we talk about a camp the same in Vietnam or any jungle warfare type thing it's not a camp where you talk about brick buildings, it's all built from timber or vegetation, very rough
- 34:00 bunkers built, holes in the ground with overhead cover, camouflaged. For some reason when the Asians do build camps it doesn't matter if it's in Vietnam, Borneo or Malaya they all seem to have the same sort of pattern.

What was it like seeing the enemy just relaxed and playing volleyball?

- 34:30 It was strange to see them relaxed and knowing full well that we shouldn't be there so that's why they were so relaxed; they were on their side of the border. It would have been the same if we were in our camp and we were playing volleyball and say that they had snuck up to us they would have said the same thing 'We shouldn't be here'. The reason why those guys were relaxed was because they were on their side of the border. They were completely at ease but we weren't, for obvious reasons.
- 35:00 They had no reason to fear us at all because we shouldn't have been there.

Did it change your opinion in any way seeing them relaxed and a bit human?

What was going through my mind was that these guys were fairly big and we are going to have a long way to run if something happened, that was more what I thought. These guys are fit and I thought if they do chase us

35:30 they are not going to stop. Particularly if we are on their side of the border they would probably know it a lot better than what we did, we went down a track but they might have known other areas where they could of come from, because it was their territory. It's like being an animal and walking into another animal's territory and they know it.

36:00 As I said they were very relaxed but we weren't for obvious reasons.

How long did you stay there?

We were there just over an hour.

How did you get away quietly?

We just slowly moved. On the embankment like that and looking over the platoon commander made the decision that we would move. We didn't all just get up together the forward elements

36:30 would go back first and then go back through each other and then get onto the track and then the road runner and then go.

When did you start to relax?

Not until I was on the other side of the border. Once you got to the other side of the border you thought 'Thank God for that'. That's when you are relaxed even though it's over you are not completely relaxed but you sort of have a bit of a giggle to yourself and a bit of talk

37:00 to the others "Did you see them?" that type of thing. Life still wasn't serious but it was good.

Did you ever suspect that maybe the Indonesians come across?

Yes they did, they came across to our side of the border all the time. The problem they had was the Iban and the Dyaks the village people would dob [inform on] them in as soon as they saw them they'd go

37:30 straight in and let someone know they had crossed the border. The way that the Indonesians used to communicate they'd actually carry radios, it was just normal radios like radios that you listen to music, they would communicate to each other on the radio. One of the DJs and Indonesian would come up in code and say "So and so." instead of a record,

38:00 they'd say some code to say that the Australians were there or whatever, that's the way that they would communicate, to tell them exactly where the Australians were. There were contacts but my company didn't have any contacts. Charlie Company had a contact and they lost a couple of the guys up on the border, they had a couple of guys wounded but they got

38:30 a few of the Indonesians. We lost another guy over there he went out on sentry, I'm not sure he went out on sentry but he went in front of the machine gun. While he was over there the sentry changed and he didn't know he was over there and he walked back in and the guy that got shot was slightly deaf, the guy behind him challenged him but he didn't hear it

39:00 and naturally once you are challenged and you don't stop then they open fire and they killed him straight through the heart. That was in another company not in my particular company. Certainly other companies had contacts with the Indonesians on our side of the border.

How was the information that you collected say

39:30 **by watching the camp, how was the used?**

That was all coded and sent back and then in Kuching where the headquarters were the SAS used to have their headquarters in Kuching they had a hotel there and the SAS used to go on a lot of our information and they'd go back again and check it out. It would be put into the big picture to see exactly who was coming.

40:00 Especially if they could see the tigers, they would be able to identify that regiment by that badge, which battalion it was or what unit it was. They were across the border but before they might have been still in Indonesia that regiment.

Tape 5

00:30 **You have talked a lot about the Dyaks and the Ibans what did they look like?**

The Dyaks were the actual village people and the Ibans, they weren't the village people, they were the coastal people. The Ibans they were the guys that had tattoos

- 01:00 all over themselves and it was a part of their manhood to have a tattoo on the neck here when they reached manhood, that was when they got the tattoo. I actually saw one done, two of our guys actually got tattoos done on their back, it was illegal if they had of been caught but they did it one night. What they did was they got a piece of bamboo with a bit of wire and they then just mix boot polish or anything like that and mix it up to a colour.
- 01:30 Then they lay the person down, in this case on their neck ,they'd lay the young boy down backwards and they would put the bit of wire over there with the bamboo and they'd just keep tapping the bamboo and it keeps going around the throat. It looks like a leopard laying down that's what the tattoo looks like, but I don't think it is. They have them on there, all the way up their legs and all the way across their backs.
- 02:00 They mean different things in the local villages. The people themselves were fantastic people, very, very warm hearted people and they would give you anything, would look after you. They'd give you all the information that you required, they would tell you everything, if the Indonesians had been anywhere near you at all they would tell you. Their houses were up on stilts
- 02:30 because of the wet weather. Between houses they had just little planks, if we walked across the plank the plank would break, and you'd fall off it but they would just go across it and they were called long houses and the whole family would live in the long house. There were no separate rooms, it was just one long hut and the whole family would live in it, with the animals and everything.
- 03:00 They'd do all their cooking and everything up there. They made their own rice wine and they gave us a couple of sips of it, not a good thing to be drinking all the time, but an interesting brew.

You mentioned that a couple might work in your patrols?

Yes.

Who would do that?

They were the Ibans, they were paid by the British government and they became what we called border scouts, and they

- 03:30 had shotguns. They would just virtually be our ears and eyes, they'd look out for signs of Indonesians, they would talk to the local village people. They'd find out all the movements, they virtually gathered all the information for us. They were very honest and they'd never ever take anything, they would ask you for something but they would never take anything off you at all.
- 04:00 They were always willing to share their food, if they cooked up something and we weren't sure what it was, we never knew quite what we were eating they would share their food with us. Again it was all to do with hearts and minds on both sides, the Australians, Dyaks and the Ibans.

You told us before how you came to be

- 04:30 **volunteered for Vietnam, what were you hearing about Vietnam in Malaysia?**

At this stage it was the buzz, Vietnam was the buzz. 1RAR we were over there, we were hearing a lot about it because everyone was talking about Vietnam. The 1st Battalion had been committed, but not only that in Malaya the first people that were killed in Vietnam were actually buried in Malaya.

- 05:00 Because we were the Australian battalion there we used to be the burial parties, as well as doing all the patrols we'd provide burial parties. It started to come home to us about Vietnam because a lot of the people that we buried we actually knew. I don't know if you have ever been to a military funeral, they pay the Last Post and you fire your weapons up in the air, it is very sad.
- 05:30 Funerals are sad at the best of times but a military one is very different from a civilian type funeral. It certainly brought Vietnam home to us, a bit of a clout because we were actually burying some friends that actually got killed in Vietnam. It definitely was the buzz, it was again another adventure, we had been to Borneo and we were fairly fit.
- 06:00 We had given the Indonesians a bloody nose, so to speak, nothing particularly worried us. We were very well trained and we were ready to go.

Just tell us about these burials, what was your role?

You had the party that actually carried the coffin and then you'd have the firing party, I was on a couple of the firing parties. You actually put your weapons on your shoulder and fire them into the air.

06:30 They'd play the Last Post and they'd read out a bit about the particular soldier that got killed. This is initially when Vietnam had started, after a while then they started bringing the bodies back home. They used to bring the bodies home on planes and bury them in Australia. As I said the initial people that were killed in Vietnam were buried at Terendak.

07:00 I would imagine about thirty would be buried at Terendak and they are still there.

You mentioned some of them you might have known, who did you know?

There was a guy there called Smith and I knew his brother too, his brother was also killed in Vietnam but I knew him and he left the 2nd Battalion to go to 1RAR.

07:30 Again it's a situation when you know someone but it wasn't until later that you actually come to grips when you actually see someone actually standing next to you that becomes a casualty that it really hits home. It didn't really hit home when you were actually burying someone, we hadn't been to Vietnam we didn't know what Vietnam was all about, we had been to Borneo and we knew that we could handle that, we didn't have any problems going to Vietnam

08:00 but it still didn't deter us one bit from going to Vietnam.

Tell us about going to Vietnam?

After we volunteered to come back we came back and joined the 2nd Battalion at Enoggera and we had three or four weeks leave from Malaya. We went on leave and joined the battalion; we virtually went straight to the battalion.

08:30 We sailed on the [HMAS] Sydney from Brisbane and it took us about ten days to go over to Vietnam. On the Sydney we did the normal things, shooting practice off the end of the boat with balloons, we had a couple of boxing matches, a couple of crossing the equator things, they took us through language and PT [Physical Training] for the first five days. But then it seemed to peter off, we tended to sort of relax on the ship.

09:00 We got over to Vung Tau from there we got sent up to Nui Dat and that's when our tour started. I arrived at Nui Dat, completely different from Malaya, very open, a different type of smell, a smell of dead vegetation.

09:30 You imagine a compost heap well that's what Vietnam smelt like. The country, the dirt was all red, dust, the heat was no worries because of being in Borneo and Malaya the heat was no worries at all. We then got trucks up to the tents where we lived in at Nui Dat, they were a bit

10:00 of a shock to us. They were old tents and they didn't look well prepared or anything, there were sandbags but the sandbags were broken. The whole camp area didn't seem to be well organised at all. A bit of a downfall after like being in Borneo where everything was underground. If you thought you were going to get overrun in Borneo you felt safe because you had bunkers, in Nui Dat

10:30 your tents were all above ground and you had sandbags around them. From there we initially started training, getting the troops acclimatised. It didn't worry us so much the guys who had come back from Borneo it was just an increase of Borneo, as if we had gone back to Borneo again, the countryside was slightly different but we were still on the same sort of

11:00 mission. The guys who were first time overseas particularly from the national service you could see looking at these guys they could see, 'What the hell am I doing here?', 'What the hell am I in for?'

How would you see this?

Just by looking at them and their reaction, 'Oh am I going to sleep there?', 'Oh have I got to carry this?', 'Are we going to go out where? Oh my God look at the barbed wire'

11:30 things like that. The guns going off at night firing in support to somebody already out on patrol, 'What's that noise?' We had been exposed to it so it didn't worry the experienced guys. It wasn't just the national service guys it was the regular guys that had never been overseas, never exposed to something like that but all of a sudden you have live ammunition, these guys probably never carried live ammunition in their lives. The only

12:00 time they had carried live ammunition was on the ranges. Where it's so controlled, after the practice every round is counted. There all your ammunition was left on your sandbags, your grenades were there, you slept with your ammunition. As I said in Australia everything was controlled, claymores were left, your grenades were left up on your sandbags. Bands of ammunition from machine guns,

12:30 your machine gun, rocket launchers were all on your sandbags, laying there by your bed. I don't think these people came to grips with it. Not only that a lot of them felt the heat a lot originally, they found it very hard to come to grips with it. Particularly when we started our first patrols, the equipment, they used to carry a lot of equipment, I think we carried a

13:00 lot more equipment in Vietnam than we did in Borneo. The weight ration, you carried more ammunition, you carried rocket launches, M79 grenade launchers, multiple claymores, multiple rations, grenades and any other equipment that was needed to be carried, plus all your water bottles.

13:30 In the dry season you didn't get water out of the creeks because there wasn't any, so you had to get it chopped in. In the wet season it was alright because there was plenty of water there. In the wet season it used to rain every afternoon at the same time without fail, so you'd get wet. When you put your tent up at the night time you'd put your water bottles down and the water used to run down into your water bottles. These guys even in training in Australia

14:00 weren't exposed to the humidity, Canungra, the guys that went to Canungra were never exposed to what Vietnam the country was going to be like. The smell of it, the vegetation, as I said, the humidity, the heat.

What briefings had you received on what to do and what to expect in Vietnam?

14:30 Not a great deal, I'm not sure what the battalions got because we joined them and we virtually went straight to Vietnam with them. I don't by talking to the young soldiers I don't think they would have had a great deal just the look at their face when they were looking at Nui Dat was enough, they wouldn't have been told too much about this. It was different once we got there your patrol briefings were very good,

15:00 they were very good and right down to the last detail. We were very fortunate with that in Malaya and Borneo our CO would make sure that everything was communicated down to the soldiers and he would make a point, he would actually go out and see soldiers before they went out on patrols and say to the soldiers "Where are you going and what are you doing?." If a soldier couldn't answer him he'd go to the control commander and say "Sit that soldier down and re-brief him."

15:30 I think that flowed on to Vietnam too with the battalions to make sure that the soldiers knew exactly where they were going and what they were going to do and what was expected of them. It certainly happened in the battalions I was in; I'm not going to say that it happened in all of the battalions but certainly in the one that I was in.

What kind of understanding and briefing of the enemy that you would be facing?

Again because you had your main force enemy

16:00 the actual Viet Cong the North Vietnamese police and then you had the local police, which is like equivalent to the CMF [Citizens Military Force] in Australia, to the regular battalions. You had the village unit cadres from the VC [Viet Cong], we were told that they weren't particularly well trained and then you had the main force, the actually fair dinkum [true] 273 Regiment and the 445 Regiment.

16:30 The ones that were in battle of Long Tan with Delta Company 6RAR [6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment]. You were fairly well briefed on those. It wasn't until you got to Vietnam that you were really briefed and I think because we were initially 1RAR and 6RAR, the first battalions and then we took over. I think as the war went on you were getting more information. Particularly when I went back the second time, I was

17:00 a lot more aware of what went on in Vietnam than what my soldiers were than when I went to Vietnam the first time. I think as the war went on the soldiers were a lot more prepared for what they were going to expect than what they were earlier on in the Vietnam war. 6RAR when they got into battle of Long Tan, I think if that had been later on in the war like in the mid 1970s,

17:30 I don't think that would have happened as that sort of a battle. I don't think that that company would have gotten into that situation and taken on a whole battalion or regiment. I think we were getting more information later on and commanders knew more about how to commit companies, battalions the Australians soldiers to do what they had to do.

18:00 What about the factor of the enemy blending in with local villages?

There was a village called Hoa Long just outside the camp area and a place called Dat Do, it was very strange and this was a thing that I could not come to grips with, was the lack of young men when you went in the village, there were no young men. They were either in the local forces like the South Vietnamese forces or they were VC [Viet Cong] but you didn't

18:30 see any young men in the village. Having said that it would have been easy for the people to just mingle in. When you talk about the VC you talk about women too and it would be very easy for women to mingle in with the crowds in the market places. I can remember the first time I went to Vietnam and people in Australia said to us, "The VC all dress in black." but when you go over there everyone is dressed in black,

19:00 all the village people were dressed in black but that was a typical example of the information we got on our first tour. The fact that someone had told us that all the VC dressed in black, the first thing we saw was, "Oh my God look at all the VC!" because everyone was dressed in black. You are right it's very easy for them to get into the local villages and you didn't know which way the local villages were going to go. We did a lot of village searches, the cordon searches

19:30 particularly the first tour. I did about six or seven cordon searches and the look on the people's faces, not sure whether to trust us what we were doing. Even since those days in the last few years I've read books about it and I understand now why those people treated us like that because we didn't realise the history of what they went through.

20:00 It would be the same if another country came to Australia and we were villagers and we had been at war for thirty or forty years, we would treat troops with contempt I'm sure.

Describe the look that they'd give you?

Straight contempt and being very arrogant with you. The kids weren't too bad because I don't think they understood anything and plus if you give a kid a

- 20:30 bar of chocolate or some biscuits you've won them, sort of hearts and minds. But certainly the older people as I said the way that they looked at you and everything that you did, they weren't sure whether to trust you or not. A typical example that I will give you, we did a village search and I've forgotten the village. Apparently they were supposed to have only so much rice in sacks
- 21:00 or bags per person per family in storage. We found this great vat of it and our commanders in their wisdom said "No they can't have that. You have got to get in there." They put us into this big vat with sand bags and we were actually putting the rice into bags. We got half way down the vat and we came across this box, with gold rings in it. This family had hidden that in there, so
- 21:30 this other guy and I we got these gold rings and showed them to the commander and you could see these people they were watching us, this wife and this real old guy, the classical type Vietnamese and you could see that they were in fear of something. We gave them back to them and you could see by the expression on their face had completely changed from complete contempt for us to the fact
- 22:00 that we actually gave them that back, we didn't take it with us. It wasn't until a couple of years ago that I realised that they were even in fear of their local forces, the friendly forces actually going into the village doing searches. Because they used to take things and God knows how many times that was done to these people, and that was the reason this stuff was hidden.
- 22:30 The fact that we gave it back to them. I think it might have changed their opinion for only a short period but the expression on their face that we had actually given it back to them. That was probably all their money was probably in those gold rings, and we gave it back to them and left them alone. I always look back and hopefully that would have changed their attitude about us.

Describe searches and how you

23:00 would do a search?

What happens we would probably go in very early in the morning, we'd put the cordon around the village. It might take one battalion to cordon the whole village because the village are fairly big. They would then send over the voice aircraft, the voice aircraft tells the village that they are now surrounded; this is what is going to happen to you. They were moved to the end of the village and

- 23:30 then another battalion would go in and they would do the search. They would cordon everyone off, everyone in the village would have to go down to one end of the village and they'd put barbed wire barricades and they would then herd those people into the barricades. They would have water and everything there for them because they'd be there for most of the day. In that area there they would have the local police and the local forces and they would then start going through everyone.
- 24:00 They would look for draft dodgers from the military, VC suspects and they would actually look after that. We would not have anything to do with talking or interrogating the locals. They would go in there and then we'd sit down and go through every hut or very building and search it, like tunnels or anything like that. If we found anything suspect we'd call the interpreters over
- 24:30 and they'd find out who owned that particular hut, while we were still there they would bring that person up to justify it. The same with that rice I was talking about the rice they found out that that old couple owned it and they were able to justify why they had that rice. You'd go through the whole village until it was over and we let them all go back in. I never ever saw any looting at all from any of the Australian troops.
- 25:00 There was one village down on the coast, it was a fairly big village with an old French hotel in there and it had a camera shop. Again when we went through those I never ever saw any looting or anything like that. I believe now that since I've started going back into the history of it when the South Vietnamese went on the village searches they certainly took things.
- 25:30 They were a big experience the village searches, because that was probably the only time you got very, very close to the local people and found out exactly the way that they lived. Could you imagine if you had a house in Australia and say German soldiers came into your home? You're not there, you would feel that your whole life has been raped.
- 26:00 It would be like someone breaking into your house, after it has happened you feel shocking that someone has been into my house. So you can imagine how these people felt with us going through all their possessions, everything that they owned in their life, to check them out. We did that to six or seven villages on the first trip in Vietnam. I don't think I did any village searches in the second trip.
- 26:30 **How did you feel about doing this job?**
- It didn't particularly worry me at that time because again it was a thing that we were doing, I didn't have any particular feelings for it. I felt sorry, particularly for the older people, because I think anybody who has got a mother and father, and you'd see they had family and particularly that older couple, I felt particularly sorry for those people. I don't feel any shame of actually

27:00 going through the huts or the buildings, it was a job that we had to do. Reflecting on it now I've got a different idea of that and I think I'd find it difficult now to have to do that sort of thing.

You mentioned the jewellery but what other kinds of things did you find in the searches?

A lot of personal stuff, like personal photos, letters, a lot of jewellery, watches.

27:30 A lot of things that probably meant nothing to us but it meant the world to the people. It might just be their feeding bowls, but again it means nothing to us to see a feeding bowl but to those people it might be the only feeding bowl that they had. A lot of Buddha type things, a lot of things, if they had lost their family during the Vietnam War they'd have pictures above

28:00 a little altar in the house with the Buddha sticks burning, and fruit that they had actually left for Buddha. But again with that kind of thing none of the guys ever touched any of the fruit; it was there. At a lot of times it would have been a great temptation if you saw a nice banana there especially when you were on ration packs and you hadn't seen fruit for a long time but nothing ever happened.

28:30 They would always respect the dead.

What impressions did you gain of Vietnamese village life?

Very free and easy, during the day time but I think during the daylight hours they owned the village but in the after hours the VC owned the village.

29:00 Which ever way it went they were being controlled either by us during the day or the VC during the night. It was a very regimented life, they didn't show it, they just went about their business but I think life was controlled for them. If they stepped out of line with the Australians you'd expect to come down hard and certainly if they didn't toe the line with the VC their families could suffer.

29:30 I think their whole lives were controlled and it would have been like that for years. I don't think they expected it to be any different.

You mentioned some of the communication methods, just talk it through again, this airplane what was this?

It was a light aircraft and its got speakers and it would fly over the village and in Vietnamese they'd speak. They'd say, "This is such and such we have

30:00 cordoned your village, you have got nothing to fear at all, just leave everything in your buildings, take some food and water with you, and congregate to the western side of the village." that was virtually what they told them. They would also have those voice aircraft all the time over Vietnam. Say they'd

30:30 had a big battle somewhere they might sent a voice plane over and say, "During the battle so and so lost their life with the VC." Or, "We have captured so and so." it was all propaganda by the Americans and they'd also throw leaflets out. All these leaflets depicted all sorts of things, grave sites of the VC that the people buried. How much they could get if they handed in

31:00 weapons, they would have all the weapons on these bits of paper and say the prices you'd get if you handed one of these weapons in. They had Chieu Hoi certificate and this Chieu Hoi certificate was to say that if you had the certificate and you went to one of the Free world [America and its allies] forces and handed it in they'd accept you as a prisoner, Chieu Hoi, that sort of thing. The speaker aircraft they used go over and particularly up

31:30 north when we were up in Bien Hoa they had the sound of the B52 bombers and when a B52 bomber came down and because they were so high up the actual bomb screeched and they recorded that sound and they'd actually fly making the sound of these B52 bombers. They weren't there but imagine if you were on the ground and all of a sudden this noise was going on, it was all propaganda stuff. The Australians at Christmas time they used to fly over Nui Dat and play Christmas carols,

32:00 they'd go over the villages and play Christmas carols, it probably meant nothing to them, but again it was all hearts and minds because we were out on operations over Christmas.

What did this plane look like?

Just a normal light aircraft, I forget what type they were but just like a normal light aircraft we have over here and it just had the speakers on. They could have probably fixed these speakers to helicopters,

32:30 but it was all hearts and minds. They had this unit and I forget what they used to call these units, it was all to do with hearts and minds to get into the peoples minds, they reckoned if you could manipulate someone you win their heart and you could get into their minds. They reckoned by doing these sort of things and dropping leaflets and all this type of thing it would happen.

33:00 **When you were conducting the search and you the interpreters there and you had to question someone, what kind of excuses would they come up with by having too much rice or even if you found something?**

We didn't have a great deal to do with the interpreters, to be quite honest I didn't even trust the interpreters. It was an Australian interpreter but we didn't have too many of those, it was usually a

Vietnamese interpreter

- 33:30 and you never knew which side they were on. Those sort of countries, they sort of revolve around graft and corruption. I would never know if the guy was saying to them, "We won't say anything about the rice, but when I come back later on, throw a couple down the road." you didn't know. A lot of people don't understand the Asian way of life is completely different from the
- 34:00 European way of life. Their way of life, they accept that type of thing. I remember the first tour over there we had interpreters and they were ex VC interpreters with the companies and I didn't feel comfortable with them at all, in the second tour we didn't have them. I always just had that feeling that something was going to happen, which way were these guys going to go and they were providing information
- 34:30 to the VC. I think the Australians woke up to that after the first battalions had them but on the second trip we didn't have them with us. As I said you didn't know which way they were going to go. If you said, "Tell that person to do so and so." you weren't sure in your mind whether they told that person to actually do that, or whether they were telling that person that, "Have a go look at these Australians, what a mob of...."
- 35:00 do you know what I mean? It was a bit different from the Ibans and the Dyaks where you had complete confidence in what they were saying to you, if you knew they were talking in their native tongue to each other, just their body language to you, you knew that was what they were talking about. With the Vietnamese the body language wasn't there,
- 35:30 and if it was, it always gave you the idea that something was wrong.

Describe some of that body language that you noticed, when would you have a feeling that something was being said wrong?

They wouldn't look at you straight; they would look away from you or look down at the ground. Whereas the Ibans and the Dyaks if they were talking to you they would look you in the eye and talk to you as if we were having a normal conversation, or they'd look far off as though they were looking way over here,

- 36:00 that type of body language. The hands, a lot of hand movement, the hand movement and the look out the side of the eye and look away from you, as if they weren't saying the right thing. Just didn't have the confidence that the information that you required was coming over.
- 36:30 **In any of these searches did you ever find anything of any significance?**

We found weapons and maps and that type of thing. A lot of tunnel systems, having said that most of the huts that they lived in they had a sort of an area that they could get into. After being at war for thirty odd years, why wouldn't you have a hole in the ground to get into if the artillery started?

- 37:00 Generally weapons, a lot of food, stacks of food, that's about it I think.

What would you do if you discovered say, weapons?

We would find out who was in that particular area and then they'd be taken away, we'd have nothing to do with that. The South Vietnamese would

- 37:30 take the people away and God knows what would happen to them from there. I could imagine in some case they didn't have trial by court in those situations, I think there was some punishment.

Was the atmosphere tense?

Not for us so much.

- 38:00 Once someone was caught and they were a suspect you could see the fear, not so much with us but when they knew they were going to be handed over to the South Vietnamese police and or military then you could actually see the fear. Not so much arrogance, they tended to be with us. Over the two trips I was there if we captured a VC they tended to be very arrogant with you,
- 38:30 the way that they looked at you, probably because they were professional soldiers I don't know. It seemed to change if they knew they were going to be taken by the South Vietnamese.

I'm interested to know also when you were searching how you approached things like tunnels or weapons with booby traps.

We'd have to be very careful. With a hut, a couple of us would go inside and the rest would remain outside,

- 39:00 looking into the hut but facing out from the hut and then we'd take it from there. If we weren't sure of anything at all, say there was a booby trap, we'd call up the engineers. If we did find a weapon and we thought it was booby trapped again we'd get the engineers up. If we didn't have to move it, we would put a rope on it and go out of the hut and give it a quick pull and hoped it didn't go bang.

- 39:30 If we thought that anything was booby trapped, the guys knew too to be very wary of things like that, particularly in VC camps. Say there was a VC flag up no one would ever go near the flag because that was bound to be booby trapped. Common things, things that guys would want to take as a souvenir, like a flag, anything that could be souvenirs would straight away be suspect that it had been booby trapped.
- 40:00 **What would you look for to see if it was booby trapped?**
- Any attachments to it, in a fairly obvious type area, like I said it was typical if you found a VC flag. Anything that you thought that an Australian soldier might think, 'That's alright', and then you'd have a complete look around that area. Again look at the body language of the people if they were in the huts you'd look at their body language,
- 40:30 if they didn't want to walk too close to that area, it could well be there is a problem there. A typical example in a village called Dat Do, we had a vehicle go down there every morning, they had a check point down there and the Australians used to go down there in a vehicle. A silly move as we can see now, on this particular morning we went down there all the bullock carts,
- 41:00 they had to wait for the Australians to get down there to let them through the barriers after curfew. On this particular morning when they got down there, there was no bullock carts within one hundred meters of the actual barrier, no one woke up to it, as soon as they got down there they were ambushed. These are the sort of things, to watch the locals with their body language or their movement said a lot, that either something is going to happen or you were going into an area where something is going to happen.

Tape 6

- 00:30 **Describe your first impressions of the camp and how it was setup?**
- After Borneo the camp didn't seem to be setup too well at all. There didn't seem to be much work done at Nui Dat, this is the first tour, but on the second tour it was completely different. The camp had been expanded,
- 01:00 probably because the Australians hadn't been there too long at that stage, it was still in the stage of being built and also because the Australians were out on patrol all the time and didn't have a great deal of time to build the camp up. We probably didn't spend a great deal of time in the camp at Nui Dat during the first tour, we were mainly out on operations. We did various operations throughout the province and in other provinces
- 01:30 when we were over on the first tour. The difference between the first and the second tour because there were only two battalions on the first tour and the workload seemed to be a lot bigger than the second tour. When I went back for the second tour there were three battalions there and the load seemed to be shared more evenly there.
- What sort of infrastructure was there on your first tour at Nui Dat?**
- Two battalions, you had the APCs, the engineers,
- 02:00 the artillery support the mortars, transport, the airfield with all the helicopters. The transport to bring everything in so it was a fairly large camp.
- What was the atmosphere like when you first arrived?**
- For us guys who had been to Borneo before it was like an extension of Borneo to us,
- 02:30 but the atmosphere amongst the other soldiers who hadn't been overseas I think it was a bit tense, they didn't know what to expect. Most of them had done their exercises in Australia but it was completely different getting into Vietnam. I think it wasn't until they started the actual operation they didn't really know what to expect. Like all things when you take over from another battalion there are always the comments, "You will be sorry, you have only three hundred and six five days to go."
- 03:00 all this sort of thing. Not only that Delta Company 6RAR had the big Battle of Long Tan and we were in Delta Company 2RAR [2nd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment] so we took over their lines where they were. After they had been in the Battle of Long Tan and us sort of the new boys on the block it was a bit different.
- What sort of things did you hear about Long Tan?**
- It was a bloody long battle, a long battle that went for a long time, lost a few people, about the weather conditions.
- 03:30 **How many people that you had been with in Borneo had come to Vietnam with you?**
- On the first tour there were about six of us very close friends, but in Delta Company there were three of us that had been in the same platoon in Borneo and we came back and joined Delta Company. Because

we were in Delta Company 4RAR they asked

04:00 us when we came back, they asked us which company we wanted to go to and naturally we said Delta Company 2RAR.

How did you go about bonding with the rest of the Delta Company 4RAR on the first tour with the six of you being very close but not knowing anyone else?

We bonded fairly well, because we had been to Borneo and we were a lot more experienced

04:30 we tended to get along with each other more than the rest of the guys. Having said that, after a few operations everyone bonded as a section or platoon. I think the people who hadn't been to Borneo sort of looked on us as leadership. Particularly on our first operations where these guys hadn't been exposed to anything like that and we had already been exposed to it so it didn't really particularly worry us.

05:00 You could see that on the guys' faces when you went on the first operation. You were actually out in the jungle and you could look around and see the look of fear in some of the guys because they didn't know what to expect. The weights that you are carrying on your back was a telling point too, the heat and humidity and just the smell of the place it makes it completely different for a lot of people.

Tell me about the first operation you went out on?

05:30 The first operation was a sort of shake down operation we went out and just did a couple of days patrol to get the feel of the jungle and the land. Get people to know how their sections worked under those conditions. To hone in on the finer points that they had learnt in Australia and had learnt in Borneo. Get people comfortable wearing their equipment. Even down to wearing your equipment

06:00 to make sure that your water bottles are in the right place, because the belt on your hips would rub you raw, knowing where to put your equipment. Exactly what to take into the field with you, some people went ridiculous. You put extra rations in, extra ammunition and what you really needed. The first couple of days were to get the finer points

06:30 in the patrolling techniques and your equipment. How to make sure you know how to call in a dust-off helicopters and the artillery.

How do you call in a dust-off helicopter?

We had various incidents in my first tour I had five minor incidents at different times on the tour. As soon as we had a minor incident like that we would call up for a dust-off helicopters,

07:00 these dust-off helicopters were the best helicopters. The first tour the dust-off helicopters were American helicopters and those guys are very experienced. We had the Australian pilots but they weren't really as experienced as the Americans. I've seen American dust-off helicopters come in and across the top of the jungle with their rotor blades and cut the branches off, small twigs,

07:30 so they could come down, you'd never see an Australian pilot do that and those sorts of things. In a dust-off situation if you were still taking fire, they are still firing at you, the VC, usually the pilots wouldn't come in but the American pilots would. Australian pilots would ask, "Are you taking ground fire?" and if you say yes they would hover off and wait for the action to die down. Where I've seen American pilots where it doesn't matter if there was fire or not, they'd bring the choppers

08:00 in to get the guys out.

Were there particular signals that you used to tell the helicopters of your exact position?

We used to use smoke grenades, we'd throw smoke and the pilot would then have to come up and identify what colour smoke we had thrown and then we'd confirm it. We wouldn't come up and say we'd thrown red smoke or blue smoke because after a while the VC got to know that too and if they were

08:30 listening in they'd throw the same coloured smoke and they'd go to their smoke instead of ours. We'd identify it with smoke.

Tell me about some of the occasions where you had to call the helicopters to come in?

The very first occasion was my first minor incident one of my friends, a guy who been in Borneo with me in the same section, he had actually trod on a mine and he lost a leg

09:00 and we had a couple of guys wounded. That was my first minor incident in Vietnam and virtually the first contact situation. But again the helicopters they were in so quick, I'd say within twenty minutes of the action happening, that Tim was on the operating theatre in Vung Tau. I think probably in Vietnam, if one good thing came out of Vietnam it was the

09:30 medivac helicopter system that could get guys onto the operating table probably far quicker than even in Australia. I think if you walked out to the front of this building and got hit by a bus I still don't think you'd be able to get on an operating theatre as quick as what the guys could have done in Vietnam. The rate of people who survived in Vietnam was so good because of the helicopters. The second one

- 10:00 was a mine incident in a place called the Long Green [open space], it's on the coastal area of Vietnam. In that incident we had a platoon commander, we had contacted the VC and we did a follow up of a blood trail, the blood of the VC that was on the ground. We stopped at mine sign; it was a skull and cross bones, that was the way that the VC marked their mines.
- 10:30 We stopped and the next day they brought in the Australian tracker dogs, the Labradors, and we patrolled onwards with the dogs going in front. We came across a junction and there was another mine sign on one junction and none on the others. The patrol then went up the left hand side one and the platoon commanders trod on a mine. That platoon commander I think lost both
- 11:00 legs and a couple of other guys were wounded again with that one and we had to call in the dust-off helicopters. The third mine incident was a stone place down on the Long Green and we had a sentry go out and he was in one certain area and it started to rain and he stood up and he moved across to the other side of the track and sat under a tree and he actually sat on a mine. Again
- 11:30 we had to bring the dust-off helicopters in and again in that particular case that guy was KIA, killed in action because we couldn't do anything for him. The next one after that we were actually still at Long Green and they put us in the back of APCs, the armoured personnel carriers. The APC that we were in actually went over a mine and blew the track of the APC. But the most frightening thing of that one was they told us to get out of the back of the APC.
- 12:00 There was the thought of, 'A mine has gone off there must be more around!' For a fraction of a second you say, 'Oh my God I can't do it.' and everything takes over and you go out.

Describe that, how does everything take over?

You are sitting there and the explosion has gone and the APC is shaking and with a mine it has a distinct smell like gunpowder, a distinct smell.

- 12:30 We knew the track had been blown off and the commander just pulled the back down and said "Everyone off!" There is the chance that maybe there bigger is going to happen to the APC. You have a choice of staying with the APC and getting completely blown up or get off the APC and get yourself into another position. But having said that it is the thought of putting your first foot down after the track. Usually where there is one mine
- 13:00 there is another mine, which happened. In the fifth case there was a VC camp not far from there and one of the platoons went into it and they lost a couple of guys in the actual camp by treading on the mines. The Long Green, just the name of the Long Green was a terrifying experience. After all those experiences we had every time
- 13:30 they mentioned Long Green for operation guys would think, 'Why do I have to go out on operations?', because we knew that going to Long Green meant we were going to have mine incidents. It was a beautiful place, there were no hills and no jungle but it was open, it was just like being at the open area of the coast
- 14:00 and there was a couple of graveyards there and a few other things. It was easy to operate in because you could see everything but there was the thought of the mines in the sand. The problem we had there because most of the mine incidents in Vietnam were our own mines. They had built a minefield outside a place called Dat Do, between Dat Do and Horseshoe, it was an Australian commander who made the decision to build a mine field.
- 14:30 They put thousands and thousand of mines into the ground and put barbed wired and everything up. One of the principles of a mine field is you must have it covered by fire all the time, someone protecting the mine field to make sure that no one gets into it but they didn't have that. The VC went in there every night and just took the mines out, they lost people doing it but for every one person that they lost they probably got fifty or sixty mines. As I said most of the mine incidents
- 15:00 in Vietnam were from our mines and that's what made it so difficult. The guy I was telling you about, Tim, who was in Vietnam with me, I was talking to him on the phone yesterday he is the national president of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia. We still have a bit of a laugh about different things because we went way, way back in Borneo. One of the funny incidents
- 15:30 that came up was when we were in Malaya and we both went into this shirt shop and this shirt shop must have had four thousand shirts. He went one way and I went the other and when we came out we both had the same shirt, exactly the same shirt, which was very strange. The mine incidents, I don't think you'll ever forget about mine incidents because there is nothing you can do about a mine incident.
- 16:00 If you get fired on you can fire back but with mine incidents it's very hard for the morale of the troops, to get them motivated to want to continue on. Once you are in a minefield or anything like that or in that situation, to get people to keep going forward. The smell of a mine going off especially when it involves someone is a smell that you will never forget. It's a real putrid smell, you have got the thud of the
- 16:30 explosion, the smell of the burning flesh and the smell of the explosive, it's unbelievable. I think most Vietnam veterans will tell you that the most feared thing and probably in other wars too, is the mines.

When Tim was injured tell me about what reaction you had to that?

Again it happened so quick, the mine incident went

17:00 and we went up to where Tim was it was fairly obvious that Tim had lost his leg, you just go into reaction of medical aid, fixing the people up and get them on a helicopter and just getting them away. Because you are on patrols or operations there is not a lot of time to reflect. You are saying to yourself, "It's a shocking thing but thank God it wasn't me."

17:30 It's happened but you can't do anything about it, but you are still alright. It was a shocking thing for Tim and I didn't see Tim until after we got back from Vietnam. The good thing about it was that Tim did survive and it was because like I said before the evacuation with the helicopters.

When did they give you the news that Tim had survived?

18:00 Virtually the next day. Again I think why people like Tim survived because of Borneo he was so fit, and I think fitness had a lot to do with survival in any war. If you are fit you tend to survive, but whereas if your condition has gone down the chance of survival goes down with it.

After Tim had trodden on the mine and had been taken away by helicopter

18:30 **what did the platoon do?**

We just continued on, it's an incident and then we continue on with the patrol.

Is your position not given away?

Obviously with the explosion and the fact that you have got to bring helicopters in. I think the VC would have known we were down in Long Green anyway; it was that type of area. It was fairly open and

19:00 there were villages down around that way. I think the people would have realised we were there. It's a bit different when you get into the thick jungle, once you get in there you can be hidden unless you have to bring a helicopter in or take a resup [resupply] or you actually have a contact nobody would ever know that you were there.

After Tim had trodden on the mine and you had to move forward were there any precautions taken against

19:30 **the fact that you might be moving forward into more mines?**

You can't really do much about it unless there are signs; the VC had put out signs like crossed sticks on tracks, the Australians tended to keep off the track. They told you not to walk on tracks because most of the mines were put on tracks. Then after a while the VC got to know our tactics and they would put them off the side of the track. When the young guy sat on the mine it was quite common for Australians,

20:00 because of the weight you had on your pack, when you sat down to lean against a tree to take the weight off your pack, when you got up you'd get straight up and I'd say the VC woke up to that. The Australians are in the area and what is one of the first things an Australian does when he goes to sit down is right next to a tree, so consequently they put a mine at the base of a tree.

You mentioned that it was a really difficult thing to get the morale of the troops to keep going after there had been a mine incident,

20:30 **how do you do that or how were you encouraged to keep going?**

I think everyone teams together as a team, you try to put it behind you, you say that it has happened but you have to continue on, you just can't stop. I think in the back of everybody's mind, 'Lets get out of this place. The quicker we get out of this place, maybe we will go into a better area'.

21:00 The first tour, because I was a lance corporal and a private it wasn't so hard, but the second tour we had two mine incidents and I was a section commander for the first mine incident and a platoon sergeant for the second one. There was a more of a leadership type role for me to play in that case. The very first mine incident was with two platoon commanders.

21:30 It was late one afternoon and we were taking over a platoon who had just had a contact in a bunker system. We married up with another platoon and the two platoon commanders went forward and activated a mine. One platoon commander lost both legs and my platoon commander lost one leg. I had seen mine incidents before but the rest of the diggers had never seen a mine incident, those two guys survived

22:00 through the medivac helicopters, they were alive. One went on to be a brigadier in charge of the legal services in the Australian Army, the other one stayed in the army, in the education corps and went back to the infantry, to Kapooka where we did our recruit training and he went down there as the CO of the recruit training battalion. The engineer that was with us on that particular day he unfortunately didn't survive

22:30 the mine incident. Again with that, that was a particularly difficult one to get everyone motivated again,

to get them going. For the first incident they had seen it was an horrendous one, most of the incidents that the fellows had seen before was one person losing a leg, but when they saw two platoon commanders be badly wounded like that and then to see someone else get killed.

23:00 We got through that and a few days after the guys were right and they were back on track again.

Take me through how you managed it, what sort of things you said to them?

You sit down and talked to them and give them some confidence. Just explained to them that that might be just a one off, to stay focused that they were still alive.

23:30 We need to stay switched on, don't let the VC have the better of us, we can still stay on top. I think they look upon us because we had been there before in Vietnam with the experience I think they probably looked towards us with a fatherly image. "Barry's been here before; he's seen it before he must know what he is talking about."

24:00 and we managed to get through it. I will give you a typical example what happened, then days after that we were actually on a patrol and one of the VCs that was apart of that mining, he was the guy that we found alongside the track, he had been shot in the foot or something had happened and it had all maggots in it. We were leaving to patrol that particular day and it would have been easy for us to have killed that guy, but for some reason

24:30 we didn't kill him. Nothing would have been said if we had shot him, for some reason he was just laying there, just in the jungle laying on his back and his foot was all maggot eating and the look in this guy's eyes. My machine gunner was there and I was standing there and we were looking down at this guy and in a second I could have said, "Kill him."

25:00 After what had happened to the platoon commanders a lot of people and even when we got back to camp said, "How could you have done that, why didn't you kill him?" It was very strange, for some reason just in that fraction of a second we could see the look in his eyes, he was a soldier and we were soldiers, for some reason we didn't do it. They then brought a helicopter in to take him away and we had a

25:30 captain 2IC [Second in Command] of the company, he was Australian and he came up to take the prisoner and put him on the helicopter and the way that he treated him, just threw him in the helicopter. The guys in the section were very, very upset about that, the fact that they had the courage not to shoot this guy and to let him live. I will always remember that day because it was my Dad's

26:00 birthday the 10th August. Within a day they took photos of him and took them over the province and dropped the photos over the province with a note on the leaflets saying that this guy had been captured by the Australians and he was being looked after in an Australian hospital and that the Australians don't treat the wounded and things like that. He came out of it alright but looking

26:30 back on it now, after this horrendous mine incident and then a few days later to have this guy there, a lot of people said that it could have been a revenge killing or something like that and you say, "No." Even today I often wonder where that guy is, you could go back to Vietnam and maybe if he was still alive you could say, "Do you remember that day?" just in the one second it was the difference between life

27:00 and death for that guy.

Was it talked about much of what you should do officially if you saw someone in his condition?

No, I think initially over in Vietnam it was all about body counts, how many people you killed and all this sort of thing and it sort of became a competition between each platoon and that type of thing.

27:30 When they did have a kill in an ambush, whether they had equipment on them that you could use as souvenirs, like watches and money, it went on, you have to be honest about it. The first tour was a bit like that but the second tour, the commanders were more or less after

28:00 prisoners to get information and that would encourage you to get prisoners and get some information, they'd sooner have that than to kill someone. Having said that a lot of people thought the other way too, once you had got a prisoner they held you up a bit, stopped your patrol and you were tied up with getting choppers in to get the prisoners out. Whereas if

28:30 someone was shot in a contact it was just a matter of just actually burying them and just send the contact report away. Again there was a difference on the first and second tour, the first tour you could have contacts and you could have bodies and you just buried them. On the second tour they used to fly in a camera and you'd have to take a photo of them, to verify that you actually had the bodies and if their face was still intact

29:00 they could take a photo of the face and put it in a museum. As I said it was just slightly different between the first and second tour with dealing with people.

Going back a bit to mines again, obviously mines have a devastating effect on a body

29:30 **but take me though what happens when someone treads on a mine?**

I will take you through the first tour as I saw the first one. The first one is just an explosion and everyone freezes, no one moves, they know what it is and they just freeze. As you get experience as soon as it happens

30:00 you initially freeze, but then you'd move to the side and someone has to take over control of the situation, you can't just stop. Whoever the commander is, I will give you an example of the second tour, one was a platoon commander and the last one we had was when one of the soldiers got killed. Again he was a friend of mine and we were going down this track and there was a hunk of bamboo about that thick across the track.

30:30 Everyone else stood over the top of that bamboo, he trod on that bamboo and that triggered the mine. That happened right in the centre of the patrol. Usually mine incidents happen at the front of the patrol where the first people go, but this guy actually trod on it and he was in the centre of the patrol. Automatically we have the centre of the patrol in the middle of the mine area and the front of the patrol and the back of the patrol all in that area.

31:00 Someone then have to completely take control and say, "This is what you have got to do." It's usually down to the commander, on this particular occasion it was me because I was in the centre of the patrol. You had the platoon commander at the front of the patrol and me in the centre, so I had to completely take control of that situation. The forward element

31:30 of the platoon went forward, the rear element went back and then I remained in the area where the mines were. With a couple of other guys and we did our thing, what you normally do is with your bayonet you prod around the wounded person to make sure there were no more mines. You actually put your bayonets into the ground to make sure you don't feel any mines, on your hands and knees and you prod into that area until you get to your wounded guys, then you take it from there.

32:00 In that particular case there were two guys, the guy that got the mine was completely cut in half. The guy that was behind him had previously been a forward scout; the forward scout was always the first one into an area. This particular guy just had the feeling that something was going to happen

32:30 to him as a forward scout so he volunteered to be the guy who carried the sig [signals] set and the guy with the sig set is always in the middle of the patrol, you'd think it would be the safest place in the world. But in this case it wasn't the safest place in the world and he lost one leg I think. He is still alive and everything is alright, we did get him out through helicopters otherwise he wouldn't have survived. The other guy didn't survive but that wasn't a very nice scene. Again, someone has got to make the

33:00 initial decision, "What are we going to do?." You have got to realise once that happens the quicker you can get to those guys, the chances of survival, there's no point freezing like animals and saying, "Oh my God I can't do anything, lets run!" the quicker you can get back into that area where the mines are and clear the area and get the choppers in the best chance of survival these guys have got. That happens in all mine incidents, there is always one person that has to take

33:30 over and say, "That's the way to do it." Usually it's that person's decision on how you are going to do it, whether you are going to go back into the minefield, whether you are going to sit down and prod or whatever you are going to do. I've seen cases where people have just walked straight back into mines, without prodding and gone straight back in and start patching people up. Whereas other people might say, "No we don't want any more casualties." Having said that again it's the person on the ground, it's their decision, the

34:00 bottom line is looking after each other so people survive.

What happens to someone's body when they tread on a mine, are they thrown up into the air?

Yes, M16 mines they jump out of the ground. When you tread on a mine it detonates and the mine actually comes up and it jumps, they are called 'Jumping Jacks'. When the blast happens it usually

34:30 gets the rest of your body like this, the top or the middle of your body. If it doesn't jump clear it will just take your legs off or your foot. In the case of the last mine incident when the young guy got it, his body was actually cut in half so his top body was like that but his legs were up where his shoulders were, it was if you had folded the body in half. In the other incident where the platoon commanders

35:00 got badly wounded the engineer who was there he was dead and he didn't have a mark on him, and we couldn't find a mark anywhere. We put him on the helicopter and we couldn't work out why he had died until he got to hospital. He had a bit of shrapnel no bigger than that big and it was right under his heart, it had gone straight into his heart and killed him, but not another mark on his body. It's a horrific thing mines,

35:30 you can imagine what any explosion can do to a body, it's just horrific.

In the first tour you mentioned Long Green and that area but what were the main provinces?

During the first tour we had the Tet Offensive which was 1968, the biggest offensive in Vietnam. We then went

- 36:00 out of the province, the first time the Australians had gone out of the province and we went to a province called Bien Hoa where the American airbase was up there, that was during the Tet Offensive, it was called Operation Coburg. We were in a fire support base just outside a village called Trang Bang, and that was one of the big pushes by the North Vietnamese to come down Saigon and take over Saigon. They all came down
- 36:30 but they didn't take Saigon. If the Americans had pushed the point in 1967/1968 and kept bombing North Vietnam, Vietnam would have been over, they had the VC on their knees during the Tet Offensive. The Viet Cong got into Saigon but they couldn't do anything, they couldn't hold them. This particular village at Tran Bang, it was on Coburg and that was overrun by the VC and our
- 37:00 Delta Company two days in a row we went back into the village to take it back from the VC. That was house to house fighting on little streets; it was a very interesting time. We also ambushed an area up there a disused railway line that went from the south to North Vietnam, we ambushed that everyday for a few days and everyday the VC came down this railway line, because they didn't know we were there and we had contacts everyday.
- 37:30 They were slightly different up there because the war went up a beat there, we saw a lot more of the Americans while we were up there, a lot more of their support. You saw more of the big picture of Vietnam. Being in Nui Dat and Phuoc Tuy province, the Australian province, it was just Australians but when we got up to Bien Hoa we could see the bigger pictures. You could see great American convoys with hundreds
- 38:00 of helicopters in the air at once, the American system.

What was the first contact that you had with the enemy in Vietnam?

That was after Long Green on an operation I think called Santa Fe, it was contact with three or four VC, just a normal contact. They bumped into us as we were going along a track and they were coming down and

- 38:30 we fired on them and that was it. That was the thing with the contacts in Vietnam, most of them were quick, you would be virtually walking down a track or ambushed a track or something like that, the VC coming down the track. We didn't really have a big pitched battles at all, the only time we got into a pitched battle was during our second tour about the 31st March.
- 39:00 I was acting platoon sergeant that time and we actually took on the battalion, I think it was thirty one guys who took on a battalion. Thirty two bunker system, we were attached to the battalion at that time, the 3rd Battalion had just come in country and they always attached one of the senior guys, one of the older guys to that company just to show them the ropes. On the 31st we were in
- 39:30 contact for about five hours, they lost a fair few, we didn't get any bodies at all but they were working on blood trails, we lost one guy and a couple were wounded. That was really the only real pitched battle we did have. I think during that day we lost one of the gunners off a helicopter.

Tape 7

- 00:30 **Over all what was the talk like of how the war was going at this stage?**

I don't ever remember discussing how the war was going at all; it was a day to day thing over there.

- 01:00 I think if you got through the day and survived I think you were happy. If we got into a contact situation and we came out on top it was like a game of sport, you survived and everything is going alright. I don't think we ever sat down and said "Geez, I hope next week they are signing a peace treaty." it was never like that at all. We had a job to do at the time, at the end of the day and after our patrol if it was successful and everything was right and we are all still alive.
- 01:30 We'd have a smoke, have a brew and go to bed and get up and have your picquets of a night time, that was your daily routine. I don't think we got into conversations of how the war was going or who was winning or losing. The conversation revolved around sport, who was going on R&R [Rest and Recreation] next, leave and that type of thing. Maybe your family at home, other soldiers or contacts or other companies had
- 02:00 in your battalion and that type of thing, that was the general conversation during the day.

You mentioned you got sent to Bien Hoa, tell us what this place what was it like?

This was another province and the Australians hadn't been in there before, predominately it was an American area, a big American airbase was in the Bien Hoa province, and there were mostly American

- 02:30 airbases up there. A bit more open than what the Phuoc Tuy Province was, there didn't seem to be so much jungle in the area that we were operating in. We just saw the difference there in the way that the

Americans operated, a lot of noise, a lot of movement of the vehicles, the different types of firepower they had. I think it was the first time they ever saw an American

03:00 general and he came in, in a helicopter. The helicopter that he came in on was all polished up and it had about four gunships with him, helicopters to protect him. It seemed so false to see this helicopter that was actually polished and when he was actually at the fire support base the pilots were out polishing the helicopter as if it was a chauffeur driven car and here we were in the middle of a war. It seemed so strange.

03:30 That was the difference after being in Phuoc Tuy and exposed to the Australian way of doing things and going to another province and seeing how the other allied forces operated.

Tell us what your view was of the Americans, from your impressions?

Everything they did, they did by numbers, they made a lot of noise. Our idea was when we were out on patrol we sort of got into the jungle and melted into the jungle and

04:00 there was no noise or anything. The Americans tended to just drive into the jungle and make a hell of a lot of noise, 'clear by fire' as if they wanted everyone to know that they were there. Whereas the Australians were completely different, straight in and you virtually became the phantoms of the jungle and you take ownership of the jungle.

What did you think of the American methods?

In some areas it wasn't

04:30 bad showing strength like that, say in a village type situation and you are going to take a village back, then showing your strength in numbers or your firepower. With the Australian Army because we were so small we could never accept casualties like the Americans could. If we lost one guy it would shatter us, whereas the Americans if they lost a few,

05:00 fifteen or twenty it was just part of the battle. I think if the Australians ever lost twenty or thirty in a battle I don't think Australia would have been in Vietnam long, I think we would have got pulled out. I think the Americans accepted that more than we did as Australians.

How about the way that they interacted with the local people?

Again we didn't see too much of it, as I said in the Phuoc Tuy Province

05:30 the Americans that were they're with some of the advisors and they were with the South Vietnamese units. We would occasionally see the Americans on operation, we'd see a glance of them when they were going past us to one area and we might be going to another area. We never got to the stage where we were in a defensive position and we met up with an American unit and we relied on each other for support.

06:00 What about the rules of engagement?

Rules of engagement, initially rules of engagement was very strange particularly with the younger soldiers. An example I will give you is one of our first contacts there was a female from the VC group and the young soldier who was the forward scout he could have shot her but the first thing he said to his commander was, "Do we shoot women?" he wasn't sure of the rules of engagement.

06:30 The fear that you were going to kill someone that you shouldn't kill because of the rules of engagement. Again there was a situation where you used to have a curfew of the night time, what they used to do from Nui Dat and the Horseshoe, they used to fire flares into the air and the locals in the paddy fields they used to see the flares because they didn't have watches, they were given a certain amount of time to get back to the village.

07:00 If they didn't get back in that time then it was open slather, there was always that doubt that someone might have been working that hard they didn't see the flare. They used to call them in Vietnam, 'Free Fire Zones', that meant if we had our orders read and they said we were going to a Free Fire Zone anyone in that fire zone and it didn't matter who it was, it was open season. You could shoot them; you wouldn't have to challenge them, you wouldn't have to do anything.

07:30 Having said that, a line on our map of a Free Fire Zone and there is no line on the ground for the local woodcutters, so they wouldn't know where that line was. We'd say, "At that creek line there, that's where the Free Fire Zone stops." so if they were on the other side we would challenge them first. If they crossed that creek then you wouldn't have to challenge them as the Free Fire Zone. There was always that doubt that you

08:00 might have engaged some poor old woodcutter and I'm sure that did happen at times.

Did you ever compare the rules of engagements with the Americans?

I don't think the Americans really had rules of engagement as it was spelt out for the Australians quite clearly of what you could and couldn't do. I'm sure the situations that the Australians got themselves into

08:30 if they had any doubt they wouldn't shoot, whereas I think the Americans would have, that was it, there would have been no sort of grey areas, they would have done it. I never saw it personally but I'm sure they wouldn't have taken the time like the Australians did to check everything out. Having said that if you thought that your life was in danger or the lives of your troops were in danger then you would have made the decision

09:00 straightaway to actually fire or whatever you had to do.

What gives you this impression about the Americans, that they might be a bit trigger happy?

Probably the way they went about their war. The Phuoc Tuy province was always known as the Australian province I think we controlled that fairly well, it became virtually our own province whereas the Americans had all the other provinces.

09:30 I don't think their hearts and mind things were the same as ours. I think if we had killed a couple of civilians in the Phuoc Tuy province it would have probably put us back so many months or years with the hearts and mind thing [community program]. It probably didn't worry the Americans because they used to clear by fire and that type of thing, it might not have been all their units. I don't think just their way with hearts and minds with the local people was the same way that the

10:00 Australians used to go about it.

How did you feel about their method of not trying to win people over?

I look at it now and say it was wrong. But in those days I didn't particularly worry about what everyone else was doing, all you were worried about was what your troops were doing and if you were doing the right thing so that was all you were worried about.

10:30 You probably had enough on your mind with your guys that you couldn't worry about what everybody else was doing; it was just the way of life. It was slightly different when we did a patrol up in Nui Dinh with a Vietnamese platoon and there were four Australians and we took this Vietnamese platoon up to Nui Dinh. The conditions that those guys lived under was a bit strange, there was a platoon commander and he'd sleep

11:00 in a hammock and his batman, the guy who looked after all his food, he would sleep underneath it. We would actually see this platoon commander beating his batman with a hunk of bamboo. That was their way of life, and they accepted that but it was hard in those days, the four of us used to sit there knowing full well we couldn't say anything.

11:30 The guy was getting beaten and he didn't worry about it, he expected it, he did something wrong and it was the punishment. I was a patrol commander and I had a machine gun with me, they were a protection part for us as I said, we couldn't accept it but we couldn't say anything about it. The same when they took prisoners,

12:00 I've seen some incidents where some bodies of the VCs have been dragged behind the APCs and again you don't say anything because that was their way of life, it was completely different from the way that we operated. I think they see in our way a weakness that the Australians do these things but you are not tough enough, if you are going to really put your story home to someone that you are really serious then you have got to hurt them, and that's

12:30 the way that they see it. We did have one incident when we had an ambush when they actually put the bodies in the back of an APC and they took it into the village of Dat Do outside the Horseshoe, a big village, and they actually put the bodies in the market square and they just sat back and waited to see who identified the bodies. That was done by the Australians but I don't think that was in a gesture of being cruel or anything

13:00 like that, it was a gesture of saying instead of us burying the bodies, there are the bodies and if you want to take the bodies and give them a decent burial. Again having said that I'm sure the looks on people's faces when they realised that there was their family and they had been killed in an ambush.

Where did this happen?

In Dat Do in the Phuoc Tuy Islands.

When did that happen?

In 1967, it was on my first tour over there.

13:30 **What's the effect on you seeing these bodies laid out?**

Again because of the time, you are a professional soldier it's just a part of warfare. It's happened, the bodies are there, you have had a successful ambush and you had been laying there all night

14:00 until the early hours of the morning and someone walks in and you spring your ambush, been a success. So the bodies to us meant that we were successful. Only because you are a professional soldier for no other reason at all.

Take us through an ambush patrol, how would you setup and what would happen?

We would go in late in the afternoon and have a reccie [reconnoitre] of the area, we usually ambush a known track

- 14:30 that could be in the outside of a village, or a watercourse from a river. The VC camps had to be near water somewhere, so they could come down and get water. We would go in late in the afternoon and put the ambush position in, in different areas we'd have the sentries out, the early warning systems. We'd put all the claymore mines out and you'd have banks of claymore mines, you might have
- 15:00 twenty five claymore mines out. You'd have your machine guns staked and ready to go, you'd have your rear protection party for the ambush. The ambush would go in complete silence, no eating at all, no smoking, nothing to give smells away, eating Minties [a confectionery] or anything like that. Sometimes we wouldn't shave when we went into those areas because of the smell
- 15:30 of the soap. We could be in there for twenty four to forty eight hours and then we'd just wait until someone came into the ambush. They weren't always sprung; you would just take a chance on that area that they might come along. If they were sprung we usually activated the claymores first, it's quite possible that you could do a hollow ambush,
- 16:00 blowing your claymore mines and not opening small arms fire. By doing that if other VC people hear it they might think it's just a mine incident and there's no one there, but as soon as you open up with your small arms fire they would know that you are there. So you could do it either way. Within an ambush the most time that you get on edge is when you do have a successful one and you'd go out and check for bodies.
- 16:30 Particularly if this is in the night, you have to got to decide whether to go out at night to check the bodies or wait until first light of the morning. There was one incident with a Kiwi platoon commander and they had an ambush and the claymore mines set off a fire with the grass. When they went out one of the claymore mines hadn't gone off and he actually walked in front of where the mines were and the fire set the
- 17:00 claymore mine off and he got caught in his own ambush. There are all those sort of things that you have got to consider, if you are actually going to go out there and check for bodies. The ideal situation is to have the ambush in the day, do whatever you have got to do with the bodies, get the information and then clear out straight away so you don't become a target for their mortars.

Take us through

- 17:30 **how the claymore mines were setup and operated?**

You would probably have a bank of about four and they would have jumper leads to each claymore mine and then you have a lead that goes back to the sentry which is called a "Clacker." It had a safety switch on the clacker and as soon as that safety switch comes off you just hit this clacker and the mines just blow. It's sort of an oval shaped mine like that and inside

- 18:00 it's got plastic explosives with thousands of ball bearings, as soon as it blows, it blows straight out. If you aim it like that it would take everyone waist high. It can work both ways and you have to be careful with claymore mines that again you have got to have those covered by fire, because if you had them at a certain distance and if the VC knew they were there they could creep in and turn your claymore mines around and as soon as they clackered they would come back towards you.
- 18:30 It's a bit like a normal minefield, if you are going to put claymore mines out anywhere you must have them covered by fire. A very successful ambush technique claymore mines, they give you a sense of security with the fact that they are there and they are a very effective weapon.

You mentioned some of the conditions on an ambush; you said that you couldn't eat

- 19:00 **so what would you do for forty eight hours?**

We used to go in early; we would have a feed and go in early. In the ambush position you'd have your rear protection party and in that rear protection party they'd relieve, one person would come up and then that other person would go back, but there would be no cooking, nothing like that at all. All your food would be eaten dry, no cooking whatsoever, no cups of coffee, no shaving.

- 19:30 There would always be fifty percent on, you'd be in pairs or in threes on the actual killing ground and one of you would be awake the whole time. The way that we contacted the sentries on each point, say there was a track coming down that way there would be a sentry on each end. If this sentry saw somebody coming down we'd have bits of rope and we would just pull the thing to say that someone was coming. You'd only have it go like that,
- 20:00 you'd have it tied somewhere around his body and give it a tug to let you know that somebody was coming.

What if you needed to go to the toilet?

Just roll over, that was it, if you just wanted to urinate you'd just roll over but if you wanted to go the other then you'd have to get relief.

Was that a dangerous thing to do?

Yes.

20:30 What about sleep?

No, because you were fifty percent. There would be two or three of you in little groups then one of you could sleep and the other guy would stay awake. When the other guy felt that he was going off he'd give you a nudge and then you'd wake up. You knew every well that it was life and death and that if you all went to sleep then you were all dead, no doubt about it and if they knew that you were there.

21:00 The VC had their anti ambush drills too like we did. Our idea was if we got into an ambush you'd turn and fire straight into it, so they would have probably had the same idea and try and out flank you.

What was the logic behind that tactic by running towards the ambush?

If you ran away they are going to shoot you anyway but it was the fear factor, once you fire at someone and if they keep coming at you then

21:30 they have got you off balance. If you run away from them they have achieved everything. Say you are going down a track and someone fires on the left flank, if you all turn and fire straight into it the chances are you are going to hit them or they are going to keep down. As soon as you go the other way and turn away from them your whole body is exposed. In an ambush, you are not really supposed to

22:00 survive an ambush, but if you are going to survive you have to become the aggressor.

Tell us about some of the operations that you were undertaking in Bien Hoa province?

We were up there in a fire support base, Coral was one and we would just go out on daily patrols,

22:30 clearance patrols, fighting patrols, reccie patrols, ambush patrols. Where we used to ambush there was this old railway line and we ambushed that for days. Because the VC were coming down from North Vietnam at that stage, they were pouring all the troops down to take up Saigon and they didn't have any information on where we were. That was incredible to think because usually in the Phuoc Tuy province

23:00 if you had an ambush in a certain area once you had that ambush then it would be pointless hanging around. When we got up there we had one in the afternoon, the next morning we'd have another one, exactly the same location, we wouldn't even move and that was a bit of a difference. The village Trang Bang that we took a couple of times. We stayed up there and it was one of our longest operations and then we came back to the Phuoc Tuy province

23:30 and the 3rd Battalion, they took over from us up there and the 1st Battalion took over. They had a fairly big fight after we had left, the VC managed to build up a great troop concentration and in fact the biggest battle in Vietnam was at Coral in Bien Hoa, it wasn't with my unit it was either with 301, but it was bigger than Long Tan, 6RAR and it was the biggest battle. The VC actually got in and overran

24:00 the guns, the artillery pieces and it was a fairly big battle.

You mentioned before about the Tet Offensive, and you said this was during your time up there. What kind of things were you noticing about the Tet Offensive?

The enemy troop movement, the amount of troops that were coming down from North Vietnam, the activity,

24:30 it was a daily occurrence, it didn't happen at the Phuoc Tuy province. We might go out and see the VC once a week or once in so many days up in Bien Hoa it was every day, every day we'd go out to do a patrol or whatever because something was going to happen. Everyday that we were up there something did happen. Not one day went by that we didn't have a contact or we weren't going into a village, there was a lot of troop movement around the place.

25:00 When you look back now and realise the big battle that the other battalion had at Coral you can understand what they were doing, they were bringing all the troops down to get them altogether to take that area out, you can look back and understand why it happened. That exposed us to the bigger picture of the Vietnam War. The Australians were a bit protected down in the Phuoc Tuy province compared to the northern part of Vietnam

25:30 and this was the first time that we were exposed probably to the regulars, the NVA [North Vietnamese Army], whereas down in Phuoc Tuy with the local VC battalions, the local cadre groups but this was the first time that we got exposed to the NVA, the professional ones from up north.

What effects does this have on yourself and others soldiers engaging daily?

26:00 Nothing really at all but again it was the adrenaline was running, you get a lot of cases in Vietnam like I was saying before, a lot of diggers that went through Vietnam never ever saw the enemy and never ever fired a shot in anger. The more that you did that you found that your tension went out of your body and you felt comfortable with it. It was the time when you went for days and days and not seeing anything and then all of a sudden a mine explosion

- 26:30 and that shatters your morale. If you are on top and having contacts everyday and as the time goes on you get more confident and it didn't worry us at all. But then having said that after Coral was overrun after we left ,thank God we did get out, you just don't know, if we had still been there would we still be alive? Again we didn't realise that that was the big picture,
- 27:00 that explained why all these people were coming down. We knew there was a Tet Offensive, we knew they wanted to take Saigon but we didn't think they would come down and try to roll up the Australians on the way.

Were any of the men stressed or not coping with the situation?

I think some of them were, but not particularly the professional soldiers, it didn't seem to worry them but

- 27:30 the guys that were in Vietnam because they had been told to be there. As you went through your tours it was a strange sort of a feeling, the first couple of months you were tip toeing through the jungle, then after that your confidence came and you were a bit blasé with what you did, you felt comfortable.
- 28:00 The last few months where you were short in country and you went back to tip toeing through the jungle. In Coburg it was that kind of time, we were half way through our tour and a lot of people thought they had got this far, I want to survive. I'm sure it went through a lot of the young soldiers' minds, that was the case.

What about yourself, how did you feel about the tour?

It didn't worry me at all.

- 28:30 I consider myself a professional soldier and I didn't find it hard, I thought Borneo was harder physically than Vietnam, but it didn't worry me. I got promoted when I was over there and once you get promoted your idea of things change. You get to know why things are happening more, you have a bit more responsibility so you haven't got a great deal of time to reflect on how you are feeling, you are more or less thinking,
- 29:00 'What about those guys' type of a thing. The second tour again I went as a corporal and then an acting platoon sergeant and your whole concept of things change because of your responsibilities, you have a lot more responsibilities of what is actually going on.

You start thinking in what way?

You start to think about survival, not your own survival but the survival of the guys you are looking after.

- 29:30 You might start questioning things a bit more with the commanders, especially when you had other experiences and you might think that something is wrong. I think as a private soldier you can bring up points you don't quite understand but as you go up in the command structure and you get experience you understand things. If you think that something is not quite right then you would go and see the platoon commander and say, "I don't think that is right maybe we should do it this way."
- 30:00 It is completely different, same like in a mine incident you know the guys are hurting but you've still got to show leadership and get on with it. While the guys of a night time they are asleep or on picquet and they might be thinking about that but all you'd be thinking about as the commander is the next day, what patrol you would be doing the next day. You would be planning it in your mind
- 30:30 how you are going to do that patrol. If you have taken casualties and I know it might appear hard to say it but that is the last of your thoughts for that day, that day is gone you then have got to think about, "Ok I've lost one guy today, I've still got thirty other guys tomorrow." so you have to look towards the next day and not the one behind you.

Talk us through that initial promotion on the first tour, what happened there and what changes came from that?

- 31:00 When I first went on tour I went over as a private soldier, within a month I got promoted to lance corporal which is Section 2IC, you have a section of ten men. You have a section commander and you've got the 2IC. The 2IC is under the study of the section commander and also he's also the guy who looks after the admin and the welfare of the troops. I was the guy who looked after all the ammunition re-supplies, the section commander looks after the tactics
- 31:30 and the 2IC looks after all the administration. If one of the diggers has a problem you have to deal with it. Also if he goes away you automatically take over as the patrol commander. It was a good experience and after being in Borneo it was the next step up. Then you know very well that the next step is section commander, so
- 32:00 it's only another step up. Your mind is a bit different to when you were a private soldier, where you go on patrol and just do what you have got to do, as you go up the ranks you start looking at things, and decide why it should be done and how it should be done.

Did you get to do much section commanding on the first tour?

Yes.

32:30 Towards the end of the tour we went to a place called the Horseshoe and that was a position out of Dat Do and it was a company position and it was away from Nui Dat and it was a hill the shape of a horseshoe. You slept underground there and it was all in bunkers, we went there for the last two months of our tour. We did local patrols, we had a check point down at the village of Dat Do, it was a bit like a holiday really, after continually patrolling

33:00 on big operations, you didn't do anymore operations from there all you did was local patrols. At check points you checked all the bullock carts, the trucks on the roads and then I became a section commander there at the support section. I went up to a corporal there at the end of the tour. Again it was slightly different it was a lot easier there because as the section commander there you weren't on big operations it was just local patrols. It was a good training area

33:30 to practice in, to get promoted to a corporal so you slowly moved into that area so it was a good place to do it on the horseshoe.

How did you feel about your leadership?

You learn a lot about yourself, you look at yourself and think "How you are going about it?" particularly at the end of your tour where people getting short in their time. Your decision can change

34:00 someone's life totally, so you were looking at all aspects of every decisions you made and whether it is the right one. It's particularly difficult when you get promoted within your own section, usually what they do in Australia if you get promoted, they move you to another battalion. One minute you are drinking with all the boys and patting each other on the back and the next day you might have to tell a guy to walk up a track that is mined.

34:30 The idea is in Australia if you get promoted you get another platoon where they know you but you haven't had the social contact with them as you normally would with the other guys. Being in Vietnam it was particularly difficult because I had a social contact, I had been on the whole tour with these guys and seen mine incidents as a private soldier, I had gone through that with them and all of a sudden you are their leader. They completely respect you for it but it does become a bit difficult.

35:00 Did you have any difficult decisions during this period?

Not during the first tour but in the second tour I had a couple of decisions that could have changed the whole situation, but I felt quite comfortable with them and everything turned out the way that it should have turned out. Then again it could have gone the other way but you haven't got time to decide that, you have got to make that decision

35:30 right at that time. I think if you do something and you stand by that decision even if it's slightly wrong or whether you can't go wrong, because someone has always got to make that decision.

Tell us about returning home from the first tour?

We came back on the Sydney again about ten days which was a complete holiday, we played

36:00 bingo and all sorts of things on the ship, there was no training. We had plenty of showers and after living over there the dirt is just in you, you just can't get out of it. Even after we got home for weeks after you'd wear a shirt and the red dirt would be on the collar of your shirt. It gave us about ten days to get home and we landed in Brisbane

36:30 and had a bit of a march through the city went out to Enoggera and all got together and just went our ways on leave. I would say that was the loneliest time you'd ever been.

What was it like to return to Australia,

37:00 what news were you hearing about Vietnam before your second tour?

There was a lot of news about Vietnam, what was going on. There were protests but that didn't worry us because we were professional soldiers. The only thing we were concerned about was when the postal guys went on strike; letters weren't getting through to the guys,

37:30 but other than that no, we didn't really get a protest. We all got posted back up to Townsville because the battalion got moved to Townsville. Then the whole circle started again, we started training ready to go back to Vietnam. The same sort of training we went through prior to the first tour. Again it was slightly different this time because I had my own section. I didn't join a section

38:00 like I did from Malaya I had all my own section that I could train them the way that I wanted them to react to different situations. We went through all the training and went through Canungra and did all the training that we needed to do in the battalions, weapon training and training out in the field, helicopter training and then we were ready to go back again for the second tour.

38:30 On the second tour we left Townsville on Qantas, back to Tan Son Nhut in Saigon down to Nui Dat. It

was unbelievable because at that stage I had changed companies into A Company and when we moved back the area was exactly the same, I moved back into exactly the same tent when I was over there in Delta Company

- 39:00 and it was as if we never left, for the experienced guys. I think the guys on the second tour were a lot better trained, the count was better prepared and all the section commanders in our particular platoon had been there, most of the 2ICs had been there, the platoon sergeant had been to Vietnam before. The only guys who hadn't been were the platoon commander, none of the platoon commanders had been. Some of the diggers
- 39:30 had been to Vietnam, but as I said I think they were a lot more prepared than what we were. They were more aware of what was going on in Vietnam, what was expected of them. I would like to think in a lot of cases they were a lot fitter than the guys on the first tour. I think as I said before, as you go through it and as the war progressed the battalions in the mid 1970s were
- 40:00 on the ball with their training and I think it was because of the experience that was coming back in. After that in the later years of the Vietnam War, after 1971, that's when the battalions started not having so many experienced people because the guys had already gone through
- 40:30 once or twice and didn't want to come back. They were struggling then to get people to fill up battalions and go over.

Tape 8

- 00:30 **When you were back in Brisbane before you went back for the second tour without you having any family here, who did you stay with?**

I had some friends up in Bundaberg and they used to go up to Bundaberg a bit. I had some friends in the army and that's where we used to spend most of our weekends

- 01:00 and sort of enjoy the delights of Bundaberg. They accepted me as part of the family and that was really good.

Did you see Eric at all?

Yes I saw Eric a couple of times when I came back, always gave me a hard time about joining the army but he was great.

Just take me through again in a little bit more detail about what the situation

- 01:30 **was about how you re-volunteered to go back to Vietnam?**

We were in Brisbane and they decided to send the battalion up to Townsville, because Laverack barracks had just opened then. We then had a choice of staying with the battalion or moving to another one, but again it was the adventure and the thought of going back to Vietnam. Most of us put up our hands and said that we would go to Townsville. None of us

- 02:00 had been to Townsville before except on exercises, new barracks and a new playground for us, all the new hotels in the city. We came to Townsville and started our training and it was slightly different because I was a fully fledged section commander. Training them meant a lot more to me because being a junior leader, having troops under your command.

- 02:30 Everything that you did didn't just reflect on you, all your decisions reflected on nine other guys so it was slightly different. I think I took the training a lot more serious then because of that, because I became a junior leader. I think life became a bit more serious then. I think the first tours like Borneo and Vietnam was an adventure went along with it but

- 03:00 when you actually become a commander it's different.

Is there a difference in your training, are you learning?

As a commander you tend to learn more about leadership, how to bring in artillery fire, tactics, you learn a lot more about tactics of where to put the troops on the ground and how it fits into the bigger picture,

- 03:30 how to give orders to groups and make appreciations of contact situations, planning ambushes. When you get promoted you have to sit for exams and all those exams cover all those sorts of things.

Because you were in Australia was national service coming through,

- 04:00 **what was your opinion?**

I never put national service or regulars any different, to me they were infantry soldiers so they weren't treated any different. One wasn't a professional soldier but he was there because he didn't really want

to be there, he still carried still the same weight as the professional soldiers, they were treated the same. I never got to the stage where I looked at someone and said

04:30 "He's national service; he's not going to do that job." I never got to that stage, to me they were all infantry soldiers and they got treated exactly the same. Some of the national servicemen were great soldiers and some weren't so great but then again some of the regular soldiers were good and some weren't so great. It went straight across the board so there was no difference. I didn't think there was any difference and the guys didn't treat themselves any different like saying

05:00 "You're a national service and you guys are in here because you need a job and we are here to do a job." it was friendly type stuff.

Do you think national service is a good thing?

I do, I think most national service guys will tell you that too. I think to a lot of them, it made a lot of guys, I saw young guys come into the battalion really immature

05:30 and after Vietnam they were completely different guys, but no I think it's a good idea. Maybe not to force them to go to war, but maybe having then in support roles and only go to war if you volunteer to go to war, then it would be a good idea.

The fact that you had already done a tour of Vietnam, would people ask you about what it was like?

06:00 Yes during your training and prior to going back to Vietnam, even when you were talking to your soldiers you were emphasizing about Vietnam about how we do it in Vietnam. There was a lot of training that we used to do in Australia; you knew very well you weren't going to do that in Vietnam. We used to go down to Canungra, to the Jungle Training Centre and they'd take you through different training methods, you knew very well it's a load of rubbish,

06:30 we've been there, we've done it, and we didn't do it that way.

What sort of things?

With searching prisoners, you might have your different methods of doing it, non aggressive, the way that you would want to do a thing. You wouldn't tell your soldiers to completely ignore what they were taught but you would say, "This is the way that we would operate."

07:00 so that they got off on the right note and they wouldn't think that when they got over there they had to do it that way. Canungra was a training system, it didn't really prepare you for Vietnam it sort of put the icing on the cake before you went over. I think it was for the government's benefit so that if anyone, especially national service guys got killed they could turn around and say, "We provided the best training in Australia

07:30 before we sent them to war." that was the only reason we all went to Canungra. I don't think there was any need for us to go to Canungra, I think we could have done all the training within our own battalion and still got the same benefit. The reason we did that was the government was able to cover their backside and they could say, "We provided the training."

Were there things they weren't prepared for,

08:00 **things that you had learnt in your first tour that they weren't prepared for during their training?**

I think things like mine incidents; you can't explain a mine incident to anyone. They used to go through the actions down in Canungra. With a mine incident it's the smell, the noise and the burnt flesh and you can't explain that to anyone and it's not until these guys

08:30 have been exposed to it that they can realise what it was all about. You can prepare them for someone shooting at you, to get into a fire position and return fire, you can show them how to navigate on a map or how to get on and off a helicopter, how to shoot a weapon. It's the things that happen, the casualties, to see someone actually shot or wounded, to be able to prepare them for exactly what

09:00 does happen. I don't think they would ever be prepared for that. The way that the village people used to treat them or look at them, you could never prepare them for that. You couldn't show them anything in Australia that was like it. That's what they really should have done, the Australian government should have taken a lot of films of Vietnam and brought them back and used them as training videos,

09:30 a lot of that could have been done. In a mine incident you can't take photos of it but you can take photos of the dust-off coming in, and you would be able to see the reaction on the guy's faces to the situation.

How did you get to Vietnam this time?

We flew over with QANTAS from Townsville

10:00 and landed at Tan Son Nhut [airport] and then by Hercs [Hercules aircraft] down to Nui Dat.

Had you been to Tan Son Nhut before?

Yes, huge.

How had it changed?

It seemed to be bigger. The second time there was aircraft everywhere; apparently it was the busiest airport in the world. Its military might, it's all American and all the gunship helicopters, jets, and civvy [civilian] planes, it was

10:30 a massive place. The military hardware was everywhere and it was incredible, really big.

Was there any difference in the condition of getting further on in the war; were there any signs of the American military machine starting to fall apart at all?

11:00 No I don't think so, not in our area in the Phuoc Tuy province, we didn't get the chance to go up north at all in the second tour, we didn't get a chance to see how it was going up there. No we didn't see that at all. On the first tour after a few months in the country if you did a fairly good job they

11:30 selected to do Saigon guards and you'd go down for seven days and you'd actually do guards on the billets of the Australians who actually worked in Saigon. You got a chance to mix with the Americans down there a bit but that was a bit strange. The funniest thing that I ever saw after living like us guys, we lived like pigs in Nui Dat, all the mud, the dust and dirt,

12:00 the patrolling and you go down there and these guys were living in hotels, and they had a complaints book there and we opened it and there would be, "The maid forgot to empty my ashtray. The maid forgot to make my bed." Us combat soldiers, we couldn't believe what we were seeing. Just the fact that we could go into the hotel and just turn on the tap, we didn't have taps in Nui Dat, all our water was in jerry cans

12:30 and little things like that were like a gold mine to us. But these guys at the hotel, it was very strange.

Did you do the guard duty on your first tour?

Yes on the first tour but we didn't do it on the second tour for some reason, I don't know whether they gave it to another battalion but on the first tour that was part of our battalion's role, we used to go on guard duty. There were a couple of areas, there was the hotel and a

13:00 radio station in Saigon and we used to do night guard duties there. Again it was an incentive to do your job right, they would say that you have done a good job in the jungle and take seven days and do a Saigon guard so it was really good.

Did you have any interaction with the media or photo journalists?

Yes we had a couple from

13:30 Time Magazine with us a couple of times and some other magazines but you didn't pay too much attention to them, because they were everywhere at different times. They might come out for a short patrol and the helicopter would come and pick them up and away they'd go, not a great deal of media.

Was there a difference in the way that you had to go, a bit softer when you had them?

14:00 No it didn't worry us, we had nothing to hide, all our procedures were down pat, and we weren't going to change for anyone. We weren't going to do things just to suit the media, if we did it that way that was the way that it was going to be done, not softening or hardening up. There were no media stunts that I know of in the area that we were with.

14:30 **As the reactions back home that we talked about before about the protests and the postmen [postal strike], was there a suspicion of the media amongst the military, about how the conflict was being portrayed?**

No I don't think so, I don't think the media was really bad to us. The problem was there was a media war,

15:00 people had to get the stories out and after a while people got fed up about Vietnam and reading about Vietnam and the media needed to look at other stories about Vietnam, not so much the war but the bad things about Vietnam. There were cases with the Americans, there were a few incidents there. There was one incident with the Australians with the water torture where there were

15:30 accusations that the Australians captured a female VC and poured water down her throat and they tried to make her talk. The media belted that up a bit, which doesn't really do much good for the guys. Whether it happened or not I can't say, I mean all situations are different, I don't know if it did happen, what those guys had gone through previously.

16:00 It was a bit like that guy we got with the maggots in his foot, we could of gone the other way and the media could have been there, if the media got hold of it, it would have been that we had shot a prisoner. The prisoner was badly wounded and we shot the prisoner so again it's what happens and it's usually only a fraction of a second.

In the second tour did you spend more time based in Nui Dat?

Yes

- 16:30 most of our patrols were done in Nui Dat, we had two mountain ranges there, the Nui Dinh [mountains] and we did most of our patrols up in that area. We didn't go down the Long Green in the second tour, thank God, and I was dreading it. What they used to do was every battalion had an area of operations and the Long Green wasn't apart of our area of operations. I had visions of saying to these guys, "We are going down to the Long Green." and
- 17:00 the first thing I said when we got over there I said to the platoon commander, "The first orders of where you go to, find out where our area of operations is, particularly the Long Green." and he came back and said, "No we don't get the Long Green." It was a bit of a relief straight away because it was a burden that we carried with us from the first tour, and they had taken that off so we didn't have any problems with anywhere else.
- 17:30 I don't think the workload was as much as the second tour because of the 3rd Battalion being there, it was constant, our operations weren't as long as what they were in the first tour, again we were mainly in the Phuoc Tuy province. We didn't do the Horseshoe in the second tour, we didn't get a chance to do the Horseshoe, it was only in Nui Dat.

18:00 What was the lifestyle like on the Nui Dat base?

The first tour it was constantly on the go, we were always filling sandbags, raking leaves, doing sentry duties and this type of thing. We were always on call and there was always a standby platoon with the APCs on the helicopter pad

- 18:30 and we might sit on APCs all day just in case someone got into trouble and we had to go out and help them out. Not too much retraining, on the first tour it was you got back there and you rested you got your one R&R and I went to Taipei and you got one R&C [rest in country] in country which was down in Vung Tau, like ten days out and five days in country R&C and R&R.
- 19:00 The second tour it was slightly different because every six weeks, you'd go on operation for six weeks and come back and do two days in Vung Tau, every company used to do that. Then you'd also get one R&R, but you had a bit more free time the second tour over there. Work wise the second tour we seemed to do a lot more training when we came back, refresher training and weapons training, rules of engagement, they kept pushing rules of engagement on the second tour.
- 19:30 Weapons handling and we had a couple of incidents and one of our section commanders accidentally shot his forward scout through the foot, so consequently they went over weapons training so every time we came back we'd have weapons training to make sure that people didn't have an unauthorized discharge - what we used to call clean up the weapons to make sure that everything was serviceable, we'd test fire weapons when we come back, in pits in the ground.
- 20:00 You'd clean up around your tents, the leaves were always falling off down from the gum trees, so we'd be forever raking leaves up and burning these leaves. It was hilarious because sometimes when we were burning the leaves there would be some ammunition in the middle of the leaves and all of a sudden, bang, bang and all this ammunition would be going off. We used to come back and get ourselves cleaned up and make sure that we were medically right for the next operation.

20:30 What about socially, what was the relaxation or the social outlet on the base?

They used to have the canteen and you could go down and have a couple of beers of a night time after operations. If we were going to go out on operations the next day we didn't drink. You would go down and have a couple of beers and we used to play a lot of cards. Generally Australian habits, cards and a couple of beers, that was about it. The guys

- 21:00 who had cassette recorders they used to record messages home, or write letters. We might have a game of cricket; we did have a bit of a cricket pitch there. Generally if we weren't training the guys would be laying on their beds reading a book, generally relaxing. If you got rashes when you were out on patrol you had chances to get the air to your body, just walk around in an old pair of shorts and a pair of old running shoes and let the air get to your body.

21:30 You mentioned that you'd have six weeks and then two days in Vung Tau, these six weeks?

They were operations; the operation would get a name. In the first tour we had something like thirty odd operations by names; they were all named after suburbs like Geraldton or Coorparoo. On the second tour there was

- 22:00 one operation and it was the same name and it might have gone for the six weeks, but that didn't mean that you were on that operation for six weeks. You might be out there for four weeks and then you'd come back into Nui Dat and then you'd do actual local patrols around Nui Dat to make sure that was secure. You were still patrolling but you may not been on a Task Force operation, you would just do local patrols. As I said you would come back and they'd take you down to
- 22:30 Vung Tau in trucks for a couple of days R&C down there, the bars and the swimming pool and then back

and the whole circle would start again. We'd be back for about half a day and then we'd be ready for another operation. "Right pack all your gear down to the helipad tomorrow and heading out to so and so." Again we'd go through the whole thing again and after six weeks we'd be back for a couple of days,

23:00 and we'd also get R&R during that period of time where we could come back to Australia. No one came back to Australia unless you were married, and all the single guys like me used to go to places like Taipei, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong. The first trip I went to Taipei and the second trip I went to Hong Kong and I had a great time. I don't remember too much about it, I think I spent most of the time at the bars. Like I said I was single

23:30 and that was our life, you didn't know if you got off the plane after you came back and within a couple of days you could tread on a mine, the time to just let your hair down and relax and we certainly did that in a big way.

Being in another country in your new position of leadership, what sort of things were you learning about what it takes to be a good leader?

24:00 Never expect anyone to do what you wouldn't do yourself, in a mine incident you would do it, initially you'd go back in. It would be quite easy to say to your troops, "Start prodding back in." but if you got down on your hands and knees and started prodding it was easier to get them to do it. Don't be frightened of sticking up for your troops if you thought something

24:30 wasn't right, it's so easy in life to agree with people if they are higher than you, thinking it's going to help you, but if you think something is wrong and you think strongly about it, if you don't do something about it and you know that you can do something about it you are not a good leader at all. It won't take long for the troops to wake up that you are only there for your benefit and not theirs; I think that's the most important thing you learn about yourself. Don't expect

25:00 anyone to do anything that you won't do yourself, and explain to people why you are doing things don't just say "You will do that" and not explain it to someone. Particularly in a life and death situation. If you are sending someone to an area and he could probably lose his life by going into that area and you are not explaining why they don't appreciate that.

Did you ever in leadership positions take on the position of the confidante?

25:30 That was a constant thing especially with the married guys and they had kids at home, there were a lot of times when you'd sit down and talk about that sort of thing and they just needed someone to talk to. I didn't find it too difficult because I wasn't married, I was a single guy, I had my family in England but I didn't really have a great deal of ties, whatever I did I did it, it was me that it

26:00 was going to hurt. Some of these other commanders, the married guys in Vietnam it must have been very difficult for them. Really I can't see how you can be a real professional soldier if you are married; I know that's a funny thing to say. To be a professional soldier your whole mind has got to be on that job. With an infantry soldier there can't be any room for

26:30 something to be in the back of your mind that might change your whole concept of what you are going to do. As I said some of the married guys I'm sure went through hell with that type of thing thinking about their kids. If I walk into a situation I'm sure I wouldn't be thinking about anything but myself or the soldiers, but I'm sure some of the married commanders would have been thinking about their families at home when they were in some situations.

27:00 It's quite possible it could have influenced them one way or the other.

How about any of the younger guys in the platoon, did they want to talk about any problems or could you give them any advice?

For unknown reasons when the young guys came to Vietnam they used to have girlfriends in Australia and they used to get 'Dear John' letters [letter informing them that their relationship is over] and that type of thing. It's not very

27:30 nice for a young digger to get a 'Dear John' letter at home. There were other things like some of the guys after so many patrols they didn't feel comfortable about going out again, they wanted to change their job. Every operation we had we had to leave so many soldiers behind at the base for protection

28:00 and for jobs to do, if I could. If a digger came to me and say, "Barry I have a feeling this is the one." then I'd leave him behind.

How would you help them deal with things like fear and tension?

Try to make life a bit of a laugh, not for me to take things too seriously. Take serious what I'm doing

28:30 but let them know 'Hey life's great' and make them laugh. Even small disciplinary things you wouldn't worry about. I've seen commanders at some levels with small disciplinary things blown out of proportion, and I reckon the diggers in my platoon and section knew what they could and couldn't do. If there was something there that I'd let go

- 29:00 and talk to them and say, "Hey don't do it." and that's it, but other commanders would go another step, with official charges. Even with an unauthorized discharge with a weapon, a lot of people were charged even out in the field with that, an unauthorized discharge with a weapon. Once they came back they got confined to barracks, they got fined
- 29:30 and they had to do field punishment, and they'd have to fill up sandbags up until ten o'clock at night and all this type of thing. I often said to my junior commanders, "If your forward scout did an unauthorized discharge in the jungle and he's been going all day, up there all day by themselves with pressure would you charge him with an unauthorized discharge? No you wouldn't." no way in the world. It would be different if he hit someone,
- 30:00 it would be slightly different and you'd probably have to charge him because he's hit one of his own troops. For a forward scout, eight hours in the steaming jungle and for some reason his finger's on the trigger and he's accidentally fired it, there is a time then as a commander and you weigh it up and say, "Hey that guy has done a great job." why when you get back to Nui Dat hit him with charges and it's going to cost him a bit of money and maybe his confidence?
- 30:30 As a commander you make those decisions, and these guys know you make these decisions putting your neck on the line too, because there is always someone who is going to talk about it, when they get back, "Hey Barry didn't do this." or whatever. If you are confident in the way that you lead your troops you will have no worries with that type of decision making.

Tell me about these unauthorized discharges?

- 31:00 If they fire a weapon and it's an accident, say they put their finger on the trigger and it accidentally fires, that's an unauthorized discharge. You can automatically be charged under military law. I think it's about twenty eight days field punishment. One of the guys used to get field punishment they would still go out on operations and they didn't have to do it. Imagine being on a patrol
- 31:30 and being out for weeks and you come back to Nui Dat and you charge him and he's got to go down and be fronted and he has to fill up all these sandbags after being out on patrol. I can see reason in certain areas for unauthorized discharge but certainly in a patrol or jungle type atmosphere where the tension is there, you have to weigh up these sorts of things. I believe in Timor now they are having a hell of a lot
- 32:00 of unauthorized discharges, the record is very poor in fact, they were actually putting it down to poor weapons handling. Not actually tension just lack of training. When we came back for the section tour and the fact that we used to do refresher training on weapons that did cut a lot of the unauthorized discharges out. It's very easy to do when you are carrying a loaded weapon.
- 32:30 The forward scout they would have their safety catch off the whole time, the rest of the patrol would have their safety catch on but the forward scout would have their safety catch off. Which means if you have your safety catch off and as soon as you pull it, it goes, but if you have it on it doesn't go, but because he's the first guy at the front his safety catch is off, very easy for a forward scout to have a UD [Unauthorized Discharge]. All he had to do if he had a UD
- 33:00 was I used to say that he thought there might have been monkeys and that's it and don't worry about it. I know a lot of people would condemn me for that but then again you have to weigh up exactly what pressure they were under at that time.

Tell me about the nickname you got in Vietnam?

The Phantom. They reckoned they could never find us in my particular section; I have got a picture over there,

- 33:30 the guys actually painted a sign and it's a big picture of the Phantom and we were known as the Phantom Pygmies and it was on a rubber tree on one of the tents and as far as we know it's probably there now, it's a fantastic sign and it meant a lot to the guys. Morale wise guys to have a look at a sign and say, "That's us." I think it's in all walks of life,
- 34:00 even a badge on a shirt or something like that, people tend to feel a bit better about themselves. The typical example was the Australian Army Training Team in Vietnam they produced their own badge that they used to wear on their sleeve, I think it was a bow and arrow and a boomerang. They wore that with pride wherever they went and it got known in Vietnam,
- 34:30 so the same with my section. Also the platoon had their own sign, 'The Comancheros' the three Mexicans with bandoliers of ammunition and it was a huge sign, right in the middle of the rubber plantation but it meant a lot to the guys because again they'd come back and identify themselves with the signs and it was really good for the morale.

Who was responsible for the phantom nickname?

The guys from the other platoons because they reckoned once

- 35:00 we were out on patrol no one could find us. Even now we had a reunion down in Wollongong and the whole platoon was down there, except we lost a couple of guys, one died of cancer and one died in a motorcycle accident but the rest of the platoon was there but it's still the Phantom, they actually gave me a t-shirt with the phantom on it. When they ring up

35:30 it's never Barry it's always, "How's it going Phantom?"

What does it mean to you, it's quite a compliment?

It was good and to be identified, everyone knew us as the Phantom Pygmies, even when we went to orders groups for the platoon, we were 4 Section, but they'd say, "Phantom Pygmies you will be doing so and so." it was never 4th Section but it was always Phantom Pygmies.

36:00 Even big orders groups and they'd have contact and they'd say, "Phantom Pygmies did so and so." and people knew who the Phantom Pygmies were. I think it meant a lot to the troops to identify themselves as the Phantom Pygmies, it didn't matter if we were doing good or bad but as long as the Phantom Pygmies were there, it was good, really enjoyable.

What sort of level of responsibility do you feel not just to the men under you, but to

36:30 **the families of the men?**

Especially the second tour, before we went to Vietnam, the whole section went up to Cairns and a lot of the guys' families came into Cairns and we had to farewell their family up there, very family type atmosphere. They looked upon me as the fatherly image,

37:00 I think they thought, "Barry you are the guy looking after them so look after them." very family orientated. In fact they gave us a pyjama party up there, of all things to give a mob of diggers going to Vietnam; you could imagine what we all looked like. It was really good. It was very family orientated, now

37:30 the guys that are still around and most of them are here in Brisbane and in Cairns and their sons drop into see me here and we have a yarn [chat]. In fact I got an email yesterday and one of the sons is taking me out to lunch so it's still all in the family, and we are all still a part of each other so it's great.

From your time in Vietnam either from the first or the second tour are there any particular songs

38:00 **or anything that really stand out?**

Nancy Sinatra, 'These boots were made for walking' was always the one; they always seemed to be playing it, that was the main one. We used to get American radio over there, 'Good morning Vietnam',

38:30 the funniest thing when you talk about radios when you are on patrol the Americans always had radios in their ears listening to music. In the Australian patrol groups the section commander would have a radio and he could actually hear the news and then he'd pass on the news to the troops so they knew what was going on and particularly with sport. Every morning early they used to have a guy on there called 'Chicken Man'

39:00 on the radio and I can remember we were in this night position and we woke up and we were all standing and we were all quiet and one of the section commanders had his ear piece in and he completely forgot that he wasn't in Nui Dat that he was on patrol and when Chicken Man went he did the same at the top of his voice. Everyone's hair stood on end because all they could hear was this chicken noise, God it was funny.

39:30 As I said we did get the American Vietnam radio, all the different types of music, they warned us about going near monkeys and getting bitten by the monkeys because of rabies. In Australia you'd have ads [advertisements] about buying cars but the ads over there they were about how to keep your weapons clean so you could keep yourself alive. Don't have monkeys

40:00 as pets because they'll bite you and you will get rabies. Make sure when you see the bar girls make sure they didn't have VD [Venereal Disease] and all that sort of stuff was on the radio, it was very interesting the way the Americans used to have it. They used to come up with all the news of what was happening in all the different provinces, they'd say, "The Aussies down in so and so did this." and the boys would say "That's great, we are getting a mention." but that was good. We had the show people, Little Pattie [entertainer] and

40:30 people like that came over and we had a few shows.

Tape 9

00:30 **Tell us about that operation Santa Fe?**

It was one of the biggest operations that we were on, it also concerned the Americans, we didn't actually see the Americans but they were part of the operation. It went for a period of about a couple of weeks; it was fairly full on,

01:00 a lot of patrolling, ambushing. We had a few contacts in that area in Santa Fe, no big contacts but just

small contacts, a party of two or three people. It was a very successful operation; it was a bit of an eye opener like I said working with other forces.

01:30 There was one operation and I'm not sure that it was Santa Fe or Pinnaroo but there was one operation where we were actually sprayed with pesticide, of course we didn't know what it was at that stage. Our gear was as if someone had thrown kerosene over you, we stayed like that I think for most of the day and then they had to get new gear into us so we could change out of it. It was definitely on one of those operations but I just can't remember which one it was,

02:00 but I do remember it was one of the larger operations.

What do you think this pesticide was?

We believe now it was Agent Orange [herbicide used in Vietnam], but then we didn't have a clue what it was, the aircraft went over and that was it. We didn't sort of worry about it at all, like I said it was just like having kerosene on your uniforms, it wasn't real pleasant but as I said they

02:30 got other gear in for us. We had been through areas that had been defoliated beyond the second tour, everything was just dead, what I would imagine the moon would look like. There were no birds, nothing, we'd come out of some areas that were thick jungle and then all of a sudden it was as if you were in another world. All silence, not a bird, nothing on the ground,

03:00 no flies, no insects, everything was completely dead.

What did you think of this?

At that stage we knew it was defoliant, but at that stage no one knew about Agent Orange, it was that they killed the area off so the VC couldn't use the area to hide in. On the second tour they didn't use so much defoliant. The

03:30 Australians they used to use bulldozers like they do with land clearing in Australia with a big chain and a big ball and clear the jungle like that, so we didn't see a great deal of defoliant, but during the first tour we saw it.

Have there been any effects that you can think that have come from this?

Not that I know of, not with me but it didn't affect my life, I got married and I had one son and he was alright.

04:00 I spoke to the wife and said, "We are in front, we have a son and he's perfect." I did have a couple of friends who did have some children who had deformities and these type of things, we don't know if it was Agent Orange, they don't really know but there is a chance that it is Agent Orange. Like I said I didn't get married until 1982, it was a fair time after that but Agent

04:30 Orange was spoken about in 1982 and a lot of people knew about it, but once we had Nathan we decided not to have any other children just in case something did come up. It might not have done but I would never have forgiven myself and I would have had to explain to the wife why the other children that had a chance that they could be deformed.

During this operation what was it like working in with the other armies, the US [United States] army?

05:00 We didn't see a great deal of them; they were large operations, they had their area to look after and our area to look after. We didn't have a great deal of contact with them at all; they were just a part of the bigger picture. The only reason we knew they were on the operation because it came out of the operation brief to say, "The US forces will be on the right flank,

05:30 or the US will be on the left flank." or the blocking force or whatever we were doing.

What were the objectives of these operations?

Clearing certain areas, we might have gone into a blocking force, we might have been down the southern area of a province and the Americans might have the job of pushing the VC into us and we would be the blocking force. A bit like the old hunting days with

06:00 the dogs and they'd push the rabbits into holes, the same sort of thing and you'd have a blocking position like that. You might be in a blocking force or you might advance to contact, search and destroy operations exactly what they were, you came on an old camp or village and you'd burn it to the ground. Everything that was in your path where you thought the VC could get some

06:30 good you'd actually burn and destroy. This brings me to a funny incident, we found a brand new bullock cart and you can imagine the type of timber that it was made of and we had no explosives and the company commander said that we had to destroy it. There were half a dozen of the diggers there with machetes, these little machetes and you couldn't shave with them but here we were trying to chop this ox cart. After about three quarters of an hour and we had chopped through about this much of one of the wheels and we gave it away.

07:00 They were the sort of things, anything that the VC could have used in a bit of a river complex or sampans [boats] we'd destroy it, search and destroy missions.

You said these operations were successful, how would you know this?

At the end of the operation you'd get what they called a 'ink sum' they would say, "We found so many tons of rice, so many weapons, so many

07:30 bunker systems were destroyed, so many people were captured, so many people were killed." and they'd also give the friendly casualties too. How many Australians were KIA or WIA [Wounded in Action], and virtually gave us all that type of information. They probably worked out the successes on exactly what they got. Again with the Americans it was very much on body count,

08:00 if they could get a one hundred VC body count it was a success. In a lot of cases the body counts were always, say in a battle and you go with artillery, if one guy found a leg and one guy found an arm that is two bodies. The body counts were never ever and even the Australian body counts even in the battle of Long Tan.

08:30 Again if you went out to count bodies it might be that situation, you could have multiple body parts but it was a body. Most cases with the Australians in the first tour we used to bury them but in the second tour they would fly in a camera and they'd actually take photos of the bodies. Just to verify that you did actually have that contact. I'm sure there were

09:00 cases where there were contacts and the results were added onto to make it look like it was a success.

Was there competitiveness about the body counts?

There sure was.

Tell us about it?

Particularly amongst companies and platoons. Our platoon had the first kill of the second tour, I

09:30 think once the platoon had the first kill it was over the competition type of thing but until that happened it was a sort of a competition to see which platoon was going to have the first kill. I don't think it was so much with the body count, I think the Australians and particularly with the infantry guys, I'm not sure about the Special Forces.

10:00 The Special Forces and especially the SAS were not controlled as much as the infantry battalions. I think they had a bit of a free rein and I'm sure it even happens in wars these days where Special Forces are virtually a unit under themselves. There is not so much control over those forces as with the normal conventional

10:30 battalions where everything you do is really under the spot light.

With this competition with the first kill, what would be said in talk about that?

It was a way for the platoon and the sections to prove that they were the better section or the better platoon. I know it's hard to say but it would be a bit like sport, who scores the first try.

11:00 It's a bit of an ego thing maybe, I'm not quite sure, but it was way of probably letting off steam a bit, letting off your emotions once the first kill has happened or the first contact and it's not so bad after that. As I said before in a lot of cases a lot of diggers [soldiers] went through Vietnam and never seen a VC or ever fired a shot in anger.

11:30 I reckon their twelve months must have been hell for them, because they never had the chance to let everything out. Once you get into a contact situation particularly in a big contact situation I've seen and heard guys laughing when they were firing their weapons and really getting involved in it, it's relieved like a steam pressure, it's as if you have taken something off and everything has come out. You see a difference in guys after

12:00 they have been in a big contact they are like a mob of budgies [budgerigars] and they get together and they can't stop talking, but the pressure is off for the time being. As I said the guys that have never ever experienced that must have gone through about twelve months of hell.

Were some of the men enjoying fighting and killing?

I'm sure they did. Again not so much for

12:30 the actual killing but because of the frustrations they've had over a period of time. Can you imagine patrolling for three months and seeing nothing and all of a sudden it's there, and I think it's like jumping out of an airplane. You are not quite sure the very first time you do it but as soon as you do you want to go back up, like bungee jumping or jumping out of an airplane or something like that. I don't think any of the guys

13:00 did it for blood lust or anything like that, I think it was a way of letting out their emotions and just being a part of the organisation of the platoon.

What about the opposition reaction, how would a casualty or a death affect them?

A friendly casualty?

No a VC killing one of your men?

That would have affected the guys

13:30 if we had of had a casualty at all. Initially it would have affected them and once the dust-off came in and got the person out, if the person was wounded and you fixed them up and you knew they were going to survive there was no problem. It's a bit different when someone dies in action, particularly with the guys who were very close to that person, it's a bit different. The other way around with the VC

14:00 there was no reaction at all. I've actually seen guys with dead bodies of VC sitting there having breakfast the next morning and the bodies just to one side, no feeling because they didn't mean anything to those guys, it was just a body it was just nothing. Some of the guys might have felt something but I never had any guy come up to me and say, "Barry I feel sorry

14:30 for that guy." There were cases where you were taking things off these people and you actually saw photos of their families but again there was no time to start thinking about that type of thing. I think about it now looking back but certainly in those days it didn't worry me in the least, and I'm sure it didn't worry the soldiers.

How does it affect you now?

You think about it now and naturally there are times when your mind goes back

15:00 to Vietnam. Those people had families exactly the same as us and they were soldiers. I've learnt a lot more about Vietnam probably in the last four or five years than I ever knew, I've read a lot more about not so much our side of it but the other side of it. There are a lot of documents out written by the other side about different things and you tend to have a completely different idea

15:30 about Vietnam, what you were fighting. Some of those people must have had a hell of a life. There is no way in the world we would have lived the way had they lived and they were constantly doing it. The superpower of the world, against all the modern equipment and to still come out of those holes and fight and in the end win the Vietnam War, whether they won it completely or whether it was handed to them by the politicians,

16:00 for what they went through is unbelievable, they have all my respect.

Do any of those horrific images come back to your mind now?

Yes at different times. It's not so bad now because we start talking about it, over a few years because the platoons are down here and the guys talk about it. Up until the welcome home parade I think

16:30 it did, we had a big welcome home parade and it brought a lot of people out of the closet . It still takes us back at different times, you look at different things, and you might see something on TV that might remind you. You are getting a lot of books on Vietnam and a lot of books are written by not so much the officers now but a lot of the diggers and corporals are coming out and writing books.

17:00 They write it as it is, officers tend to write it what the government wants you to read, what other officers want to read but when corporals and diggers start writing books it's usually the hard facts and the way it did happen over there. There are some really good books on the market now that really

17:30 brought it out. When you read it, it makes life a lot easier for us guys who have gone through it because we can actually see the truth written, not covered up by stories that you know that did happen but they don't want the people to know exactly what had happened.

What about dreams or images in dreams, does that ever happen?

I'm under treatment with a psychiatrist,

18:00 I've got no problem with that and I've still got the dreams. I have my meetings with the doctor every six weeks and we sit down and talk like we are doing now and away we go. Before that it would have made it very difficult, particularly in the job here because I was getting very short, because we get a lot of North Vietnamese visitors here,

18:30 this is about five years ago mind you. But since I've sought treatment and we have started with the platoon and the platoon has come back together and we talk to each other and we continually ring each other up and send emails to each other, we have got no problem with it. We have got a problem with what we have done in the past but we've got no problem with the way that we served the country.

What problems do come up for you as far as things that you did?

Some of the villages we went through, the sort of things that you can't change but you know now that you shouldn't have done. You should have questioned it maybe, but if I killed someone I've got no problem with that.

- 19:30 It was a part of it, he could have killed me, if I've killed a guy I can live with that and I've got no problem, professional soldiers. It's the things that have involved people that were tied up with the war through no fault of their own. Anything to do with the VC or the actual soldiering part of it to do with the war, like mine incidents I've got no problem with that, it's just these other little things. There is one thing that I can't accept.
- 20:00 On the first tour we had a firepower demonstration with the Americans and we were going out onto a ridge and we were the lead section and the section commander, John, said, "Barry, we have got to go down this way." and I said, "Ok." So we went down off the ridge and we went slowly down the ridge and the platoon commander
- 20:30 said, "No you are going the wrong way, but you guys stay there and I've got this other section to take over the lead." They took over the lead and we came in behind the rest of the platoon and then we got up onto the top of the ridge where the fire demonstration was going to be with the American helicopters. The American helicopters came over and fired the gunship with the rockets and one of the rockets malfunctioned and we could see it swinging like that and it fell in the middle of a section where we were supposed to be and
- 21:00 two of my very dear friends got killed.
- 21:30 You reflect on it now but that's where we would have been and like I said I lost a couple of very dear mates. I can accept casualties in actual situations but it's very hard to accept casualties in an accidental situation like that, that was not a very good situation but we did get over it.
- 22:00 After that particular incident they virtually flew us straight out into another operation to get our minds back on the job, they didn't let us stay in Nui Dat at all. As soon as it happened the dust-offs came in, the rest of the platoon was back on the chopper pad and flown straight out to an operation. We had already down this operation prior to that but we were allocated a village in an area called Slope 22
- 22:30 at a place called Ap Say Nieu, it was a demonstration type thing, they were trying to build a village like in Australia like the war service homes, that type of thing, a village where they had houses and little gardens. But it never really worked so what they did they sent the platoon and company out to guard Ap Say Nieu. While we were out
- 23:00 there, there was one funny incident because at night time they gave them a TV and it used to be in the market place and it used to be all American programs. It was like going to the drive-in in Australia except there were no cars, all the village people would be sitting in the market square just watching this TV. On this particular night we were outside the village in a secure area, all asleep with sentries out and there was one hell of a noise in the village. The company commander said,
- 23:30 "Barry grab yourself a patrol and slip into the village and see what's going on." We went into the village and it was the village drunk, he was typical like in Australian, every village has a drunk so this village had a town drunk. We had to settle him down and make sure that he got home. It was so strange to think that here we are in Vietnam and they have the same problems we do back home, someone would have too much to drink and away they'd go and they cause
- 24:00 all the noise in the village of a night time. It was good thinking on the commander's part to get us out to an area where we completely forget about it and focusing us on this village was completely different than on a normal operation where you were actually intermingling with village people during the day and see if you could help them, or if they wanted you to
- 24:30 help them build something. Who ever the commander was who decided to do it was brilliant, good leadership.

Over a period in both tours did you get to have a lot of interaction with the local people?

On the first tour a lot because we did a lot of cordon searches, I think I did about seven of those. Not so much the second tour because I don't remember

- 25:00 doing any cordon searches. The only reaction we had was if we were out on patrol and we came across some woodcutters, people working in the fields. This brings me back to the first tour during the Tet Offensive after Coburg, one of the big towns in a place called Ba Ria and that was taken
- 25:30 over by the VC and 3RAR went in there and they left and we took their place. We actually lived in the middle of this town for ten days and we had a lot of reaction from the people in this town of Ba Ria. It was good reaction because they felt safe with us being there. It's funny because you had a town there and paddy fields there and then a bit of a village here and we were in the paddy fields, we sort of camped in the paddy fields.
- 26:00 The reaction was good and we used to go in there daily and check out the markets for them. I think the people started to come back outside a bit after the Tet Offensive and that we weren't there to hurt them whereas the VC were.

We were talking earlier about some radio stuff, you mentioned propaganda, what was the

name and what was that like?

- 26:30 Hanoi Hannah, I remember just after we got there and Hannah came up and said that the Sydney had been sunk on the way to Australia with the Australian puppet troops, we used to listen to this and have a great laugh, I don't think anyone ever took her very seriously at all. It was a bit like a show, if you tuned into her
- 27:00 at all it was a bit of a laugh, it was really ridiculous. It was a way that we could sit there and have a bit of a laugh at ourselves and have a laugh at them. No one ever took any of it very seriously.

What did she sound like?

Not really completely Asian but just with a twang of Asian,

- 27:30 she used to rattle on about different things, she wouldn't always mention Australians, the Americans and the American puppet troops and this type of thing and what went on. How they were having great successes during the Tet Offensive, and Saigon had fallen and all this type of thing. To the locals if they were listening to it they probably believed it
- 28:00 because they wouldn't of known any different but to us we didn't pay any attention to it at all.

You talked a lot about your group on the second tour and then towards the end what happen to this group?

When we came back, most of my section towards the end of the tour I then went to the 1st Platoon as the platoon sergeant.

- 28:30 I think I went there at the beginning of March, so March, April and May and then went to another platoon and they then got another section commander. Again it was a very hard day because leaving the guys, it was a step up for me and then it was a step up for someone else to become a section commander, the experience and everything like that. I went to 1st Platoon at one stage, a bit different from the platoon
- 29:00 I had been in, slightly different discipline wise but basically the same tactics. The 1st Platoon had a very quiet period in Vietnam, I don't know if someone was putting a hex on me because as soon as I went to that platoon they had all the action. They had multiple contacts, a couple of very big contacts with four or five VC.
- 29:30 They found a lot of tunnel systems. I was leading one patrol, what they used to do with the platoons was to split the platoon in half and the platoon commander would have half of the platoon and I'd have the other half. So his call sign used to be 1 1, and mine would be 1 1 Alpha so that meant that I was in control of that platoon as platoon sergeant over that patrol. The contact that we had
- 30:00 was with about four VC, the guys opened fire and the VC ran, there was a lot of blood but no bodies, but we found a lot of documents and we even found a typewriter, someone was carrying a typewriter to type out all the orders. Then at the end of March when we had the big incident with the D445 Battalion we were patrolling along a river
- 30:30 and we found this track and straightaway the signs were all there, because all the trees had just been cut and you could see the sap actually running down from the trees. Straightaway you knew there must have been a bunker system somewhere because the trees were that thick and they used to use them as overhead cover for the bunker systems. The track went to the left and went slightly up a hill; straightaway as soon as we saw the trees, what we used to do was if we saw signs of a contact
- 31:00 being imminent we used to take our packs off because of the weight so that we could actually run and dive down and get into cover without our packs on our backs. We dropped our packs and with that the forward scout, he came up over the top and there were five VC sitting on a bunker, he had an automatic weapon and he shot the five VC. Then all hell broke loose because the bunker system was in the shape of a horseshoe and we were in the middle. We had managed, for some
- 31:30 reason their sentry was down here and we came in between the sentry and the bunker system. We had turned left but if we had turned right we would have hit the sentry and they would have been behind us, but we had turned left and went up the hill. So consequently the sentry was here and he didn't know we were there. The people in the bunker system didn't know we were there because their sentry hadn't seen us. So consequently we were right in the middle of the bunker system, and then all hell broke loose. Then we were in contact for four hours and
- 32:00 they hit us with mortars, everything, small arms fire. We only lost one guy and the only reason we lost this guy was for some reason he stood up, we don't know why he stood up and he got shot. They brought gunship helicopters in but the gunship helicopters couldn't do much for us because we were too close to the actual enemy, we were right in with them in the bunker system so the gunships couldn't open up.
- 32:30 They brought in my old platoon, the 2nd Platoon were in trouble and again they came in to give us a hand to get out but they couldn't get in close enough to us. We threw smoke grenades and the gunship helicopters but the VC threw smoke grenades too so again they couldn't fire because they didn't know

who was doing what. We were in contact for four hours and I spoke to the platoon commander

- 33:00 and I think he said, "It's prudent that we withdraw, we are not going to fight our way out of it, we have taken a couple of light casualties and one guy dead, let's withdraw and let the gunships come in and do their thing." they couldn't do anything while we were still in contact. They said, "OK, we will withdraw." so I gathered the wounded guys as the platoon sergeant with one section and grabbed all the wounded guys and took them back to the rear.
- 33:30 Called the dust-off helicopters in and the dust-off helicopters started taking fire, one of the gunners on the side of the dust-off helicopters was killed, the dust-off helicopters then went away. At that time we had the Australian tanks but they were on the other side of the river and they couldn't come across. We were still in contact and we withdrew under fire all the way back across the river and then met up with the tanks.
- 34:00 From there they just bombarded with all the artillery and the American gunships and we finished the fight four or five hours later and got our wounded and dead away. Stayed with the tanks and the whole battalion of the 3RAR came in and did the follow up and that's where they found the thirty two bunkers and found a lot of shell dressings from the VC wounded.
- 34:30 They didn't find any of our packs, they did find a few but the VC had taken the packs and all our equipment. For weeks after that 3RAR were still finding our equipment, every time they had contact with the VC they were finding our equipment and they were actually finding letters from the guys' wives and mothers that they had in their packs that they took out on patrol with them. When you are out on patrol you'd still get your letters brought out to you and they were
- 35:00 in contact with the VC weeks after that and they were retrieving letters from the VCs that they had actually had on them.

How close to the end of the tour was this?

That was the 31st March, there was March, April, May, so that's two months to go,

- 35:30 getting a bit short to be in a big contact. After that we had a couple of smaller contacts but that was the biggest one we had. I remained with the 1st Platoon until the end of the tour. Even though I wasn't promoted to sergeant at this stage I was moved into the sergeants' mess. I think I was the only corporal in Vietnam who was in the
- 36:00 sergeants' mess, because they considered me active in the position. I didn't particularly want to do it because I wanted to be with the diggers, but that was how the system operated in those days.

I'm also curious to know in such a big fight how you withdrew the wounded, how you moved them out without getting shot?

We dragged and carried them, we got to a certain area and a couple of the big guys, and the guy who was dead they actually threw him over his shoulder,

- 36:30 they knew he was dead so he couldn't be hurt. The wounded guys we dragged by the feet and just dragged them back. They knew they were wounded and they were hurting, a bit of dragging over a bit of timber or things like that didn't worry them at all at that stage because they knew they were going to get dusted off. When we got across to the other side of the river we then realised we had a couple more wounded guys, some guys had slight wounds like
- 37:00 shrapnel in the back and things like that, and just went away and came back and remained on duty, they just got fixed up. That was a really big contact; the platoon commander got a Military Cross out of that. The forward scout, a bloke called Dennis Harrigan got the Conduct Medal. One of the section commanders Peter Wood got
- 37:30 a Mentioned in Dispatches, from an action like that for those decorations it just goes to show you the standard of the action and those guys did a fantastic job.

With the underground bunker systems, maybe not on that occasion but on other occasions did you explore them?

Yes we'd go down and look at the bunker systems. We never went down the tunnels because we would leave that for the engineers, the actual long tunnels. Some of the bunker systems are really big.

- 38:00 We had one incident not so much a bunker system but on the second tour it was in a swamp area in the mangroves and there was a suspected hospital in that area and this was when I was still a section commander. They choppered us in and winched us down into the mangrove swamps and we went into the mangrove swamps and we actually found a hospital area. What they did down there, they didn't build bunkers they actually, in amongst the mangroves it was all
- 38:30 like mud and clay and they built them like igloos. We never got the people in there but when we got to the actual camp area there was still mud crabs being cooked in pots, they were very nice, but that shows how close we were to them. As we were following them up when you put your boots in mud the water is still coming down, the water was still actually coming down the footprints.

- 39:00 Because it was a hospital area we were warned to be super sensitive about contact because they were probably wounded people so we weren't as aggressive as we could have been. Whether we were thinking we didn't really want a contact with the medical people I'm not sure but what we did was we just pulled back from there.
- 39:30 The strange thing was the military planners didn't realise that the mangrove swamps have got a tide so we were there that night and the tide came in, we had to sit up in the mangrove swamp, all night we sat up, we couldn't go to sleep because we were frightened we were going to fall out of the mangroves. All night you could hear the water hitting up against the mangroves, you weren't sure if it was people coming in or the tide going out. The next day
- 40:00 they winched us back out again, but that was an interesting incident. Like I said, just the difference between the VC and how they could adapt to any sort of country, whether it was bunker systems or the mangroves. You would never think that they could build a hospital in a mangrove, with the mangroves and the rivers you just have to look at the mangroves, noone could ever live in there, but they actually built a hospital in that area, it was unbelievable.

Tape 10

00:30 You are Mentioned in Dispatches?

Yes.

Can you tell us about that event?

That was over three events, it was the first mine incident with the two platoon commanders. I sort of took control of the whole situation there and called in

- 01:00 the medivac helicopter, it was only because of my experience of being there before. It was nothing big that I did or anything it was the fact that I had the experience and I had done medivac helicopters before. I knew how to prioritize casualties and to get them off, that was the first part again, no big deal. The second one was we had

- 01:30 sprung an ambush one morning and we got a couple of VCs, one VC seemed to withdraw and I volunteered to do the follow up and I killed the guy, again no big deal anybody else would have done the same thing, just experience. The third part was in the last mine incident where the guy trod on the bamboo again I remained in the mine area

- 02:00 and I went back, no big deal.

But it's a pretty good feeling?

Yes it is. I think I wear the decorations for the rest of the guys.

Is it strange to be awarded, to get something like a Mentioned in Dispatches in an event where one of your men has died?

- 02:30 I don't really know how they put awards out, I'm not really sure, there was a VC [Victoria Cross] that was in Vietnam where a guy stayed with another guy and they both perished. I don't know, I don't know whether they give it for not so much the event but the leadership that you show within that event.
- 03:00 As I say I don't know what the criteria is, it wasn't until I came home in June but it wasn't until November that I was told that I got a Mentioned in Dispatches, so you never know. I think there were so many awards they had to give away in those days, it was a ratio system and if you were lucky enough you got one. I know there are a lot of guys who missed out and they did fantastic things.
- 03:30 I'm not really overjoyed with the thing, it was nice to have, it was nice to get recognized but like I said, there are other people who deserve the awards. A Cross of Gallantry [South Vietnamese award] was slightly different because prior to that the Australians weren't allowed to accept foreign awards. A typical example is in the battle of Long Tan with 6RAR, they all got foreign awards but they weren't allowed to accept
- 04:00 them, they went into town and brought them dolls, the Vietnamese presented them Vietnamese dolls instead of decorations. I consider that very wrong, this Cross of Gallantry has only been in the last three years that I've been allowed to wear that decoration, but before there was no authority to wear a foreign decoration. In the last three years I got a letter from the governor
- 04:30 saying that it has now been approved for me to wear the foreign award. So again it's a good feeling that if someone is going to give you something in good faith, particularly a foreign country then you should be able to wear that award. I'm sure ministers if they got foreign awards they would have been able to wear them and I think it took the Australian Government far too long to let us wear those foreign awards.

Tell me about what this award represents

05:00 **and how you gained it?**

The gallantry. It was virtually for the same thing that was mentioned in the dispatches. I actually got that award in Vietnam, we had a parade in Vietnam and I was the only soldier in our company that got an award. It was a big thing for the section too, but again there were a lot of guys who should have got awards.

05:30 It didn't mean a great deal to me knowing full well I had the award but what could I do with it? I couldn't wear it, it was our records to say that we had it but it didn't mean a great deal, it was just a Cross of Gallantry by Vietnam, so what. The Mentioned in Dispatches is slightly different. They were all foreign awards, they didn't mention in dispatches that it was a British award

06:00 it's not an Australian award. I've never got an Australian award really; it has always been foreign awards, but again never mind.

We talked briefly before about how you were split up from your Pygmies, what sort of emotional effect did this have on you?

Very emotional initially but because I was going into the position of sergeant

06:30 the responsibilities are going up again. I would still listen to the radio, we would listen to the radio all our different call signs, like 21 Alpha, 1 1 and the 2nd Platoon was naturally call sign 2 or 2 1 or 2 2 or whatever and I'd listen, 1 1 and 1 2, and I'd say "1 2 is in contact." straight away I'd know and they'd say, "The section would

07:00 be in contact." We would listen out for each other so it was good that way.

With it being so soon before you were going home how did this affect the way that you related or bonded with the new section?

There were no worries but initially it was a bit strange for them because I had my different views of platoon sergeant. They would have gone through a bit of a hard time

07:30 I think, they had a few discipline problems. Not big discipline problems but discipline problems that needed to be handled, and I think the powers that be thought I was the person to handle those situations and I had no problems with discipline when I got there. I think once they had a few contacts and they had the big contact it really made that platoon then and it settled them down a lot.

08:00 The platoon commanders are a bit different, the platoon commander is a great guy and he lives in Brisbane now and like I said before he got a Military Cross for that particular contact and it's very hard for a platoon sergeant to go into a platoon with a platoon sergeant who has already been in the country for say eight months and have any influence on the way that you see things going, so it's a bit

08:30 different, a bit more diplomatic than the way that I might of handled situations. Having said that we had our disagreements and our agreements but it was always for the good of the platoon and the good of what we were doing. There was never a situation that called for us to say, "No I'm not going to do this anymore." it was always for the good of the platoon.

As your section tour

09:00 **drew to a close what were your feelings about going home?**

I was looking forward to going home but again most of the guys when we got home were national servicemen and we sort of split up. I was very confident sort of a guy by that stage, I turned into a really professional soldier and my whole life revolved around soldiering.

09:30 I put in to go back again, I asked if I could go back on the Training Team later down the track but that was denied and they said, "No, you remain with the battalion, you are experienced now and you can get promoted to sergeant and you will remain with the battalion." Like I said I was a professional soldier then and I got promoted to sergeant after I got home. I remained with the battalion and the battalion then split up

10:00 because as the national service guys got out of the army it got smaller. The 2nd and 4th Battalion linked so we were then the 2/4th Battalion and it was great for me because I had served in both battalions in combat. I had served with the 2nd Battalion in combat and I had served with the 4th Battalion in combat so it was very much of a family gathering. Most of the NCOs I knew in 4 I knew a lot of the diggers I still knew, and 2RAR too. I stayed there with the battalion

10:30 and got promoted to sergeant and after that I got posted to the Infantry Centre as an instructor. Again this was a thing that I always wanted, I always wanted to go back as an instructor and instruct the young guys. It was good and went back there and while I was there at the Infantry Centre I instructed in small arms wing, sniper courses, we used to travel throughout Australia and teach the soldiers how to shoot correctly. Especially after Vietnam

11:00 a lot of ammunition was spent but there weren't too many kills from it. They looked at methods on how to shoot, night shooting. While I was at the Infantry Centre I got selected to go overseas back to

England. Having said that when I was in 2/4th that was the first time I went back to England and the company went over to England to do an exercise and that's when I went back to see the family.

- 11:30 Also when I was in 2/4th we did a three month trip to Butterworth up at Penang to the air force base with just normal base patrols, nothing big. We did that and that was my battalion days virtually over. I then went to the Infantry Centre and joined the sniper wing, again I was selected to go back to England as an instructor at the Infantry Centre to instruct the British on sniping techniques.
- 12:00 Also we had foreign students over there, we had Israelis, Arabs, Norwegians, Irish, Scottish we had everyone, they were actually the students on the course. Again they didn't think I was British or English, I was Australian and that was it. Then I came back to the Infantry Centre and I was then
- 12:30 promoted to warrant officer and I stayed with the Infantry Centre and I went into what was sort of junior leaders, it was where they came to do their courses to be corporals, it was passing on your experiences from overseas and telling the corporals and that sort of thing. From there I then got posted back to Adelaide to Woodside back to 3RAR in
- 13:00 Adelaide. I had never served in 3RAR but I had been in the big contact as we were apart of 3RAR in Vietnam as a sort of an attachment we had before those days, I went down there as a company sergeant major. The battalion remained there for a couple of months and the whole battalion got posted to Holsworthy in New South Wales and we then became a parachute battalion. At that stage I was
- 13:30 getting up into my forties and I thought, "Barry it's very hard to keep up with the youngsters." and I then went away and did my RSM course and I passed the RSM course. While I was there I got married in 1982 and we had Nathan in 1983 and I was still in the battalion at that stage. I then got posted again with rank.
- 14:00 With the infantry battalions you only did two to three years as a company sergeant major and then you moved on. I was in Bravo Company 3RAR and got posted up here to Waco, an army reserve unit out of Waco. At that time I was ready to be posted again as RSM warrant officer but we had Nathan and I decided that this was the time to start looking after the boy,
- 14:30 so I decided that was it I was finished with the army. That was the only reason I got out of the army, I still enjoyed it, we had a great time, the army was good to me. This job came up and they formed this particular job and it was the State Government Protective Security Service and its charter was too look after the politicians and the courts, there were a lot of threats going around with the politicians in those days, a lot of bomb threats. Particularly against judges so the Queensland Government
- 15:00 decided to form the service. I came for the interview and they accepted me but just to keep myself in tune I thought, "I'll take leave first and start the job and if I like it then I'd apply for my discharge." so that's what I did. I took a month's leave, I liked the job, felt comfortable with it and then applied for my discharge. They accepted my discharge and they gave me a honourable discharge and
- 15:30 wished me all the best and then I continued on with this job and I've been in this job for twenty years. I originally started on patrols with different jobs and about fifteen years ago I was selected to come here to look after the premier and I've looked after all the premiers in Queensland from Sir Joh [Sir Joh Bjelke-Peterson] all the way up to the current one so it's been really good. We live in Durack and built our own house
- 16:00 and my son is doing well, he is in the meat industry and going well. My wife is the normal housewife and enjoys life doing gardening and all those type of things, and it's been great, it's been a good twenty odd years.

After spending so long in the army did you miss it, did you miss the lifestyle?

Very much so, but we found out in this service a lot of the guys

- 16:30 about 99% percent in this service were actual military guys so it was an easy transition from the military into here, we all had the same interest. It's changed now, you will see a lot of my guys are young guys and there are a few females within the service which is good. Now I've grown used to being out of the army, I don't particularly miss it but
- 17:00 it's just nice to get together with all the guys, but I've lead a very interesting life.

Just going back quite a bit, coming home from Vietnam the second time what was that transition period like being away again and adjusting to Australia again?

It wasn't bad at all.

- 17:30 We went to Townsville, we were lucky going to Townsville because the people of Townsville weren't exposed to too much military and they opened their arms to us. The public, the locals were good to us and we only ever had one incident in Townsville prior to going to Vietnam on the second trip. We had the university next to the camp up there and
- 18:00 there was a huge big rock at Laverack Barracks, as you drive into Laverack Barracks and someone painted 'Death 2RAR' on it and this was prior to us going up. The guys rightly or wrongly believed it

was the students. A couple of guys retaliated with paint and they went up to the car park and painted all the students cars. There was never anything

18:30 in the paper about it, no publicity they wanted to keep it quite. The deans of the university got together with the COs and they came to some sort of agreement, from then we had sort of a good working relationship with the students. I still believe it was the students; it was certainly our guys who painted the cars I've got no doubt about that. But that incident maybe brought everything to a head and the students

19:00 got invited down to our sport events and we got invited up to their sport events, and people got together and they realised that we were doing what we were told to do by the government, whether we wanted to go it was immaterial, we had no choice in going. I think it worked their way too, we understood the way they felt that they had a freedom of speech to do things, but to do things the right way.

19:30 Protest against something but don't protest directly to the soldiers.

How did you feel when you heard about the news about the Australian troops being brought home from Vietnam?

Because I wanted to go back I was a bit disappointed, I think I must have been mad. I didn't mind them coming back but the problem was once they did come back the army

20:00 got smaller, the morale was lost in the battalions. Having a full battalion of troops, say five hundred and you went down to two hundred guys, the guys were continually doing mess duties, barrack type soldiering. There didn't appear to be any future for the army,

20:30 people wanted to get out of the army. Training was very mundane and boring, the people were fed up with that type of training, everything seemed repetitive all the time. It wasn't until we started getting some battalion commanders, not younger type battalion commanders but ex-Vietnam company commanders who came back and became platoon commanders and they would see the problems. That peace type soldier is very hard

21:00 after being in all the action and come back and do peace time soldiering. We had a particular commander called Colonel Deighton and he actually won a Military Cross in Vietnam with 4RAR and he could see this and he introduced what we called 'Adventure Training'. Adventure training was still military training but they would send Les Hiddins, the bush tucker man [television personality] he was in the battalion at that stage

21:30 and they used to send the platoons and companies to different places to do different things. We used to paddle canoes down rivers to try to get diggers introduced back into the army. He got away from the normal type training, to keep the guys active and encourage

22:00 a lot more sport and these type of activities within the battalion. If you did go away on exercises they were interesting exercises, they were different phases. He took us up to Katherine in the Northern Territory on an exercise, the whole battalion went up to Katherine and it was different type of exercises and we were paddling boats down rivers on one part of the exercise and another part of the exercise was survival training, eating birds, snakes and lizards,

22:30 living off the land and again it brought the army back to where it really wanted to be. If those commanders like John Deighton hadn't of done that I think the army would have really suffered because I think they would have lost a lot of experienced guys. Like I said soldiering after being in actual contact is completely different. We had nowhere to go,

23:00 they would never employ Australian troops in a peacekeeping role, its only in the last few years that we have been employed in peacekeeping roles. Whether they thought we were too aggressive I'm not too sure, but no one ever invited Australian soldiers as peacekeepers, with no history. As I said it's only been in the last few years that we have been in peacekeeping roles, but certainly not in our day.

How did you feel when you heard about the fall of Saigon considering you had spent so much

23:30 **time in the country?**

We could see it was a politically motivated thing, why Saigon fell, it didn't fall because of the military it had nothing to do with military at all it was because of the politicians and the decisions that they had made. As I said before in 1967 and 1968 they had North Vietnam on their knees and if they had continued bombing North Vietnam and gone

24:00 into North Vietnam it would have been over, but for some reason the politicians were holding the bombing. As I said if they had of kept bombing it would have shortened the war. Even the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese they knew that, if they had of kept going. I think really the politicians were conned by North Vietnam, every time it looked like they were having a hard time that's when they wanted to go back to

24:30 peace talks. I think they used that as an avenue to start building up their troops. The war wasn't lost by the military, no way in the world, it was lost by the politicians and certainly the Australians they did a

fantastic job, they never lost.

When you were talking a little bit before about how excellent

25:00 **it is to get together with people from the army and your section. What do days like Anzac Day mean to you?**

Until the welcome home parade we never went to an Anzac Day parade, we kept well away from them, for some reason we didn't want to go there. Now it's great, you see your mates and you go and have a couple of beers. I think the

25:30 local people, particularly here in Brisbane accept Vietnam veterans, great to what they used to years ago. On the parades here we get the largest claps as I said people accept us and the youngsters they accept us a lot better than the young people did in our day. Because we have families now and we have a lot of kids

26:00 they like to march and be a part of it. It does mean a great deal. The more that we can be a part of it that's the importance of keeping the Anzac tradition alive. The way that Vietnam had gone, particularly the way we were treated when we came home, the veterans didn't come out of the woodwork I think Anzac Day would have slowly lost what it was all a part of.

26:30 Now the Vietnam veterans come out of the woodwork and they feel proud and they feel apart of it and it feels good.

What do you think about when you march on Anzac Day?

About the guys that didn't come home, the good and bad times you had. I think the strangest thing is in Brisbane they always fly the Helicon helicopters and the Helicon has got a sound

27:00 of it own and your hair just stands up on end. When I live in Durack they have Helicon helicopters for the emergency services, rescue helicopters and they flow right over the top of my house every other day. As I said a Helicon helicopter has a sound all of its own and it brings it all back to you when you hear the helicopters and it's really good.

27:30 In Brisbane on the Anzac Day march you are marching along and as soon as the Helicon helicopters go overhead you are straight up, you feel eight foot tall and you've got your medals around you and you feel great and it's good.

Looking back on your entire service what would you say was the most important lessons that you've learnt, or what it has taught you?

As a commander

28:00 it has certainly taught me to look at myself, what I do, how I do things, how you treat people. As I said before not to ever expect anyone to do anything that you won't do yourself. Always lead by example, don't be too critical of anyone, and always look at their side.

28:30 **What would you sum up as your best experience?**

Mateship, the mateship of the guys, the funny times, the good and bad times. Even during the bad times it always brings the best out of people and you look back on those.

29:00 In the twenty two years in the army I had some fantastic experiences you can never buy, even the bad ones there were so many good ones too, it was great. I could never have had a better life, I could never have had the life that I wanted outside of what I've done in the last twenty two years in the military or the twenty years I've been in this service. I could never have sat down and said "This is what I want to do"

29:30 everything in life has come to me whether it's been good or bad, and at the end of it everything has come out good. Initially as I said before when we first came back from Vietnam there were very bad periods but now my life is complete.

When you mentioned you first came back from Vietnam and those were bad

30:00 **periods due to?**

Things that were going on in your life, it wasn't so bad for us that were still in the military because we had each other, it was the times when you didn't have each other.

How did you deal with that loss of companionship?

30:30 We were fairly lucky because most of our life revolved around the military and the military is your family. Even when you went on leave you were still glad to get back, you were enjoying your leave but it was nice to get back with the guys. The ideal situations were that you went on leave with some of your mates, you shared your experiences.

31:00 In fact on the second trip before we went over we went over to Cairns and some of us went to Noumea on one of the cruises just for the hell of it, something might go bad over there so we will take a trip and

there were about seven of us that went on a cruise to Noumea and had a great time. As I said before the 'Band of Brothers' and more so now than what we were

31:30 then and we can really say we were the 'Band of Brothers'.

We are coming towards the end of this tape is there anything that you would like to say or any final words or anything we have missed?

Only to say that if Australian troops ever get committed to war

32:00 always back whatever they do.

INTERVIEW ENDS