

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Edward Schunemann - Transcript of interview

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### Tape 1

00:34 **If you'd like to give us your name and give us a bit of a life summary?**

OK! I've done that a few times in Toastmasters! That's the icebreaker.

**Oh good, excellent!**

I'm Ted Schunemann and I was born in Rockhampton in 1931. We lived on a small farm at Thangool, a little settlement about a hundred and nine miles then, from southwest of Rockhampton. We had a small farm, three hundred and four

01:00 acres. We were very poor because it was the Depression era but we were not hungry. We had plenty of food on the farm but clothing we had little of. I recall not having my first pair of boots actually until I was about twelve or thirteen years of age and that made it very difficult in the cold winters that we'd get down in Thangool. I went to Mount Scoria State School. I walked five miles to get there. Later on I

01:30 left home early in my life and got a job on the council. From there I went to North Queensland in the sugar industry. When the Korean War broke out as soon as I had opportunity I joined up and I served in Japan and Korea with the 3rd Battalion. I came home, left the army and became a sales rep [representative] for various organizations, and when the Cuban Crisis came on I was a bit worried about what might happen, so I rejoined the regular army but I didn't go to Cuba. I ended up going to

02:00 Vietnam and because of my downgrading medically from the Korean War, I served in an administration capacity for the 1st Australian Civil Affairs Unit, which was very good. After the war I came home and I was posted to the cadet organization in North Queensland at Charters Towers, and stood for the city council, and was elected as an alderman, and was discharged in absentia, and stayed on there. I ran for parliament in 1977,

02:30 didn't get in by a whisker and eventually managed the tourist bureau and development bureau. After that of course I retired, received an army pension and in 1999 after a world tour we came and bought a house here in Rockhampton, and we're here because we have some grandkids here. That's my life story in how many minutes?

**Well done!**

03:00 **Maybe we could start with your parents. Can you tell us a little bit about your parents?**

My background is very interesting. My father and his parents came from Germany when he was a very young boy. It would have been in the 1900's early and our surname Schunemann was obviously a German name. It does mean nice person or pretty boy if you want to flash it up a bit! My father's name was Adolph

03:30 and he married Bernice Ida Gaze, that's from the Gaze family, the basketballer group, and they're related right back to Watt, who invented the steam engine in Scotland. So it's a fine background. During the war of course this created a problem. Grandfather Schunemann was a respected citizen at Thangool. He had bonds in the war and his house was raided by the Commonwealth Police or whatever it was called in those days, and they confiscated his silver

04:00 German opera glasses. My father's brother Ernst or Ernie as we called him was shire councillor and a member of the Queensland Cotton Board, and he was interned during the war. I still do not know why. He was a respectable well liked person too. Going to school I started and did well at school but on the way home probably about 1939 when I was eight or '40 when I was ten, some of the older boys would stone me in the creek because I had

04:30 a German surname, and my father's name of course was Adolph. That sort of turned me off school, so I played the wag a lot [skipped school]. In fact I got to like that, playing the wag, so my primary school education was very limited because of those things that happened in those days. However, it's never worried me. The other younger friends of my age, we sort of followed the war with interest and all

- 05:00 wanted to be in it, as we got older. Towards the end of the war we sort of secretly hoped the war may go on long enough so that we could get a shot because that was the big thing. Undoubtedly we were affected by the promotional side of things from our side during the war, propaganda as they sometimes call it but the war didn't go long enough, so we missed out but then they started the Korean War. We went to join up. They said, "No we only want ex-servicemen
- 05:30 from World War II with experience." So we waited and waited and at one time the newspapers came out, and said they're taking them from the regular army. So we joined up, a group of us. We signed up for six years to go to the Korean War and away we went. We were a fine bunch. They won a lot of medals and they performed well. The Korean War of course had these ex-servicemen there, who guided us. That was a very important part of it and eventually what I believe, they became one of the most professional group of service people that ever served
- 06:00 for this country. I came home. Of course it was dull times being back home in the Australian Army and we all sort of got out after doing about three years. I then started to look at better jobs than I had labouring in the sugarcane industry. I became a tyre salesman, a spare parts counter jumper [sales assistant] and I learned quickly. I received a little bit of education in that part of the regular army but not much. But
- 06:30 I was a good reader and I improved my own self. I had a job on a trochus boat as a marine motor engineer. I worked on the British Food Corporation out at Enmore as a diesel mechanic, all of these without any qualifications but I did the job because I understood how the thing worked. In the cyclone of the year the Queen came out, which must have been about 1956, we were
- 07:00 in there and we were sunk. Our boat went down in a cyclone off Swain's Reef, off Rockhampton towards Gladstone. We were wrecked on Percy Islands for a week and I came back, and that was it. So I had to get a job somewhere, so I went and worked in a sugar mill in the town of Babinda just south of Cairns. Whilst there I joined the reserve army, the CMF [Citizens Military Force] as it was called and went through all the ranks, and became qualified as a warrant officer. Anyway,
- 07:30 when the, as I said earlier, the Cuban Crisis started I rejoined the regular army and I was promoted pretty quickly up to the rank of sergeant in 2 Battalion for a long time. Then I was promoted to warrant officer as the area sergeant major cum administrative assistant for the Wacol Greenbank sub-area. From there of course I did Australian Army training, team training for Vietnam but because of the medical condition from the
- 08:00 Korean War I was taken off that draft and posted to Vietnam with the 1st Australian Civil Affairs Unit. This of course was a brand new concept for the Australian Army, where we worked with Vietnamese, bearing in mind that I had done two Vietnamese language courses and with the administrative background plus the army background, and all the other things I'd done, I was seconded there because of those
- 08:30 previous experiences. It turned out to be a very interesting tour of duty. Some of the fellas were mixed up in the fighting. We were not always far from it in Vietnam but it wasn't the same as being in the infantry of course. It was a very fine experience and I met a lot of wonderful Vietnamese people, and I learnt a hell of a lot about their culture, and their country by being in that position.

**We'll definitely cover that**

- 09:00 **in a lot more detail later on. That's very interesting. We'll just go back a little.**

I'm trying to go in chronological order.

**Chronological order, yes. That's OK. It doesn't need to be in a chronological order, so don't worry about that. What would be your earliest memory from your childhood?**

The earliest memories from my childhood are definitely on the farm. I can remember when I was four. My mother came home with my second sister.

- 09:30 I can't remember my first sister. We were two years apart and then another two years apart. I can remember her coming home and the old farmhouse, and I can remember the cotton growing there, and all the cotton pickers coming in the season, and picking the cotton. I can remember that my father was a person who really looked after the workers where others had to live in tents or bush humpies [basic shelters] around the place. He actually had a house there. I can remember our first house came
- 10:00 from Mount Morgan. It was an empty house an my father bought it, and they put it on the train, and took it down to the Callide Valley, and unloaded it, and towed it with tractors out onto the farm, and it's still there today. I can remember that. I can remember 1938. Well I'd have been seven then, buying our first new car, a 1938 Ford Deluxe V8 sedan. It smelled beautiful inside. I can still smell it, that lovely green upholstery but it wasn't long after Dad started carting
- 10:30 the pigs and the calves in the back seat to the markets in Thangool every fortnight. That was a different side of things.

**Why did your dad decide to come to Australia?**

He never spoke about Germany all that much and he didn't speak German to us. I never ever heard my father speak German. He was a very fluent speaker of English, except if you listened carefully he'd say

11:00 'J' for 'Y' in 'Yapan' or Yarwun down the road, he'd say the same thing again, he'd say 'Jarwun' instead of Yarwun. That's the only thing you'd ever pick up but I can't believe it was a religious persecution or anything in Germany because I never observed any religion whatsoever in any of the family. There were three or four brothers and aunties, and they all did well in Australia, held prominent positions but I don't

11:30 really know why they left. I believe that they were fairly well off because grandmother ran a shop, a department shop and grandfather Schunemann, my grandfather was in charge of a moulding shop or a factory of some sort. So they both had jobs.

#### **In Australia?**

No. In Germany but when they came out here of course they selected land. My father did at Thangool but prior to that they were for some years on the western line

12:00 out for miles on the south western line, main line and that's of course where he met my mother. Her father and mother were there working for the railways. Grandma Gaze was the station mistress at a place called Drillham and they had a little block of land there. It reminds me a lot of the Prickle Patch in some of the humorous things or "On Our Selection". It was a fitting description by Steele Rudd's book. When you read that, but that was before me.

12:30 They packed up with my brother Bill, who is nine years older than I and that indicates there must have been some children lost between my brother and I. They travelled in a buggy with all their possessions to Thangool. I've got no idea how long it took but it's quite a way. Nowadays it would take you ten hours possibly to drive there from Rockhampton but they travelled in a buggy. It must have been some weeks and took up the block of land. My father worked on the relay

13:00 or the line land gang in the railway for a while. He was a pretty good fighter and he at one time beat Rusty Cook, who represented Australia at the Olympic Games in the boxing ring. They're the sorts of things that I remember.

#### **And he wasn't involved in World War I at all?**

No. He wasn't He'd have been too young then I should imagine and I'm now

13:30 seventy-two and he was thirty-five when I was born.

#### **How old was he?**

He was thirty-five in 1931, so I should have all this in my brain. Thirty-five in 1931, what does that make him? World War II fits in somewhere.

#### **Can you remember his opinion about Adolph Hitler during World War II?**

In World War II he never sort of spoke

14:00 too much. No one in the family, in the German part of our family spoke too much about Adolph Hitler or anything like that. I don't think they liked it very much. I suspect and I'm sure that on occasions my father was pretty proud of the German fighting ability of the soldier. Of course later on her was very proud of me being the first Schunemann soldier in our side of the world affairs, the British Empire side and the Commonwealth of Australia side .

14:30 He never said anything much though but when the Germans were dancing on the Russians, the Russians being Communist of course, he didn't like Communists and he'd point out subtly how well the German Army did fight and they did. Any historian of infantry fighting knows exactly what they did. That's the only way. Grandfather Schunemann had a lot of bonds supporting the war,

15:00 not for a reason. After the war I remember that we received some letters asking for help from some Schunemanns in Germany. They were starving. Everything was pretty bad but that's about all I know there. They couldn't do much about it because we didn't have much more of course but I believe some members of his brother's family did send them food parcels over. So, that's about that bit.

#### **What about your mum?**

15:30 **How did her parents react to her marrying a German?**

I can't say that because I wasn't there but she was a beautiful woman and he was a very handsome man of course too. Even at the time of his death in his late sixties he had never been to a dentist and didn't need to go to a dentist. He didn't smoke and I only ever saw him have a drink once. He was ambitious in as much

16:00 as being a good farmer. Droughts and everything went against him, so I suppose it was pretty natural for him to get married because after all, many people in other countries married, even prisoners of war who came into that country whilst the war was on even. That's how that came about but I believe my mother's parents, Grandmother and

16:30 Grandfather Gaze didn't really like my father all that much because of that German background. He was pretty outspoken. He'd call a spade a spade. He wasn't frightened of anyone naturally and quite often I remember the cotton pickers would have a brawl in Thangool out in front of the picture theatre [cinema], and in front of the pub once a week pictures. The person to stop it was my father. He would get in amongst them and just pull them into

17:00 gear very quickly. He wasn't big. He was only about my size, five foot five but he was very thick set and strong.

**What kind of chores did you have on the farm?**

Me?

**As a child?**

Chores? That's an English word. We had to get up early. The girls, there were two girls, they were younger than I but I had to get up early, my brother before me but he left home relatively early too. We'd get the cows in, probably at dawn. We milked about...

17:30 You would get the horse and round the cows up, and bring them in. We milked about thirty or forty depending and by hand in those early days but half the time you just ran around the block and got the cows in because it was too much trouble to catch the flaming horse. He put his head the wrong way every time you tried to get the bridle on, so away you'd go on foot. When you've got the cattle in the yard and I can still remember the smells, and the taste, and everything. Mum would come down to the dairy bales with the tea and toast,

18:00 a big pot of tea, and all these thick slices of toast with homemade butter on, and we'd have that first. Then we'd get in and milk these cows and we were all pretty good at it. The girls would come down and milk but it wasn't a part of their workload. They helped up at the house and so forth but they would come down, and milk because we'd play up, and squirt each other with milk. We'd finish them and then you had to turn the separator by hand, and produce the cream. The cream had to be put in the cans

18:30 and carted from there up to the gate because you had a horse dragging a wooden sledge for the cream carter who came around later in the day to take it to the butter factory, for which you would eventually be paid. I remember one time in the night time we were hurrying up to go to the pictures and it was getting late and dark, and I had to feed the pigs with the skim milk. I mixed them up and fed the pigs the cream. We didn't realise

19:00 this was the case until they went to put the cream out for the cream carrier and found that it was indeed skim milk, and I had to go missing for a couple of days from home until Dad cooled down. Other than that, we did grow crops and you learnt to plough in early days with horses, horse drawn ploughs. Terrible things, hard on the horses, hard on my father but eventually we bought a tractor, steel wheels. What an atrocious thing to drive!

19:30 By about eight or nine I was on that tractor driving it and ploughing fairly capably. You had to do those things and of course you had to walk five miles to school when you did go. Horseback riding was bareback. My father came home one day and said, "Here's your horse son." This horse was skinny. I said, 'Where's me bridle?' He said, "Make one. There's a bit." He gave me a bit for the horse's mouth and what about my saddle? He said "Oh you're not

20:00 getting a saddle". Once again we learnt, all the kids learnt to ride bareback. We were better than any of the Red Indians in the films, that's how good we were. Eventually I had one fall, but that was when I was about fourteen and I was unconscious for ten days in hospital. It was just lucky someone going past saw it happen. Other than that I survived well, I had some scars up and down my shins where I ran into a barbed wire fence, and the horse turned, and my leg went along the barbed wire. But they were all part of a...we had our series of

20:30 childhood illnesses, you know the whooping cough went around. I think we survived that and we had boils, and we survived those. You trod on things and cuts, and you survived all those. If you had a cold, Mum would mix a bit of kerosene and sugar together, and you'd sip that with a teaspoon, and that would ease your throat. If you were going to the pictures and you wanted to slick your hair up, you snatched a bit of clean grease from underneath the tractor, and you pinched a bit of Mum's scent, mix it in together, and put it on your hair

21:00 and slicked it all back like Rudolph Valentino [actor], well we used to call him Rhubarb Vaselino in the old days. So you'd all go to pictures looking and smelling wonderful but you would still sneak in, in the dark. You didn't like walking in front of other people because we didn't have the clothes or the shoes to wear but we enjoyed the pictures the same as everyone else in the old days.

**You mentioned your dad had some workers on the farm?**

Yes.

21:30 There could be as many as twenty to twenty-five cotton pickers. They would come back every year. A lot of them were boozers [alcoholics] and so forth but they still came back because he was one of the good ones to work for. We always made some milk and eggs, and butter available, and they gave him a good

day's work for a reasonable day's pay. I don't know what the rates were. The work included chipping the cotton. You had to thin the cotton out originally. They were planted in rows and

22:00 if the bushes were too small together they didn't grow, and you got very few cotton balls on, so you had to chip the excess out, and make them...you couldn't plant them that way because you'd lose some, and then you'd have a big gap. You'd plant them all together and then you'd thin them out after. The excess would be chipped out with a broad sort of a hoe and they would do that, and then eventually of course when the cotton ball produced cotton balls, they would come back and pick it by hand.

22:30 That would all be packed into the bales at the end of the row, and that was great fun for us. We used jump in and stomp them down, and sleep in there in this beautiful soft cotton. In the winters it was terribly cold down there. Cotton bales figured on our beds. That was our eiderdown. Sheets were unheard of, of course. The one who was friendliest with the cats would have more cats on the bottom of your bed, always had warm feet at night. The workers...

**Any Aboriginal workers?**

23:00 There were no Aboriginals around the area. There were a few, which I met later on, the Daylight family and others but there were very few there, and I don't think there was anything that had driven them away. I find nothing in the history. My father, we never had any racist problems whatsoever and that helped me in later life, when I worked with Aboriginals. I never had a conflict of interest or anything. It's just something he instilled in us,

23:30 part of our education even though I didn't go to school much.

**Can you tell me a little bit about your schooling years?**

Mount Scoria State School was a small state school, started in the early '30s and I first went there...I was five in June, so I went along in...much like today, January, February. I actually went to school for a while

24:00 and I did very well. They had a couple of prep [preparatory] grades and I came top in just about every exam I had. It was just one of those things. I learnt to read before we went to school because we used to read all of the labels on the jam tins, tea packets or anything that had writing on it. We would read it and read it out aloud over, and over, and over, so we had a good grounding there before we went to school. However the laws those days, as they apply today, said I couldn't continue going to school. So I

24:30 went home and I had to wait until the following year, which was when I was five and three quarters old, and then I went along. I did very well again. I got quickly into Grade One and Two, and we had a teacher come along. I'm not real sure, I think the war problems was the thing that turned me off it, though I used to get them one by one if I could but I could never ever catch them, the stone throwers on the way home. They would gang up in the creek where there were millions of stones! You couldn't go

25:00 home another way either! You couldn't go home another way either. You couldn't go the way there was no creek. You had to go and I wouldn't do that. I would fight them but they'd get me down and make me say sorry, and so forth.

**What types of things would they say?**

The German Kraut, Square Head, Dumkopf, you know? The usual things, Adolph Hitler and all this sort of stuff.

**As a child what did you know about what they were talking about?**

We didn't have television but we knew the war was on. Everyone knew about that because a lot of

25:30 the older boys had gone to war. In fact that little centre lost a few in the war and we knew what was going in. We were all sort of sad about it but eventually of course I just got sick of going to school, so I think that...I left school officially of my own volition at thirteen years of age and I got a job on a farm for a while.

**When you had so many children teasing you at school,**

26:00 **how did you feel about your own heritage?**

I don't think we realised in those days what they were actually about. It was just another form of bullying, like they have today. I know one fella, I did get him later on, gave him a terrible flogging because I must have inherited some of my father's fisty abilities, so I always remember that. Of course I gained a lot of respect after that with some of the others but

26:30 the group that were doing it, in a few years they'd left school of course because everyone more or less left school at fourteen. There were no such things as high schools. Only those with money were able to send their young teenagers to a boarding school in Rockhampton.

**But you didn't try to change your last name or pretend you weren't German?**

No. At one stage of the game my father was talking about shortening the name to Schumann. Of course we all objected. We staunchly, the whole lot of us objected.

27:00 Of course I didn't know what I know now, what the name means because Schumann is a cobbler, who makes shoes but Schunemann with the "N-E" in it is in fact a German name meaning nice guy or pretty boy. That's exactly what it means.

**Why did your father want to change the name?**

I think it was only because to make it shorter because there were not too many long names around in those days, which you'd appreciate. He never ever complained too much but nobody was game of course to say anything to his

27:30 face. When he went to town he always got cleaned up and even though he had working clothes on, he tucked his shirt in his belt, and he made sure his shoes or boots, work boots, he had a pair of boots... I've never ever seen him in shorts in my life, and he always looked neat and tidy, and he would go to town, and everybody would say, "G'day Dolph! How are you Dolph?" That was it and ask him his opinions on this and that. He had

28:00 access to some of the members of parliament. One of the early ones of course that I remember was Joh Bjelke-Petersen, who was in the electorate. He actually bought a tractor off us at one stage of the game. My father, he was very much in demand for cutting down tourer cars and making utilities out of them. He used to do that as an extra thing on the farm. We grew some great maize crops, record crops. We grew some record crops of cotton. We grew wheat and oats, and barley at different times of the year.

28:30 The cows were always there of course because they were the backbone. You can lose everything in a drought but the good old cows will always produce some milk and some cream won't they? We always had a few pigs and so we survived. That was about it.

29:00 **Was there some story with you running away from home when you were thirteen?**

Yes. My father was pretty strict of course and I was a bit rebellious. That's our nature because there were no wimps in our family and I was walking through the scrub one day. I used to roam all over the countryside in the scrub bare footed and I saw a couple of tails disappear in a log, so I blocked it up with some timber, and I went home, and I got an axe, and I chopped

29:30 the log open, and there were two cross-dingo pups in the log. There were grown a fair size, so I took them home and they were cross-dingo. They had more of a domestic dog look about them than a dingo but I took them home and they were marvellous but when working with dairy cattle, they're very valuable items on a dairy farm, the dingo bred ones would bite very high up the legs, and that's dangerous on any cow.

30:00 It could even bite a cow's udder, whereas the good cattle dogs that you used on farms would bite very low around the ankles of the cow. My father said, "They've got to go." I said, "They're not going." This went on for a bit and one day they bit high again, and he said, "They're definitely going. That's it." I said, "They're not." He said, "Well if they don't go, you can go." So away I went. I packed me bags and I went down the road. It was the worst time of the season. It was winter and here's me

30:30 sleeping up against this big log with my two cross-bred dingo dogs freezing. I had about an inch of frost on me, so I used to look out and whenever my father went to town, I'd sneak home, and have something to eat. Mum would give me some food, Weetbix! Away I'd go again before Dad came home. This couldn't last, so I don't know what actually happened to the dingos in the end. I think I found homes for them and

31:00 I got a job then on another dairy farm.

**You mentioned that you were rebellious. Were there any other incidents or anecdotes you can think of?**

Well, I went to work for this fellow and his wife, and they were older than I, probably seven or eight years. They had a farm and I used to call

31:30 her by her first name, and he didn't like this because I was working there, only a worker and I'd sit at their table but I was still a worker, a servant if you want to put it that way. He said, "You'll call her...my wife as Mrs" and the name, and I wouldn't do that see? So he would shift everything up his end of the table, so I would have to say, "Pass the salt Mrs..." or "Pass

32:00 the sugar." So I got to eat my meals without any of that. I wouldn't give in. I was rebellious and eventually one day I went swimming, and I got back late, seven days a week job. I got back instead of at three o'clock to get the cows in and milk them in the afternoon on this farm, I got back about four o'clock after having a good time, and I was sacked promptly on the job. I think that was about the first time or last time I'd ever been sacked on the job.

32:30 That was quite interesting. We used to be rebellious in a nice way. We never copped any nonsense from anybody. I think most of us could fight. We all boxed in the ring in the old days but you never ever attacked people other than one on one if you had to and then there had to be a good reason to justify it otherwise everyone would turn against you too. That's young people I'm talking now.

33:00 It's just been a nature of mine. I question things. I think you have to be a bit that was to survive later in

the Australian infantry.

**Tell me about your uncle being interned.**

Uncle Ernst? Yes, it was a shock to the system because if you look at his record, he was a councillor and also on the cotton board, the Queensland Cotton Board, and that was a very

- 33:30 important semi-government organization in those days because cotton was an important product, especially in World War II years. Maybe what tipped it against him, he belonged to the German Club in Brisbane and I was actually their guest at one time when I was an area sergeant major at Waycock. I had their president out at my mess and then he invited me into the German Club in south Brisbane, and that's where I saw my uncle's name up on the life
- 34:00 membership board. Now whether that had something to do with it...that club was actually operating before World War II had started. The other thing was he had an extra letter in his name, an extra "E". Now I don't know whether that was a mix up with his naturalisation papers or whatever. There was something there but he just accepted it and went to the internment camp. I don't know where it was. There were internment camps in
- 34:30 Rockhampton. There were internment camps in north Queensland, mostly with Italians and other places but I can't even tell you off the cuff how long he was there. I'm working on that but he came back and of course things politically, local politics were never the same again of course. I would imagine that some people viewed him in an unfavourable light also because of his internment but they never ever did anything against the Australian war effort or to
- 35:00 support the German war effort. There was no way in the world.

**How long was he interned for?**

I think he did a number of years, possibly two or three.

**Did you go and visit him?**

Oh no. He was too far away and we couldn't go and visit anyone anywhere actually. I think I was nine before I saw the sea at Emu Park here. We got on a train once and I said, "Gee Mum, that's a big dam!" I was being facetious of course. I knew what the sea was. I wasn't that silly!

**What was it like seeing the sea for the**

**35:30 first time?**

It was unbelievable and I can still smell it, and I can still see it. My wife and I go down there occasionally for a drive, and I look at the park where the trains used to come in, and we'd all come out, hundreds of them, tumble out of the train, and have picnics, and swim, and so forth. That was once a year if you were lucky and if you were good.

**When you uncle was interned what kind of effect did that have on the family in general?**

I think it was part of the problem.

- 36:00 It affected other people. It didn't affect me because I was Ted Schunemann, an Aussie and that's it. In fact probably the best description I've ever been able to give myself is that I was very much like Tom Sawyer in the American Huckleberry Finn series. Tom Sawyer used to have a big old hat on and I don't think I wore braces all that much. They were cool in those days, braces, but
- 36:30 we dressed very similarly. We had nothing on our feet and we were in the bush playing the truant as they call it, playing the wag as we called it. We roamed the countryside. We climbed all of the hills. We did some Aboriginal paintings in a little cave once of our own for posterity! That's how we sort of operated.

**Were there any German traditions that your father kept within the family?**

None.

- 37:00 There were more English traditions. My Australian born mother was of English descent, had a few of those. My Grandmother and Grandfather Gaze, who used to pop in now and then, they brought English traditions with them. That's what Australia was. In fact that's the thing that I'm doing now, a Bachelor of Arts in Australian History and one segment is out of the Empire, that I have to admit that Australia will
- 37:30 retain a lot of British tradition but my father never offered anything whatsoever. He was just an Aussie as good as anyone else, apart from that Y instead of a J you'd never know!

**Can you remember how the Depression impacted on your family?**

Well, my brother must have had it worse than I. He was nine years older than I

- 38:00 was. I was born in 1931, so he would have been an age to have noticed it more than I. In 1931 through the Depression, which went till probably...it was still going at the start of the war really, '38, '39. Kids

are resilient. They don't notice these things. I've seen children in the aftermaths of war, like in Vietnam. I worked with the children and the people of Vietnam, and also in the Korean War. We'd come across many children

- 38:30 and it's what you see also in the films on World War II. They all get around the incoming soldiers and are scrounging for chocolates, and so forth. There were a lot of Australian soldiers down Thangool way building defence roads in those days and they were a great source of entertainment, and we often cadged luxury items from them, like currants and raisins, and sultanas, and things from their kitchen that we never had on the farm. The worst thing of course was
- 39:00 being cold. You know, you would have loved to have had a pair of gloves. You'd love to have had a pair of socks. We didn't know what Ugg boots were of course but something like that would have been really nice because I remember rounding the cattle up one day on horse. They were on an adjacent block, which we borrowed for a while and got to this little waterhole there, and gave my horse a drink, and I got off the horse for a little while, and he was off! I wasn't game to muck around. I had to get those cows home because they had to be milked
- 39:30 by a certain time. I ran around in this inch of frost on the ground. They've actually had snow in Thangool. I rounded the cattle up and I was running. My feet were freezing but I had enough nous [sense] to know that every time the cows on the move dropped a big heap of manure, I jumped into it with both feet and the hot manure, cow manure, which is relatively clean stuff actually, warmed my feet up, and then I'd go on, and chase the next slack cow, and got them all
- 40:00 home, and in the paddock. Of course I got a bollocking for letting the horse get away, "Stupid!" Coldness was the thing. We were cold.

## Tape 2

- 00:32 **Can you remember when Menzies [Australian Prime Minister] declared Australia's involvement in the war?**

Yes. We were working in north Queensland. We were aware of the Korean War.

**Sorry, as a child for World War II?**

The Korean War? I was a young fella by then.

**Can you remember though as a child when Menzies declared war?**

Oh World War II?

**Yes.**

Yes. We can remember that because he copped a lot of

- 01:00 criticism over things and the main points that he was criticised on was his not becoming involved in the war himself. That goes back to World War I I believe. He was an officer in like the reserve or whatever it was. He didn't go away you see. Of course the other one we were all aware of was the 'Pig Iron Bob' [nickname that Menzies acquired] thing stuck with him. When he declared it I don't think we worried too much about who declared it because in those days it was Mother England actually that they all went to

- 01:30 defend. How dare those Germans attack Mother England! Of course as we know now, they didn't attack Mother England until after England declared war on Germany did they? Germany invaded Poland first. It was discussed at the table and the news of course was radio. The ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] was very comprehensive and we could have all the discussion you wanted to.

**Germany was**

- 02:00 **stocking up on a lot of cotton and wool supplies before the war. Did your father notice any kind of increase in business or anything like that?**

No. Most of our cotton went to, as far as we know, to England and in fact just north of Thangool there is a place where these cotton or millers from England actually came out to grow cotton themselves, to help augment

- 02:30 what they could buy off us. When the war started of course, cotton was an important commodity, more so than what it was prior to the war. There was great shortages of cotton but I've never heard of that, never knew anything about it. Maybe Germany bought cotton somehow or other through the system. I should imagine they would.

**Can you remember when World War II ended and the Atomic bomb was dropped. Can you remember any**

- 03:00 **celebrations or anything that happened?**



I don't remember any celebrations when the Atomic bomb was dropped because we were all mystified. Nobody knew on our side of the country that there was an Atomic bomb being prepared and when it was dropped we sort of didn't know what it was, at least as kids we didn't know but it had to be a big, big bomb. The celebrations were on because I remember everyone went into Thangool, which is a two pub town and nothing else much.

- 03:30 We all went in there and there were all the noises in the world being created to celebrate the end of the war because there were quite a number on a percentage basis, quite a high percentage of local young fellas actually went to war from there. So that was a big night's entertainment.

**How old were you by this stage?**

I would have been fourteen when World War II ended and I was a bit cranky of course because I couldn't

- 04:00 put my age up, because I was fairly small in size. To tell you the truth I never started shaving until I was about twenty-five!

**So you left school and where did you go after you finished school?**

After I left school I worked on that farm for a while and I got the sack because I was home late one day. Then I got a job on the Banana Shire Council. I was walking behind a pull-grader. Now a pull-grader is a road grader that is dragged by a tractor.

- 04:30 You walk behind it, young fellas, and pick up the stones that are dislodged, and throw them off the road because it's going to be a gravel road. You don't want round stones the size of a cricket ball or a football lying around. You threw them off, off the side of the road and that was my first job. Then I learnt of course how to operate that pull-grader and that's one of the earliest forms of plant operating you can probably get. I learned a lot of other things, how to use explosives to blow up

- 05:00 things in the quarry, to loosen up the earth or the roads. I also learned how to operate the shovel, the pick not so much but the shovel and to shovel in those days; all of the gravel from the heap onto these trucks to cart to the roadside was the only way it was done. There were no end loaders and we became very efficient with the use of the shovel, which is a wonderful thing, and it was a great thing to have in my favour in the Korean

- 05:30 War, where we had to dig in. I could shovel all day and never get a blister. In fact I can still do that to this day.

**And you enjoyed that work?**

Well, I was free and I was getting a regular pay, and I could handle it physically. We would go out for a week or a fortnight and on payday...pays were once a fortnight, we lived out in camps, and in tents, and the big open fireplaces where we had a roast cooking

- 06:00 in the camp over, and chuck potatoes and onions in, and all the fatty foods of course in those days but you worked them off, and it didn't matter. When we came to town we didn't flock in. You know, we never had much money but we would probably buy a lot of things that we needed for the next fortnight, but then we would buy a couple of luxury items. We never ever bought much grog [alcohol] or anything because you could always get a bottle of beer. I hated beer or anything. I never really started drinking proper until

- 06:30 probably the Korean War days. I didn't bother smoking. It just wasn't there. We weren't subjected to the pressures that young people are today of course, from that sector see? Coming to town, I remember one pay I had enough and I bought my first Golden Casket ticket [lottery ticket]. The prize was something like so many thousand pounds, probably five thousand, which was a lot of money and I actually thought

- 07:00 I was going to win it. Of course out came the results and I got them, and I looked it up and down, and I won nothing. I've never bought another casket ticket for about ten years! I was disgusted!

**What job did you do after that one?**

Well, the one on the shire behind the grader it rained a lot. Even though it's not known for its rain down there, we had floods.

- 07:30 After the pull-grader it rained and they took us off the job, and they put us digging graves in the cemetery. My mate and I, it was raining and everything was sloppy, the dirt was soft, and we're digging this grave down, and I could smell this smell. I said to the foreman who came round to see how we were going...remember we were kids. We were only in our fifteens by then. I said, "What's that smell?" He said, "They buried one there not long ago next door."

- 08:00 It was seeping through the earth, the next door...a hole into the...Ah! That was OK. As long as we knew what it was it didn't matter. It didn't matter to us. So we did there and in the end I got sick of that, and they started an irrigation and water supply job up on the plateau. So we all went up there and we got a job as labourers, and my father of course rented them one of our rubber tyre tractors, which was a rarity those days. I used to cuss,

- 08:30 tow stuff around, trailers with it all up in the north. On Friday afternoon we would come home to knock off for the weekend and kerosene tractor, so you made sure you used up all the kerosene or drained it out, and fill the tank full of petrol because petrol rationing was still on in those days. Then we'd run it down the hill nearly all the way home. Then when we got home we'd pump all the petrol out to put in the old fellas car, fill the tank up with kerosene again to go back to work the next day, see?
- 09:00 That was a little side trick they used to do, not entirely honest but we didn't get much money for what we were doing but that was interesting because the engineer there was a fellow called Bob Cashmerick, who had actually worked on the Bikini Atoll bomb, the Atomic bomb explosions and I learned a lot from him. He had a disagreement with the Queensland Water Supply Commission and resigned, and took a job on the Burdekin Weir, which is just
- 09:30 seaward side of the now large Burdekin Dam. So we all packed up and went up there with him. That was my first introduction to things up north. I was eventually in the cane and whatever, and we stayed there for a long time. From there he went to the British Food Corporation at Cullingarah, out near Emerald. That's where they first started to grow grain sorghum to feed the British...to grow pork, to feed the pigs to grow pork,
- 10:00 to send to England because after World War II things were pretty short in that line over there. I stayed there until 1949 because World War II as I said, was over in 1945. Then I worked in sugar mills and so forth, and the Korean War days more or less took over from there.

**Can you remember the first news of Korea?**

Yes. Well, the most interesting thing of course was we started and we went down to Brisbane

- 10:30 for recruit training, and that was a great new adventure for us. When I say "us", the whole lot of us. We were all volunteers. There were no problems whatsoever in the Korean War in relation to somebody being sent there because you were not sent there. Even if you were a member of the regular army, for some time you still had to specifically volunteer to go to the Korean War. Once you've done that of course you can't blame anyone but yourself either. But they were all adventurous sorts of fellows. I don't think there was any
- 11:00 patriotic thing really. Communism was in of course and a lot of people didn't like it. We knew what Communism was; we weren't dumb, from the Russian people that lived around that came out from the Russian Revolution to Queensland. We were all aware of what went on, the terrible things, soft hands to the left and hands with calluses to the right when they sorted them all out, and executed a lot of them. So weren't worried about that but we'd missed World War II and this was our
- 11:30 chance. I'm talking about my age group, so we all went there. The training was marvellous. It was a great new adventure. I was eventually posted to Japan and when we got there that was a different kettle of fish [a different situation] because here was a culture that we'd never seen before, and an old enemy, and they were marvellous. The first night, the first meal we had, we were waited on by all these beautiful Japanese girls serving the food and I'd never seen anything like that. In my short
- 12:00 introduction into the army you had to line up and get your mashie potatoes, and everything else off somebody serving it out who would put the hot potato on your thumb holding the plate instead of on the plate. That was one of the luxuries that amazed us. We couldn't believe it. That's how they lived.

**Just going back a little bit, you mentioned that you felt like you'd missed out on World War II. What were the other reasons why you decided to join up with the army?**

It would be the adventure of

- 12:30 World War II, the travel, pay. It was a well paid job. We knew all about that from talking to people and I think you wanted to make a bit of a name for yourself. I've never been a medal gatherer but you know, we'd have a medal or two when we came back and we'd be able to look some of those other ones in the eye. Probably secretly inside of me it was to show the community that the Schunemanns were capable of being soldiers
- 13:00 too and I was a good soldier. I've never had any charges or anything of that nature. I always did my job, be it under difficult circumstances sometimes.

**What was your understanding right at the beginning about what was happening over there?**

In Korea?

**Mmm.**

We knew what was happening. We knew that North Korea was a result of splitting the country in two at the end of World War II. We knew that and we didn't have briefing

- 13:30 sessions like we had before we went to Vietnam really but we knew what was going on because some of the soldiers who were there, we had relatives, we had friends who were already in Korea before we went there, they being the World War II fellas and others who were in the British Occupation Forces. They were really close to the action, so when the North Koreans invaded the South, well that was good enough. It was just another country needing volunteers, so away we went. We went as Australians more

14:00 so, whereas World War II there would have been a little bit of King and Country, and even the Empire but that didn't apply with us. That didn't apply.

**Can you remember any propaganda or advertising, or messages from the government about putting the terror of Communism in people?**

It wouldn't have registered as if it was a big blaring ad and to use the term "propaganda", propaganda used to be a word

14:30 that just meant propagating things. You advertise if you've got socks for sale and something else but propaganda changed in World War II to mean what the Germans were putting out, all that spiel. But I don't think there was anything like that really. There might have been a few speeches from Menzies but they didn't get the audience that might happen nowadays with John Howard [Australian Prime Minister at time of interview], say over Iraq 2 [Second Gulf War]. That didn't happen.

15:00 The papers would write things up but they'd be fairly factual, you know so many soldiers were killed in an ambush or whatever. So we went there with an open mind. I can't recall any real propaganda, though I suppose some of the journalism and I've got some paper cuttings that...who have made errors. You know, this is not what actually happened but it's there's nothing really wrong with that. They were genuine errors.

15:30 I don't know of any real propaganda, though we were subjected to along the line the American side of things, which came more later, the domino effect in relation to Malaya, and Borneo, and all those others. I'd assume that was there. Communism was a big thing but Korea was a bit close to World War II and remember in World War II the Russians were our mates you see? The Americans would have to be careful how they...

**16:00 What were your parents' reactions when you signed up?**

I was working in north Queensland and I was under twenty-one of course at the time, and I have one of my letters here, "Dear Mum, I'm in Brisbane and I'm joining the army to go to Korea. Will you please sign the form whereby you give me your consent to join? How's Dad and

16:30 how's the farm, and how are the cows? P.S. Send it back as quick as you can to the recruiting office address, so I can get in the army." So it was rather a surprise I should imagine to them. She would have been concerned, as all mothers are about their children. My father would have been proud. That was it. Away I went into recruit training and I wrote many letters home along the way. I have them all back.

**Did you have a medical and physical?**

Medically we

17:00 went in and of course we were fit, especially us sort of bush fellas, bush blokes. They were a great bunch of blokes. A lot of them are gone today unfortunately. They've all passed on. There are a couple left but we sort of retained an association all those years, fifty odd years now. On the medical side we had a lot of needles. That was something new. I'd never had any needles. They hit me with the smallpox

17:30 vaccinations and none of them worked because I came from the dairy farm. I was immune to any smallpox infections but some of the needles hurt, especially the advanced ones we got in Japan. Your arms would be very sore but the instructors immediately after getting needles would take you out and give you a lot of rifle drill to keep your arms moving, and make you forget about the pain from the needles. I remember once lining up for needles

18:00 in Japan and there was a Canadian soldier about six foot six, a timber cutter from Canada in front of me, and they hit the needle into his arm, and the next thing slump! He's on the floor. The building shook and rattled, and I said, "Oh my God! I'm next!" Anyway they gave me one. I walked in but I walked out all right too!

**18:30 Did you go and sign up with any particular mates?**

There were a group of us that were in North Queensland at the time, sort of similar backgrounds. Some were from Bundaberg and Maryborough, and places like that. Whilst a lot of them have passed on there are still some left today. We were working in the sugar industry and we heard on the news that they were taking regular army people. That meant people

19:00 with no experience but they'd be going to the Korean War. We said, "That's us." I was actually in Nares at the time in north Queensland and I went straight up to the courthouse there, and signed up. The next thing we were on a train down to Brisbane. Some were from Mackay. Mackay had the highest proportion of volunteers of any centre in Australia for the Korean War per capita.

**Why was that?**

Oh the sort of outgoing people that were there like us.

19:30 They'd have a go at anything, so away we went and experienced everything along the way. The Infantry Centre was in Sydney. We had to do our recruit training in Brisbane and the instructors were

marvellous. They were World War II fellas. I remember one Snowy Marcus; he had a great X mark on his chest where he'd been bayoneted by Japanese or as a result of a bayonet fight. He was the hero, still surviving. He used to always

20:00 take his shirt off when we were doing bayonet practice too! Now I look back, he was probably a real motivator. When we went to the Infantry Centre or 1 Battalion actually in those days, in Ingleburn, they didn't teach us much at all, so I went up and I said to the orderly room sergeant, "I want to get out of here and go to Korea." So he said, "Righto." and away I went quicker than anyone else. I was on a plane and heading up there

20:30 but they all caught me up later on.

### **So what kind of basic training did you get in Brisbane?**

Well, it hasn't changed much. Some of the weapons have changed a bit. We had World War II and a lot of World War I type weapons would you believe, even in the Korean War. You go through the usual marching and rifle drill, and how to clean the weapons, through

21:00 some basic tactics, and so forth. Then when you go down to the next place you should, which was the 1 Battalion, you are supposed to receive some advanced training. We did some on 17 pounders. I believe they had them in the Korean War earlier but they had no protection and the Chinese or the enemy would actually shoot them out very quickly. Later on they were replaced by the Centurion Tank, which had its natural cover. We did a bit of mortars and a few other little things,

21:30 and away we went but the real advanced training was in Japan. We went to Haramura, which was the old Japanese Cavalry training centre.

### **How did you get there?**

We flew up on a four engine plane. It took about twenty-seven hours. That was a very interesting experience. I think it was about my second flight but certainly my longest one. We flew from Sydney non-stop to Darwin and then we flew from Darwin to Hong Kong. That was interesting. We stayed the night there

22:00 and then we were to fly from Hong Kong to Japan anyway, and we had engine troubles, and they wouldn't let us fly over Formosa [Taiwan], the Formosan Government. We had to fly around, so we went to Okinawa, which was a big American base and we stayed the night there while they repaired the engine, and that's where we lined up with the Americans for the evening meal, a lovely big juicy steak, and the person serving the food plonked a big chocolate ice cream right on top

22:30 of my steak. I said, "I don't eat that." The American alongside me said, "Ah guy I'll have it." So he ended up with two ice creams on his. That was our first introduction to American food or eating style. From there of course we flew to Japan and landed at Iwakuni. That was still daylight at nine o'clock at night and all that sort of stuff.

### **What were your first impressions of Japan?**

It was an entirely different culture and the picture we had of the Japanese was the World War

23:00 II one, who did all sorts of bad things. I had a cousin who actually died in the POW [Prisoner of War] camp in Thailand and Changi, so we lost a lot of friends and some relatives to the Japanese in World War II. So that's the picture we had and we were always warned, "Don't pick this up." When you were a kid, it might be a terrible Japanese thing, and don't touch...they reckoned they were dropping lollies to kill children.

23:30 "Don't eat those." This is at Thangool mind you, those stories were going around but they weren't propaganda stories in as much as they were put out by the government or anything. They were just sort of stories put out by locals I think, people sitting around thinking up something. When we got there we were amazed to see that it was a pretty advanced sort of civilisation. That was one of the first things I noticed. The other thing that interested me were their remnants of the World War II effort. The

24:00 storerooms and there were big tunnels built into hills that housed just about everything, whole workshops. They had submarine bays at Kure that were not touched by any bombs. Later in the piece I was even there when they brought in the giant Japanese battleship, the Yokohama named after the Admiral Yokohama, Yamamoto I'm sorry, Yamamoto. He was shot down in a plane somewhere off

24:30 New Guinea. Our side got him but they had this giant battleship, the largest in the world. They sent it out for trials and the Americans got it in the Inland Sea of Japan, and sunk it. You wouldn't believe it the Japanese...this was in the Korean War days, raised it and brought it in, salvaged it. I'd never seen anything of such gigantic proportions in my whole life, especially coming from Thangool. I'd never seen a ship that size.

25:00 The Japanese seemed very polite. You could go around beer halls and drink beer. You could get drunk and nobody would expect anything from you. It just seemed to be...you know? So I suppose I just sort of formed an opinion that generally the Japanese were pretty good but there were certain people in the forces in World War II that to do the job that they did, they wouldn't put people who had a conscience in there. They'd put people you would be...you know, who would do anything.

- 25:30 They didn't necessarily represent the Japanese people. The thing about the Australians of course, our larrikinism and so forth, one of my friends in particular, he had a way of adulterating I suppose or bastardising the Japanese language. For example they would say, "Arigato Gozaimasu." Chalky, he had this broken down into "Harry's gaiters". Instead of "Arigato",
- 26:00 Harry's gaiters and after a while the Japanese were saying Harry's gaiters, and after a while "Arigato" became "Harry's." I think if you went back to where we were you'd still have Japanese saying Harry's. The other few words was, "Doitashimashita". This became, "Don't touch me moustache." The Australians do this. You have people saying; "You beaut" and "Bonza", Japanese people I'm talking about, and they enjoyed every minute of it. They have a
- 26:30 great sense of humour too of course. They see the funny side. I remember being in Tokyo main station one night and there was thousands of people. It is a big as the centre of Sydney and there's trains going everywhere and Japanese hurrying everywhere all over the place and here's this Japanese bloke staggering all over the place. He's was as full as a goog [drunk] and you never see that in Japan. They might have a drink but they do it and go home early where nobody can see them or something. I said, "G'day!"
- 27:00 How ya going?" He said, "G'day! How are ya mate!" I said, "All right! Where'd you learn to speak English?" He said, "I bloody lived in Western Australia for many years." He was boozing and carrying on something shocking! I said, "Oh well!" That was quite OK, a bit of Australiana implanted in Japan!

### **What was your job over there?**

In Korea?

### **In Japan.**

In Japan I was

- 27:30 training. I trained at Haramura, the battle training school on machine guns, you name it. Every possible spectre of infantry we were trained at and very well. We had some wonderful Australian senior officers and of course it was a British Commonwealth effort at Haramura, and in charge of it was Colonel Lonsdale, a senior British officer, who was a bit eccentric. He was in the Battle of the Bulge and he was in the big paratrooper drop in World War II. He used to walk around
- 28:00 wearing a beret, no shirt, corduroy sort of trousers and he had a big long walking stick, and a dog always with him. He loved the Australians. Some of the British trainees, they'd be a bit slack or something. He'd whack them across the back with this stick but he never whacked any Australians. We never saluted him either. He liked that but we had to do all this advanced training, where you would go on the ground, all live ammo [ammunition] I might add. We would go on the ground and fire between your mates
- 28:30 advancing in front of you at the enemy position but if anyone came into the periphery of your vision, you would automatically take your finger off the trigger until they passed then keep on firing. To build you up for this the Colonel Lonsdale said "You will go on the mound on the rifle range at Haramura and fire at the targets. Other soldiers will march from the left to the right across the mound in front of the target. You will keep firing at the targets pausing only as the soldiers progressively
- 29:00 pass in your arc of fire." This was fairly narrow, for a short distance I might add too. He said "The officers will go across first. I will lead them." Well, he won a lot of friends straightaway. So away they went, they went across and I was in that detail firing, and as you see the soldier coming in you're looking at the target, and sighting the weapon but as you're looking at the sights I can see that one coming in, you stop for that
- 29:30 person, and you can see them going here, so you continue again, so that you can keep the fire going whilst you're firing between your own kind. It was all over and he congratulated us all, and they checked the back of his corduroy pants, and found a bullet hole right between...through the trousers behind the area of his knee. I don't know who did that. It wasn't me! We did advanced machine gun training there. They had a big demonstration. All of the senior officers were there and
- 30:00 there were colonels and brigadiers, and I think an odd general on a night firing exercise with the enemy, and they used tracers. So what did some Australian do? Tracers were loaded in the belts and what he did; he filed with a file a bevel [a groove] on the point of a number of rounds. Of course the viewing was from behind and that's what a tracer is like, so you can see where it's going, and where it's landing from your firing position, which is behind you. The ones
- 30:30 who were filed off, away they went. They left the Vickers gun and then they started increasing their circles, and as they went further and further towards the circle, the targets got bigger and bigger of this firefly type light. This caused a lot of trouble. "Who did that?" They checked all the rounds because this was the Australian sense of humour and it came out all the way through the campaigns, and I'm sure that it existed in Vietnam too.
- 31:00 It must have existed in the POW camps from the reports that I read and people I spoke to how were captured by the North Koreans and/or Chinese. They had that. Whereas other prisoners died, the

Australians survived and that's how it worked.

**How would you describe that Australian sense of humour?**

It's very good. It's a dry sense of humour and it's top class. There's no crummy stuff you know. Dirty stories

31:30 don't really interest Australians, of that age anyway in that era. It had to be good subtle stuff and probably British style humour. The Yanks had no humour whatsoever. We used to get on the booze with them on leave in Tokyo and you'd give them away after a while. I respect them but they had no humour and the Australians certainly did. They'd have Japanese rolling on the floor laughing. Now that's something!

32:00 **Did you have any pre-embarkation leave?**

Yes, very short. I think it was about four or five days. I was in Sydney and I got on a train to Brisbane, and I got on a plane, flew up to North Queensland, and saw them off, Mum and Dad, and that sort of thing.

**How was that?**

That was all right yes, no big thing about it. I remember we wore khakis [army uniform] in those days and my sister ironed all my clothes, starched them up, and that,

32:30 made them look nice only she ironed the pants flat instead of with a crease where it should be, and I didn't know this until I unpacked on the way back but everything was all well. I have one photo, the only photo in existence of Mum and Dad, and the four children. It's the one at that time I was on my way, on my pre-embarkation leave to go to the Korean War and that's the only photo in existence. I don't even know to this day who took the photo because Mum was in it. Usually our photos were taken by Mum and quite often they had her finger in it, in the front.

33:00 **You mentioned that there were some Americans over in Japan. Were there British as well?**

Well, there were a lot of British...prior to going to Vietnam we were in the British sector, the British Commonwealth Sector. They did very good with the Japanese. They encouraged democracy and they lead them the right way. I can't comment on the American side of things because I wasn't over there, so we didn't see all that many but when we came back from Japan first off...

33:30 supposedly after three months in the front line you have five days leave in Japan. I think I did close to six. I was the longest serving in the front line at the time. I must have been invaluable! ...before I went on leave but when you went on leave, you went to Tokyo and that was in the American sector. That is where you came across Americans and they're wonderful blokes, and I've had a lot to do with them since, and I go out of my way to find out all about their country, and I spoke to American girls. One PFC [Private First Class], Joan

34:00 Eichenberger, I met her one night in a nightclub. She'd come from Okinawa or Guam, which I went to Guam later on. I met American Military Police too because we had some run-ins with them, the Australians once again with their humour. It sometimes got them into trouble. We associated with a lot of Americans there in the sector that they ran in Tokyo, which is a big place. But Australians, they had a guard in Tokyo.

34:30 This was prior to my time and it was on the palace. They used to rotate between the British, Canadians and New Zealanders. They'd mount the guard and they were very popular, very professional, the 3rd Battalion, (UNCLEAR) Greenlanders, and that's because they provided a guard on there prior to Korea, that one a competition, very, very strict guidelines, that many times they retained the Gloucester Cup it's called. They were

35:00 very professional soldiers, hand picked.

**Did you have much interaction with the Japanese?**

I had a lot to do with them yes because that's my nature. I talk to everybody. Even when we went on a trip overseas I talked to policemen, I talk to people, that's me. It doesn't matter...you know? And I saw them rurally. I remember one night when we were at Haramura or halfway down we camped. Chalky and I snuck away, and we went

35:30 into this little village. We weren't looking for grog or anything but we went in and had a look. If we'd have got a bottle of beer we'd have been all right. There was nobody there and we found this little picture theatre, and they were all in there. We took our shoes off and snuck in, and they were watching a movie, and they were laughing when we felt sad, and we felt like laughing when they were sad. I said, "This is no good. Let's go!" So as we went, we walked out and we put our shoes on, and then we noticed all the Japanese footwear, getas.

36:00 All their getas were all lined up outside in front, so being the devilish imp that I was, I mixed about a dozen or two of them up, took one from here, put over there and one from there, put I over there. I don't know what happened there when the Japanese came out of the film. I often thought afterwards, "Just as well it wasn't a fire." That was me, no harm but a sense of humour!

## **Did you have any conversations with them about their experiences**

### **36:30 through World War II?**

It was difficult to talk but we quickly adapted to Japanese...a smattering of Japanese. I met people. I saw the Japanese Air Force officer at Iwakuni, who actually flew the light plane from the submarine over Sydney Harbour when the submarines came into Sydney. He had a sports store at Iwakuni, one of the landing places and I have a cutting in the paper, where it was only recently that he passed away.

37:00 They gave him a write up in an Australian newspaper and I cut it out, and put it away somewhere in my log of historical things. He was of course an educated officer who spoke pretty good English but the ordinary Japanese, you'd talk to them about the cows. The cow would live in an adjacent lean-to on the house in Japanese rural areas. Rice, you could sort of get an idea what they were doing. They used to

37:30 save all the human excrement and put dollops of it on the rice, stools as they're called on the fields as fertiliser. They'd store it primarily in sort of wells at the headland of the rice fields and I can remember doing exercises in the night and we'd go across their rice fields, which they were compensated for later but I remember one of our blokes actually fell down this deep well, and out he came.

38:00 Well, he stunk and we made him sleep about three kilometres away, and have about fifty swims and showers before he got new gear, and we let him back into the group. Other than that we got on pretty well with the Japanese, the rural people. They were just the same as any other rural people actually.

### **So at this stage what were you hearing about Korea?**

What was I hearing about Korea? Well, some of them had come back. We knew of some that were

38:30 captured. One of our instructors, a sergeant, he'd been captured and they went to the POW camp up north. Of course they go into the sessions of political indoctrination about Wall Street capitalists and on, and on, and on, and how bad they were, and what they were doing to the world. The Australians were all going nod, nod, nod, "Yes, yes that's right." "How do you feel about the American Wall Street capitalists?" "Oh no good" and they're all nodding their head. They did that well

39:00 in the school, these Australian fellows, that they released a few of them, gave them a hundred dollars each or something like that, American dollars and took them back down to the frontline, and released them in the same area, in a safe area. Of course they thought that they would spread the gospel about how they were see? I don't think it ever worked but of course they had to give an undertaking that they wouldn't do that and our army I believe posted them to Japan, some of them. That's where I

39:30 met one anyway, who had actually done that and in all fairness they didn't go back to the frontline, which wouldn't be nice if they got caught, and also if somebody else did something like that...well they may never get to do something like that. So there's a bit of propaganda.

### **Was there any other propaganda that came through?**

Yes. There were the leaflets that were dropped. We dropped

40:00 millions of them I suppose from aircraft in shells. The Chinese used them a lot, propaganda type leaflets. I would have some somewhere and we also dropped surrender pamphlets, "Come over to our side" safe conduct passes. The Chinese had a similar one and the Chinese of course would sneak out in the middle of the night, and stick them all along the front of your barbed wire fences. All of the units in the frontline had

40:30 barbed wire fences. They enemy knew they were there but they were only there to slow them up when they came in so that you could kill easier, a bit like shooting ducks isn't it? But they would leave these messages there and when we went down in the morning to check the wire hadn't been cut and that happened, but that's another story, we would find these notes left there. Even at Christmas time there'd be Christmas cards and a packet of Chinese cigarettes as a gift! So I suppose they had a sense of

41:00 humour too. I'd like to think so. I've never met a Chinaman from there later but anyway, that propaganda war went on, the safe conduct pass and it actually happened where one fella came in, and my friend and I got him, had a long chat with him in broken English before we handed him over to the military police down at battalion headquarters.

## **Tape 3**

### **00:33 When that initial advertisement was for blokes to join up to go to Korea, that was part of K Force?**

No. K Force, there were two different K Forces and a lot of people are not aware of this. Initially the forces that were in Japan, the battalions, there were three battalions there, under strength a bit but they were fairly highly trained and had a very high percentage of World War II veterans. They were committed or the 3rd

- 01:00 Battalion was. They made it up to strength but it was obvious that they needed troops quickly, so they started a K Force in Australia for those who'd served in World War II to come forward and they did, quite a few. So they then, after a refreshment training, went to the battalion in Korea. They still didn't meet the demand because casualties were fairly high, so they then decided to
- 01:30 take members of the regular army. Now there would have been a small regular army in existence and they were going over too, so they needed more in the regular army not wanting to diminish the numbers, and that's where we came in. We all flocked in. We've got short numbers. My number was 1/1789. I was the 1789th person to join up in the regular army in Queensland. There were shorter numbers around but they were in the regular army maybe before Korea, but not many of them. Then of course they
- 02:00 still couldn't meet the demand, so they then called for a special K Force of two years. There was some resistance against signing up for six like we did just to go to Korea, so they had a two year K Force and they got another group then came in, and they were all like us, inexperienced people in the main. They were like us.

**Were you aware that those blokes that signed up in the last group, the two year blokes that they had to sign that form where they were not allowed to make any entitlement claims and things like that?**

- 02:30 **No. No, I'm not aware of that but we gave them curry [teased them] of course because we were the professionals we reckoned, the six year boys and they came in late anyway we said. The thing was the war was over when they came in but that's not true. Don't ever let anyone say that.**

**So what sort of curry did you give them?**

Just the normal ribbing, sledging like the cricketers do, that sort of stuff, especially in the beer hall if you came across some there. If you were home

- 03:00 and they were going over, you of course yelled out, "You'll be sorry!" That was the call at the time, "You'll be sorry!" If they were posted to a unit that wasn't right in the frontline, you ribbed them over that but they've got a pretty good record too.

**When you were in Japan doing your advanced infantry training, how keen were you to get into the thick of it?**

We were keen to get over there but I think it was getting close to the truth of the matter and we realised what it was all about because we knew of

- 03:30 casualties coming back to Japan. There were a fair few of them and the Chinese of course had entered by then, and we knew from our talking to people that they were a very formidable foe. They were not as easy to dispose of as the North Koreans and they had greater numbers of them. There were millions of Chinese available to fight in Korea and so we expected it to be difficult, and there was some apprehension but you don't really know until

- 04:00 you got in there. You can have live firing exercises and they can throw all sorts of mortars and things near you but it's not the same as when you get them on you, so you find that out later.

**How did those factors as they built up with the casualties and the Chinese coming into it, how did that affect the blokes morale as to their keenness to go?**

I don't think the morale was ever in trouble really. Australians are not really like that. They have this light way of handling things like that, adversity. They make a

- 04:30 joke of things, see? That's how it goes. You find in things that I'm writing now, bits of stories, there's more humour side. I had one published recently in our local association magazine in Brisbane and it's more about the fun side of things. People like it, they read it and they don't form an opinion, and I haven't seen anything because I write that way. I hate writing the other side too much because...but some people ought to and they have to.

- 05:00 **Being a country kid had you already handled a weapon?**

An old .22 [rifle] somewhere. I picked up a .22 barrel, no stock, nothing. It had a bolt in it and you used to put a round in it, and fire it. That was the story of that.

**So how did you fire a .22 with no stock?**

Easy! As long as there was a chamber there to hold the round and a mechanism. You don't only really need a

- 05:30 trigger. You can just pull the cocking piece back and let it go, and it would fire. I can't recall shooting anything but it was interesting. That was about the strength of it.

**Do you know when it was that you were given an actual departure date in Japan to go to Korea?**



You were on stand by. You were fairly well trained and you just did other incidental type duties in the big bases we were in at Huro, and things like that. You only went over there as you were

06:00 required to, to replace casualties more or less. There was a lull in there until the October of 1951. That's when we lost a lot of soldiers. We lost twenty killed and of course hundreds odd wounded, and they had to be replaced. That's when we went over. I arrived there just at the end of...on the 5th of October 1951. I came over just around about that time

06:30 because it was all...as the main attack had ended and they were consolidating on the positions. That's when I arrived.

**How did they transport you from Japan to Korea?**

We flew in DC3s called Dakotas or Goony Birds as some people now call them, which I don't like. We flew over. There were about twenty-eight of us, thirty on board and we landed at Seoul Airport in South Korea. I think it's Kimpo. From there we were put in

07:00 trucks and transported to the front with all our gear, rifles and whatever.

**What was the temperature like at that stage when you got there?**

My time the temperature was cool, just October and I think in November we got our first issue of winter clothing. I might add that that was the first time the Australians had received top-notch winter clothing. Prior to that they had whatever they could scrounge. The first fellas who went

07:30 there really had it bad. We had the best of British winter boots and string vests, and long underpants to put under your windproof trousers that had a front and a back fly, so that you didn't have to take them off because when we were trying them on we couldn't work it out, how the fly was always at the back instead of the front until will woke up to there were two flies in these pairs of pants. We had mittens where the fingers protruded and of course gloves also, and

08:00 a balaclava type...we had balaclavas and a balaclava type cap. Before that the only thing the Aussies had was what the Americans.

**When you first landed in Korea what were your thoughts about what was...?**

The first landing at Seoul it was all smashed up. That was the first time that I had seen live, if you want to use that term, war damage. I'd seen things on movies of course and it is always much different because it was very

08:30 badly damaged. They'd been up and back through Seoul twice or so. Our trip up north was much the same but there were small farmhouses or huts and there were some tiny hamlets standing around the place. When you got up into the frontline area, that's where the battle really raged. I was just amazed by the complete devastation. Whatever greenery there was whether it be trees or bushes

09:00 was just all shot and blown to pieces. The ground was as if it had been ploughed up by monstrous big tractors and ploughs, me being from the farm. The other strange thing was, especially in the morning or when there was no firing going on, was how quiet it was. There was deadliness about the quiet, not a sound. That's the first thing that I knew or noticed because when you come from bush,

09:30 if you get up and the birds are not making a noise, there is something wrong, either something tragic has happened to everything or you're dead, you're not really waking up at all! There were no bird sounds, no sounds of cows or anything else. Doesn't matter where you go, even in the city of Brisbane there are bird sounds in the morning. That was absent. The truckloads and truckloads of empty shell casings were going out because it was a great artillery war. The whole thing ranked with World War I really

10:00 in that. I suppose one of the differences; we would have been a little further apart in the trench warfare stage. The initial one was up and down a peninsula. That was before my time. In my time the trench warfare started but we would have been a little bit further apart that what they would have been in World War I. They were the first things I noticed. Then of course the next thing I got a taste of artillery and that was one of my great fears in the Korean

10:30 War.

**When you first got there and saw the landscape, was it what you imagined a war battlefield to be like?**

It wasn't really but I sort of reconciled myself to this is what it must have been. They must have been using a lot of ammunition. It probably didn't register on me that a lot of the stuff too was cause by the enemy artillery. Most of it would have been from our artillery facing forwards as the men were going forward

11:00 because when you got on the other side facing the enemy, some of that would have been from them too and others on the roads and gaps in between. Thousands and thousands of guns were fired in that shower and they fired later on in November, which was really bad. But I sort of adapted to it. The company sergeant major, who runs these sorts of things said to me, "You're going on the

- 11:30 Bren gun first of here in the company of quarters group." probably too easy me out into the rifle platoon. He said, "You will dig yourself a shell hole because there is artillery mortar coming in all the time." So I dug this thing very quickly with the shovel and I threw my gear, and my excess gear in there, and he also said, "You can be the company barber Schunemann." I said, "I've never cut hair in me life!" He said, "It doesn't matter.
- 12:00 Here's the gear." They gave me a case with clippers and things in it, and I put that in the hole. He came by later and said, "Quick grab your gear." meaning your basic pouches and your weapon. "We've got to go and do a couple of patrols and secure a couple of little areas that weren't too safe." because the enemy was still around all the time. The frontline was adjusting every day and night just about. So away I went and I came back, and there was a direct hit on my dugout. Every thing I had in that hole including the barbers gear was blown to
- 12:30 pieces. A mortar had actually landed in that hole, so I thought, "Boy! That's getting a bit close to home that is!" I was ever grateful to the sergeant major for giving me something to do and I never did get to cut any hair anyway! I nearly got shot one night. We had to have sentries at night, on the forward slopes especially and I had a Bren gun at one of the back re-entrance, and it was my turn to go and picquet,
- 13:00 and I was always taught never walk across the skyline, so he took me up, and he was running the picquet sentries. I did my turn and you had to come back, and wake the next fella up, so I just walked around the lower level of the hill, and I came around there was a sentry towards the rear. The password that night was Duck Pin. The thing was he'd say, "Halt Duck." and I'd say, "Pin." I came around and this back sentry said, "Halt Duck!" I said nothing and I
- 13:30 ducked. I didn't answer. I ducked because that's what the word was, it was like a command and he mustn't have had enough seniority to understand that it was a rookie, and he said, "Halt Duck!" again, and I said, "Aaaah Ppppin!" So that's what you call in-country training, don't come around the hill there on the low side if you're in that sort of thing at night. You follow the line of the trench because they didn't have indication trenches in that particular one. Later on that was the norm. So that's
- 14:00 how you learned very quickly all the way along the line.

**How would you say your tension was on those first forays into the enemy line?**

I could do all those things and patrolling, and bullets would be whizzing over sometimes, they make a funny noise like a bee going past you, it's different to anything else, I handled all that. That was never a problem to me and I had faith in those others with me. I had soldiers from World

- 14:30 War II who were corporals and at that time some of them had been wounded three times. There were people from Thangool there too, who were senior in rank by virtue of their World War II service. The company commander had a batman, which is his male servant if you want to call it that. He wasn't. He didn't do anything like that. He made his own coffee but he had him there because he was a great
- 15:00 veteran of World War II and he came from Rockhampton, and he used to advise the company commander on tactics. We all knew that went on but we gave the company commander ten out of ten for being able to ask and seek advice in a frontline situation. So we all knew this and we were confident. We were cocky in other words.

**How much advantage do you think it was to know they were mixed in with a much...?**

That was the great thing about the 3rd Battalion. The battalion went there and

- 15:30 as they were wounded or killed, or served their time, twelve months was generally the norm, they went home. Some of them came back again later too of course but that was up to them. They had to re-volunteer. They were replaced by us and we fitted in. When you got there, there was this in-country training thing going on. You weren't fighting day and night, and day, and night spasmodically. You had other duties to do like digging alternative lines behind the frontline to fall back to if you were pushed off, lying
- 16:00 barbed wire, miles and miles. I wrote home to Dad, I said, "If you only saw this barbed wire up here and the Chinese are blowing it up too! If I could only get some home for the farm!" We became very proficient. Everyone had to know every weapon and every radio that was used in the country. You had to know how to make out shell reports and they indicated where enemy fire was coming from, so you'd have counter-shell bombardment or air attacks on it. There was nothing...you had to know how to repair telephone lines. We knew
- 16:30 every single aspect of a company operation. Of course I had a flare some how or other along the line. I could do clerical too and they'd send me here and there to see a company clerk, who lived in the frontline. He'd get pays and make up ration strengths so that we got the right rations, and whatever. If he went away on five days rest to Japan they'd shove me in and I was able to do this. Filling out forms, I suppose I had a natural aptitude for it, even though I ran away from school. At
- 17:00 one stage of the game I even went down to battalion headquarters and that was a big job for five days while that clerk went on holidays. I don't know. I still haven't worked out whether I was dispensable or what but I did the job and I learnt a lot along the way. The company commander who lives in Canberra, still refers to me as a very industrious person, a good worker.

### **You mentioned all the digging you had to do. How hard was the ground?**

The digging in the summer months was pretty hard. There was a lot of rock in it and you could use some

- 17:30 muffled modified explosives if you had it but nobody did much. Most of us could dig. In the winter it was a different kettle of fish. If you were unfortunate enough to have to dig in, in the winter and there were cases when we lost some land to the Chinese, some features were caught, you had to dig in again, and there was only one way to do it. You could dig about an inch or so and it was all ice, ice six to ten foot down. Sometimes you could pour petrol on the ground and burn it. There was ample fuel, petrol because we used it in heaters in the dugout to keep warm
- 18:00 and warm your food up on. You'd pour a bit of petrol on the ground and burn it, and then you'd dig a bit more but then of course you'd get a certain amount of smoke. Whenever you had smoke the Chinese took great joy in...I talk about Chinese all the time because they were our enemy in my time. The previous ones up and down the peninsula had a lot of...they were mainly North Koreans, and then of course Kapyong was the introduction for them of the Chinese. The Chinese would send these mortars in and I remember one position
- 18:30 we went to, my mate and I, he was a military medal winner. The company commander said, "You two go on up to get our positions ready to take over from the Canadians of 355." So up we go. Canadian? They're French Canadians, couldn't speak a word of English! We couldn't speak a word of French. Anyway, they gave us some Canadian sorghum whiskey or something they had and that was nice. Then they gave me some chewing tobacco and
- 19:00 I had a go at chewing it. The only thing wrong of course was I was swallowing the juice instead of spitting it out as you were supposed to. I was awfully sick the next day. They were great big men. They must have been all six foot seven or something. They didn't carry the British number of weapon strength in the platoon; there were so many rifles, so many submachine guns, one Bren gun. They just armed themselves, all Bren guns, a
- 19:30 short version of a Bren gun. You wouldn't have the men to carry those normally. The British wouldn't. They were little fellas. They would carry heaps of grenades, same as us, whereas the British didn't. We took over from them. That was an experience. While we were there they were cleaning up and they had a lot of rubbish. They were burning rubbish and in came the mortars. I remember them. It was cold weather and this fella was wearing two pairs of pants, khaki sort of battledress trousers. As he dived into his dugout
- 20:00 a mortar bomb landed into an ammo box just near the opening that had phosphorous grenades in it and up they went, and the phosphorous grenades hit him straight in the backside. I'm there looking at this later on after the mortaring had finished and here's this big Canadian fella trying to sit with his backside in a bucket of water while he waited to be carted out because phosphorous doesn't go out you see and the only thing that will tame it down is to put very wet bandages or put it in water. He was trying to have his backside cool
- 20:30 down and all this phosphorous was embedded in his buttocks, and here he is sitting in a bucket of water. It was quite funny. I didn't have a camera in those days but anyway, eventually we went out and there were still corpses lying out in front of the lines. We had to go and clear through the minefields and burn them with petrol. It was the only thing you could do.

### **Can you remember the first time you saw a corpse?**

The first corpse I saw was in Sydney before I went over. A fellow got run over by a tram

- 21:00 while I was in town one night. I handled that all right. It never worried me but when we were there at this place it was after Operation Commando. There were a lot of Chinese dead. It was estimated that they lost three thousand. Our battalion lost twenty killed. The artillery and small arm fire got a lot of them but they had mass attack see, and mass defence too, and they counterattacked quickly. They sent a couple of mates of mine, again this group I'm talking about, they sent Harry and
- 21:30 Kev. They said, "Righto! Out you go!" In front of the position mind you. You've got to dig a hole. So they went out and here's this fella there. He's in a bad state and they dug this hole, and they were a bit lazy. They didn't dig it all that deep. That's all you can do. You can't do anything else. He was pretty gone. So they tied a bit of wire they had around his foot, around his ankle and they dragged him into the hole and they no sooner dragged him into the hole, and in came the Chinese mortars. Well,
- 22:00 Harry went straight in on top of him, this dead body and Kev copied, tried to jump in on top of him to get cover. It was automatic reaction. Well, I don't think Harry ever got over that. He came back and he was vomiting for about four or five days over it. We used to needle [tease] him about that too. That's the Aussie style of things. They'd bring a hot meal up and Harry would be ready to have something to eat, and somebody would say something about this. That would be the end of Harry's dinner.
- 22:30 That's a true story. Yeah Harry and Kev!

### **What was your opinion of the Australian officers?**

Australian officers have been rubbished a lot over history. I recall things about World War I and World

War II, and I'd like to think that I have enough intelligence to assess people. The officers that I came in contact with in the training

- 23:00 in Australia and then in Japan, in the advanced training, the Australian ones, and especially in Korea in my active service, they were first class. They were real Aussie officers, as they should be. The company commander we had, he was twenty-five. He was a captain at the time and made a major, a temporary major...in fact the first one that I served under was Reg Saunders. That company commander, he'd gone on some rest after Operation
- 23:30 Commando and they put on Reg Saunders, the Aboriginal captain. I think he had a temporary major's crown up and he was the first company commander that I ever served under in active service in A Company. Then of course the permanent at that time, company commander came back and he was a fine gentleman. He got a Military Cross and he said to us, "I received this because of you people. There's no doubt about that and it was a pleasure doing business with you." You could go around all
- 24:00 of the members of that company today and they would still stand up, and call him Sir. You don't have to call him Sir but you do that because that's a mark of recognition, of respect. The platoon commanders, they were junior people in the main. Earlier the platoon commanders could have been higher ranking officers, captains even in World War II and when they joined K Force, they were...probably couldn't. You can't all be captains but there can be
- 24:30 more lieutenants and they took it to go back, so there were quite a few of those you see? The Kapyong veterans, they were wearing ribbons and at that time it means they had service in World War II, whereas our fellas didn't. They came from Duntroon [Royal Military College] in the main but they were a fine lot too. We lost two of ours and there is never a day in my life that I don't think about them, including another mate especially. Lieutenant Ryan, he's missing in action and most of the platoon got wiped out.
- 25:00 I actually was the platoon commander on a temporary basis until the next officer came and I was a private. There was no one left. Lieutenant Frank Smith was the next and he went. I came home in November and he was out of the patrol in February '53, and they've never seen him since either, so that's two of them. In other companies I believe it was similar. They were Duntroon graduates and they were big enough to listen to the experienced
- 25:30 fellas because you could imagine by the time Frank Smith arrived, I was an experienced soldier see? Of course the company commanders used us to retrain on the actual ground whenever we had the opportunity, new recruits coming into the company. It went on and on, and on, and on. That gets back to what we said earlier, with the 3rd Battalion rotating. It stayed the same name but it rotated all the time, whereas other battalions came new and not being disrespectful I honestly believe they had a tough time settling
- 26:00 in, although there were in amongst them soldiers from the 3rd Battalion that were back for another bash, professionals.

#### **Can you remember your first contact with the enemy?**

Artilleries and mortars were the first contact. Contact would have been on patrolling, where we had clashes in the Samichon Valley. Operation Commando was over but they were still going on all around us, though I never had any personal contact

- 26:30 initially there. I was there on Guy Fawke's Night 1951. That was the worst night. That's when Bill Speakman won the Victoria Cross on [Hill] 317. We'd occupied 317, the Australians and we'd had enough of the frontline, so we went back on a rest area, which we had to dig in again. The Chinese took 317 from the British and Speakman won the
- 27:00 Victoria Cross then. They'd run out of ammunition. They had ammo per the book. We had ammo per the book plus ten times. That was the difference. That night I was out with a lot of Koreans, South Koreans, porters who were carrying ammunition supplies up to the front and taking wounded back out across the river. That was my involvement there with that but until we...I never had any personal contact
- 27:30 with them, not like some of the others that were in the trenches.

#### **How did you find the South Koreans?**

The South Koreans, I think their morale would have been down. At the start they were their own people that were invading them, the North Koreans but Communism doesn't really mean anything to the majority of the peasant people. It was a little like Vietnam. The North Koreans would have been

- 28:00 probably a better educated group than the South Koreans, like North Vietnam. The industrial areas and that were all up there. The educated people were up there. In fact the language was slightly different to the south, which was rice growing. The same thing I think existed in Vietnam. So they weren't all that worried what Communism was. You can only impose some sort of thing on people like that. It's not like say imposing something on a nation that has a very high education
- 28:30 standard and used to a certain type of democracy. It doesn't matter much to them. If they hadn't had Communism they had some sort of dynasty ruling them or something else. What I had to do with them

was generally on that level at the front. There were interpreters although we never had much to do with North Koreans in my time.

**Can you explain exactly what you did on that evening when you were**

**29:00 doing the work with the porters there?**

Yes. Well, I was a jack of all trades [person who does several jobs] and of course the roads in the last adjustment when the Chinese took back some of the positions, we couldn't get the trucks up near the front, so stuff had to come to the Indian River and come across on ducks, American. When the barrage started earlier in the afternoon, they put it all along the front. It was the heaviest...it was said at the time and I was in a position to hear things because I

29:30 was pretty close to the company commander for a while and they claimed that the Chinese barrage on the Australian or the British Commonwealth front on Guy Fawke's night 1951, I think it the seventh or the ninth, or whatever it was, of November was the heaviest barrage the world had ever known. It was heavier than what Montgomery had put on the Germans at El Alamein in World War II and that was the yardstick apparently. It was estimated that there could have been three thousand enemy guns firing. These are not

30:00 little ones. These are big ones on the front at that time. The shells were coming in at a rate of a hundred shells per minute. That could have been on a company, even on a platoon area depending on where they were going to direct their forces. This was on and there had been fire going back across at the Chinese. Ammo, more ammo had to come in and the Korean porters had to get out. I'll never forget the incident of course, this big American negro sergeant was in charge of the amphibious vehicle,

30:30 the duck. He brought across a load of ammo, which I'd got up the front. I came back with the porters and the porters from the other companies, which were coming down from the other side to the same point all arrived, and they all got on the duck at once, on the amphibious vehicle at once. There was no freeboard. There was only about two inches of it sticking out of water. This would probably have gone to the bottom of the Indian River, which was a big river, had they not unloaded some. I think he pulled a gun out in the end and unloaded a few off but

31:00 it took them across, and got them there. Eventually we got rid of them all to safety because they couldn't be involved security-wise at night time. You don't know what's going to happen. Then we went back up and the barrage started and all night. That was the first night that the Chinese used the multiple rockets, which is just unbelievable. It never ended all night. They were firing. They had trucks with all these rocket launches on the back, multiples and they were firing them, and

31:30 they make a terrible noise when they fire them. You get a noise and they come down, and you get a noise in batches. When they hit it is like fireworks and they bounce all over the place. The closest thing I could put to it would be like standing in Sydney Central Station in the old days when all the steam trains and electric trams went through Sydney Station at once, roaring through. It was a terrible thing. Then you had the concussion and a lot of soldiers, and my ears were bleeding from that.

32:00 I was just looking at the figures in my book today. The highest figures in the Korean War of casualty evacuation out was in the month of October and November. November after Operation Commando was actually the highest and most of that was of course shell shock and concussion.

**What could you do when all this stuff was raining down?**

Well you just hoped your bunker lasted because as this went on

32:30 you improved your bunker-building abilities didn't you?

**Having the original fox hole that you dug received a direct hit, that must have placed some sort of questioning in...?**

Oh yes! You get your priorities right there and in fact I even hoped for some of that in Vietnam because we were later in a defensive position, I was a sergeant major then, and the colonel said, "Get those fellas to dig those fighting pits and overhead cover better. They're no good." And he was an old Korean veteran. I called them up in the morning and

33:00 I said, "Get your shovels." and they said, "Where's the backhoe Sir?" Where's the backhoe! They wanted a backhoe to dig the holes, so there's a different sort of soldier again! Digging with a pick and shovel was paramount up there. The weather, you had to bury your water points. You had water, it was all carted up in jerry cans and the jerry cans were emptied into 44 gallon drums with the top cut out, buried in the ground, so they wouldn't go frozen overnight, and many of them still did,

33:30 a solid drum of water. The toilets, they had part of a drum with a hole cut in for toilets at the reverse side of the hill. Often a mortar went down there. They had them in the summer and the fellas just dropped their trousers, and sat on the drum but then the winter came, so down they go, and this fella dropped his trousers, and sat on the drum, the next thing, "Help! Help!" His backside was stuck to the frozen drum and they had to come down with some hot water, and pour it in around the drum

34:00 to...this is the humour side you remember, to free him from it. In the summer there were flies and there were mosquitoes, and other tropical sort of diseases up there, and the blowflies, so the latrines whilst

they were dug deep, there were still flies hanging around. So early in the morning the latrine fellow would pour a dose of petrol, range fuel, call it what you like, into there and burn it, and away he'd go and do the next one. This fellas was a mass production job

34:30 he was. He went around and poured some of this stuff in, the whole, and then went and put it away, and then went around, and lit them after but in between this, this digger goes down, he's got his comic book or something, and he's sitting there, and he's having a cigarette, and doing his morning ritual. As he finished he lifted his cheek and his bum up, and he dropped this cigarette butt down. Well we had to get the helicopter in to fly him out. Incidentally MASH [American television series about the Korean War-stands for Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] is very true to the

35:00 picture, the MASH program of the helicopter evacuation system.

### **Have you watched MASH?**

Yes. I watched it. I loved the humour and I loved the helicopter bit. The tent putting up and putting down parts were definitely authentic. I believe it was made in America but the hills were authentic. The enemy, the Koreans and all that seemed authentic but some of the fighting bits they got into actually in the hospital wouldn't be authentic because infantry,

35:30 they're always there to protect you, the infantry. You've got to get through them first.

### **Can you tell us a bit about Chalky?**

Chalky White? He's my great mate. There were a few others that died. Vince Cherry got killed the night Chalky won the Military Medal. It should have been a Victoria Cross. Henry Russell, he got hit very bad in Operation Commando. We were all bush kids. Chalky

36:00 White came from New South Wales. What a larrikin! He used to drink a lot. He's up in Queensland here and he hears the boat's going for Japan to go to Korea. He's in Townsville and they're all out on the booze you know? A great Aussie boozier he was. "Oh," he says, "I'll have a bit of that!" So he got drinking with all these Australian soldiers' last port of call and he scrounges a uniform and a hat, and next thing he's on a troop ship to go to Japan to reinforce the soldier in

36:30 Korea. When they got level with Thursday Island they discovered him and two others, two of Chalky's bush mates, so they threw them off. So not to be outdone Chalky and his two mates signed up for the regular army on Thursday Island. They were the first people ever to join the army on Thursday Island since World War I. They had these old forms but he filled them all in. They chucked them on a plane and a boat, and they sent them down.

37:00 I don't know what happened police-wise. I think they were let off but they had signed up, so they put them into Enoggera and I was sitting at the gate, sitting in Enoggera Army Camp. No Chalky was sitting there and he saw me coming in dressed like a galah with a green country music sort of shirt, a real country bumpkin. He said something smart to me and that started it, and we've been great friends ever since. He was a person they didn't take too kindly of. He used to get

37:30 on the grog. We'd get on the grog in the frontline even, but we never failed to carry out our duty. Chalky White, he and I were blown up together three times. Apart from the one mortar in the pit, we were in a dugout that we had just started digging in. We found a Chinese dugout. It had big logs in it, the roof of it, so we got in through there. We cut one of the logs out, here's the Chinese dugout about two and a half, three feet

38:00 deep. We were in there and the Chinese opened up a terrible barrage, and we got a direct hit on that. It killed somebody nearby and it buried us alive in there. They dug us out in time, these other fellows, and in under shellfire too I might add. That's where my ears were bleeding again and we were all dopey and stupid. Then we were blown up in a truck. We'd been in the frontline at another area farewell

38:30 and we hadn't had a bath for three months or so. He said to me, "It's a nice fine day and there's nothing going on is there?" I said, "No!" He said, "What about we go down to A Echelon?" This was an administrative organization for back behind the lines, relatively safe. "Yes!" I don't know if we ever asked the company commander or anybody but we went down there. While we were there, there was a bath unit, that's right. We'd heard this bath unit had come around, hot baths. So we had a hot bath. Then we scrounged a bit of this and that, and he had a tin of butter,

39:00 opened but it had butter in it. We hadn't seen butter for a long time. "We better get back up the frontline before we get in trouble see?" So there was a truck with about a dozen, eight or ten, a dozen recruits, new fellas on board going up to the frontline, so we got on with them. We're sitting in the back. We're driving up the Samichon Valley and here's the first sign on this dirt road. It says, "Speed Brings Dust!" Hey, everyone's laughing. "Look at that!" We were showing these recruits, these

39:30 Greenies [people new to the army]. We got a bit further, another sign. "Dust Brings Shells!" Ha, ha, ha, everyone was laughing. We go a bit further and there's the third sign. "Shells Bring Misery!" We just started to go around a slight spur coming down off one of the big hills, getting close to where we were and that road if you kept going on it, went straight into the Chinese lines. No one ever went up there. You turned off. Sitting up

- 40:00 there, we knew it was there, was a Chinese SP, self-propelled gun, which is flat trajectory, very accurate, fires about an 18 pounder or 20 pounder shell. Next thing, "Boom!" It's on! The truck stopped dead. Shrapnel holes appeared in it and we leapt out as soon as he stopped. Out we went and we dashed for cover behind this spur coming down. We were in there with all these rookies, who were a bit terrified. We were analysing the situation, making an
- 40:30 appreciation. "What are we gonna do?" We're gonna stay here as long as possible." They were still firing at that truck sitting on the road and never hit it. I still reckon he was the worst artillery shooter in the Chinese Army. How he never hit it? He must have been drunk. We were there for a while. It's not easing off. The driver of the truck, I don't know where he was. He wasn't with us. He went somewhere else. I said to Chalky, "What are we gonna do?" He said, "Look, we've got to get out of there."
- 41:00 I said, "Why?" He said, "Look at this. Here we are in an old ammunition dump. Those shells were sort of nearly coming around the bend. This is going to go up and we'll all cop it." I said, "Righto!"

## Tape 4

- 00:30 **So we'll pick it up where Chalky said, "We're in an ammo dump."**

So I said, "We better get out of here before one comes in." So I said, "Right I'll tell you what we'll do. I can drive that truck." I never had licence or anything but from the farm I said, "I'll drive that truck." I said, "I'll dash down and get in the truck, and you get all these other rookie fellas to run down as soon as they see me get in, and jump in the back, and we'll drive it out." Because the artillery shots were coming in a bit spasmodic

- 01:00 by then. So off I go and in one came. It landed in the dirt just beside me and didn't go off. Would you believe I was gravel-rashed from the hard sort of decomposed granite from the place we were in? I got to the truck and I jumped in. They were starting to come down. It was a matter of a couple of hundred metres. They were running down. The next minute he opened up again. I'm in the truck. The recruits saw this happening and they turned around, and they ran back into the cover of the re-entrants.
- 01:30 Chalky was with them because he was the tail-end Charlie to bring them up. Well, I'm in the truck and I started her up, and I knew how to drive it. I put her in gear and it wouldn't move. The driver had put the handbrake on and the handbrake was one that came of a type that came out in the late model Holden down alongside the right hand side of the front seat, whereas I was used to a big handbrake sticking up in the centre where the floor gearshift was. Eventually I worked it out and got it off. They came in and they landed all around that truck again, and holes
- 02:00 appeared into it, and away I went. I went straight down the road towards the enemy. I had to go, no choice and there was a roadblock near the next spur-line, and that was manned by the Turks would you believe, our friends from Anzac Cove. They saw me coming and they opened up. I wasn't going to stop for anything and they opened this roadblock up with all the barbed wire, and logs on it, and through I went, and they all went "Yay!" They were throwing their hats in the air and
- 02:30 about another few hundred yards further I turned right up behind the next spur-line that ran down into the valley, and that was where our RAP was, the Regimental Aid Post, and some other bits and pieces of the battalion. I pulled up there and all the medic blokes were in array because they knew what was going on. Someone from our own hills from further up that you couldn't get down...there were mines everywhere too in re-entrants and that restricted where you could go on foot, and they all clapped. I noticed the driver was at the RAP, so he must have suffered
- 03:00 from the stress. So I was a bit of a hero or sub-hero then and one of the sergeants got a jeep, and went down, after the firing later in the afternoon, and got Chalky, and the other new fellows, and brought them back up. So that was that one. The next time with Chalky...

**You didn't get any stick from those fellas for leaving them there?**

I didn't get any...?

**Any stick from the fellas about leaving them there?**

No! They reckoned I was a crook driver!

- 03:30 They reckoned I was a crook driver. They reckoned I was grating gears but I got through them pretty quick. It was a British Bedford QL, they called them, the high type they used in the landing on France in World War 11. That's what they were first developed for.

**Did you ever wonder with all the holes that the truck was getting that you didn't get any yourself?**

Yes, it was amazing but that's how it's always been. That's how it was with the thing and how it was in the big dugout. We were on another defensive position one time and most of your living quarters

- 04:00 were...if at all possible your dugout was always on the reverse side. Mortars can get in those but shells

wouldn't. Shells would go over the top of the hill and they keep going in that direction until they hit the ground, and then they burst forwards, so anywhere under that you're pretty right. You hear them but we were there and the beer ration came up. We used to get a bottle of this Asahi beer a day and that was issued to us in place of fresh greens and things see? You have to have something like that otherwise you're going to get stomach troubles. We had our bottle of beer and

04:30 we were sat on the backside of the hill. It was nice and quiet. The Kiwis [New Zealanders] who were that side too firing an odd 25 pounder at the Chinese, wonderful Kiwi gunners, the most accurate ever, no problem ever with them, what happened this night? They dropped short one, a miscalculation, right into Chalky and I sitting on the back of the hill. We must have went six, ten foot in the air. We came down. We jumped in, found ourselves more or less in the crawl trench. We crawled down the

05:00 trench on our hands and knees. We crawled into our dugout, which was further down and we were sitting there shaking. Our ears were ringing. Our heads were blurred. We looked down and we still had our bottle of beers in our hands, and we never spilt one drop of beer! No caps on it and that was that one!

**Can you explain for someone who has no idea what it is like for an artillery round to go off close to you?**

I don't know. It's very hard to explain. It's worse than a cracker

05:30 at Christmas time! It's a terrible blast and it's just a matter of geometry I suppose or something, as to where you're sitting in relation. The mortars when they come down, they come down straight in a vertical line and when they explode it goes in all directions. They're commonly called by us as grass cutters or daisy cutters. Shells come in and explode, and go the way most of the shrapnel...up, and in the direction the shell was going. The exception is of course the airburst and there were a few of those there.

06:00 They burst overhead and proximity fuses were set in relation to the distance from the ground and they exploded. In fact one fella there once, he was wounded. He had some blood on the top of his head and they put him in the ambulance. The stretcher-bearers always had to carry them back a bit. They put him in the ambulance, which was an American style jeep with a longer tray on the back if you put a stretcher on it. They put him in there and they took off. He was pretty crook but the next thing he jumped up out of the jeep

06:30 and he was running down the road yelling. "I want to shit! I want to shit! I want to shit!" He fell down and when they got there he was dead. Later on a post-mortem revealed that a splinter from an airburst had gone down from the top of his head, straight down into his stomach, and that's what had given him that feeling, that he wanted to go to the toilet, and he died then because the stomach you know? It's the shock and the blood loss. All the blood goes into the stomach and makes it worse.

**Assuming you don't get hit by shrapnel when a round goes off, what sort of**

07:00 **feeling do you get in your head?**

The hearing, you're definitely in trouble because my ears bled on a number of occasions and I was medically downgraded because of that, you know? There were three major times but artillery was there all the time. I can't stand anyone slamming a car door. This is a problem even here. A car door slams and it has a concussion sort of...especially...my son had a

07:30 Monaro, and he'd come home late in Charters Towers. The Monaro was pretty airtight, only two doors and you had to slam them hard to shut them easy. When he'd do it, "Boom", right through my head and my wife can tell you now, I have that same problem. That's there. Somebody said you can do something about but I don't know. Concussion is a bad thing. You just live with it for the rest of your life. Other noises are not as bad. If a storm comes

08:00 I can stand the thunder and all that because you know what it is. It's got to be a bit sudden, a sudden crack of thunder or something like that would make you startle but if something comes and I can steel myself to it, and I can keep walking, I wouldn't hit the deck but you hear about people hitting the deck when they hear artillery. I can steel myself from it but if it was unexpected it would be difficult.

**Would you get ringing in the ears and would you be temporarily deaf?**

I have continuous ringing in the ears all the time.

08:30 I have trouble hearing the female voice. It's a higher pitch isn't it? I'd have trouble hearing you if there was a crowd, like in a bar. In later years I drank more or less in the side of a bar or something otherwise I had great difficulties. It's very tiring having a conversation with anyone. I love to speak in Toastmasters but there the atmosphere, the environment was quiet whilst you were publicly speaking. If you were judging it wasn't too bad because

09:00 everyone was quiet. It was demanded but if you had to really listen to somebody...the kids over the years would be difficult with television, trying to listen to something on the news. All family problems you have to put up with.

**Was Chalky by your side through most of what you went through?**



Chalky was, yes. The worst thing that I've had to live with all my life, I sort of only told my wife recently, it's been a terrible thing, was that after being longer

- 09:30 in the frontline than anyone, eventually I went on leave. I remember it was on my twenty-first birthday on the 18th of June 1951, I went on leave for three weeks. You have three weeks in Tokyo. I got down to Seoul and the plane did not come in, and the Chinese broke through up at the frontline on some position, so they put us all back on, and took us all back up to the company. That was a delay see?
- 10:00 Eventually I went later and I had my three weeks leave, and I was supposed to be back on this particular day. It was into July by then and I'm pretty sure that it must have been about mid-July. I went to get the plane and there were none there, so I was left in Japan a bit longer, and they put me on duty because officially of my leave. That night I typed a letter home on a typewriter, one finger to my mother, this
- 10:30 uneducated son. "Dear Mum, guess what I'm doing? I'm working in the order room because there's no plane." The date was on it and everything, right down to the bottom with some kisses on it typing. I have that letter here but that night they were supposed to go out on a fighting patrol, the whole platoon, twenty odd of them up this hill, and get a Chinese prisoner. Vince Cherry, my great mate, who I had a lot to do with like Chalky,
- 11:00 we were inseparable. He came from Moki [?], a wonderful man. I've got photos of him. He was to go on leave that night. It might have been his five days. The plane didn't come in, so he didn't go and he went out. I didn't get back to go out with my platoon A Company with Lieutenant Ryan that night and he went out. Anyway, they ran into trouble. The Chinese must have suspected they were coming and they had a full force there. It was estimated that our platoon killed
- 11:30 sixty Chinese, who were dug in. The good book says the attacking force will be three times greater than the defending force, not the other way around and then the Chinese called down their own mortars on themselves. That's done by both sides at times, where you all duck into your dugouts and call your own mortars down or light artillery, and then blow the enemy off that are running around on your position. Chalky though...heaps of them were wounded, Chalky got the platoon commander who was shot bad. Vince had seven bullets
- 12:00 in under his arm. They all had bullet-proof vests on that night, they did. They put the platoon commander in a shell hole, couldn't find Vince and then he withdrew the rest of the platoon to a safe base. He was doing the signals thing on the radio informing the battalion and then he went back three times under enemy fire picking up wounded, and other weapons and things, back to a safe base where the Chinese were in mortaring. The others came out,
- 12:30 stretcher-bearers to get...I think there was about...there was the platoon commander. They never found him again. There were two or three prisoners that night and of course Vince. They got Vince out and he lived for seven days, one day for each bullet, and then he died. He's buried at Pusan but I think of him every day of my life. Chalky's still going but he went straight out after that. They sent him on a break to Japan and
- 13:00 the Queen awarded him an immediate Military Medal, whereas medals usually took a while to come through. So that will give you an idea of what he must have done. I often wonder would he have got a Victoria Cross if he wasn't such a larrikin maybe because he deserved the Victoria Cross but it's worth noting and I said so here in 2002 reunion in Rockhampton when I made an opening address,
- 13:30 that isn't it strange that no Australians earned a Victoria Cross in the Korean War. They had to be approved through the British system and I know once Menzies did stick up for one Australian to get a Distinguished Conduct Medal. He had to more or less plead directly with the British Prime Minister and the King. The British were awarded Victoria Crosses and they were all in campaigns that were defensive, and
- 14:00 lost, in the Gloucesters for example. Our fellows who ran the Operation Commando campaign, which is regarded as one of the greatest and most professional ever entered into by an Australian group of soldiers, once again they attacked an enemy that was three times greater, who were very well dug in, and had artillery to back them up, and they beat them.
- 14:30 **What are your thoughts about those sorts of operations where the objective seems in retrospect to be a bit weak when you are sent out to catch a prisoner?**
- Well, that was at the end of the war and that became controversial. There were things being said and I've got to watch what I say of course, that some people just did that to get medals. An old colonel from World War 11 said to me at Wacol when I was the area sergeant
- 15:00 major, that a company commander, if he gets his platoon commanders Military Crosses, he'll get a Distinguished Service Order or whatever it is, one of the higher ones see? I couldn't comment on that but it did seem a bit futile at the end to bother getting prisoners really because the peace talks were getting close. I can understand having a fight over some ground
- 15:30 because the front, that was very important in the negotiations. I could see that, taking this hill or the Chinese taking back 317 earlier because it had a commanding view of the whole front. That affect

where you go and what you do, and vice versa of course too but at some point in time economics must play a part too because I could never ever accuse any Australian commanders of really wasting Australian soldiers just for the fun of it, yet we got reports of this happening

16:00 at the end of World War 11 with the Americans telling Australians to get engaged in battles up in New Guinea. We've got cases elsewhere in World War 11 where that happened. It could have been avoided. It wouldn't have solved anything. In World War 11 and that, we could bypass islands with Japanese on them. You couldn't do that in the Korean War because there was a frontline and you can't sort of bypass anything. You can tighten it up or

16:30 put some bends in it but you can't bypass it too easy.

#### **How did you personally feel towards your enemy?**

We had a great respect for the Chinese and we still do. In fact I could shake hands with the Chinese real easy. That fella that we had that night and brought him up to our dugout, he could speak a bit of good English, and he was telling us that they were all volunteers, so that would have made two groups

17:00 in the Korean War, us and the Chinese! The rest were just drafted or conscripted, or whatever you want. The sad part about the British conscripts, I was getting as much as a day as what a British conscript was getting a week and we really felt sorry for them. We used to by them a lot of drinks if we met them on leave, met them whilst we were on leave. The Chinese, they were honourable and they often...there were reports and cases where wounded, who couldn't

17:30 be retrieved for whatever reason were left there badly wounded, and their wounds had tourniquets applied, and the times written on them in blood or whatever, the times so you knew you had to release it now and then to stop gangrene. There were tags put on them. They also as I mentioned earlier, put Christmas cards and sometimes little gifts on our barbed wire. We often added empty food tins with stones in to make them rattle for anyone

18:00 tampering with the wire, sometimes there'd be a packet of Chinese cigarettes in the can! So there was a healthy respect. Their tactics were very good. I recall one somewhere around the Sami-chon Valley on 317 where a Chinese patrol in single file were trying to get through apparently, to get at one of the Centurion tanks that were with us and he didn't achieve anything, and he returned around, and they were going

18:30 back the same way in single file, and he was in the front leading them, the Chinese officer, this was recreated later from whatever happened, and they were ambushed because we'd seen them going down. When I say we, the Australians from the companies on either side of the valley closest to him. They sent an ambush patrol on either side and they hit them straight away. They were in a single file, so it was easy to shoot at every single person. He barked one word of command this Chinese officer and the whole patrol

19:00 moved into an extended line well spaced between them, and charged forward out. They opened up on them but they only got one, the Chinese officer. He was the only casualty they got because of that evasive immediate aggressive action back. I always remember that because we keep in close contacts with our mate and his company. He had a pearl handled Luger [pistol]. I don't know what happened to it but somebody got it.

19:30 But the Australians were very aggressive like that. You're going out in single file and you're ambushed from the left or right, turn right, fire every single thing you have, even throw grenades, and more or less run through them, was the drill. The Kiwis were pretty good I believe but they didn't have the infantry like we did. I think in Malaya or Vietnam they were actually firing straight from the shoulder too because the best cover you have from the enemy in the infantry is your own fire back. To sit on the deck

20:00 and hide behind rocks and logs, initially isn't the way to go.

#### **What was your personal weapon?**

I started off on a Bren gun, which was one of the World War 11 Czech made machine guns, one of the best machine guns in the world, very accurate and of course instead of ten magazines like the British carried, like Speakman when won the VC [Victoria Cross], I had about a hundred magazines. They were filled and of course with that I had a 2IC [Second in Charge], who had a .303 [rifle]

20:30 only by virtue of the fact that the Bren gun had .303 ammunition. Instead of having two or four grenades I had hundreds of them in boxes in the trench. When we went out we carried heaps of magazines and ten HE [high explosive] grenades, and two phosphorous honest! The Australians really loaded themselves up, so they were able to in attack, able to reorganise and when the Chinese always counterattacked quickly, the Australians had enough ammo to sustain a counterattack because the ammo

21:00 doesn't get up there quickly. Sometimes it's impossible see? This is what the difference was between the two armies. The Canadians were very adaptable like that too. The Americans were learning fast at the end too. They used to come and borrow our M36 grenades because you could screw two of them together, and make a big one. I believe one of their patrols that were continually hit on 355 did arm

themselves with shotguns, which is against the Geneva Convention [convention on fair fighting in war] but they didn't get ambushed after that.

21:30 **Can you tell us about that? I've never heard that grenade thing before?**

An M36 is the pineapple one. They're all pineapples to a degree but this is the World War 11 one. The M36 is a great grenade. It's a fragmentation like chocolate pieces and it was World War 11, could have been back to World War 1 but it had a five second fuse for throwing and a seven second fuse you could use if you fired it off the end of a

22:00 rifle. We carried plenty of those. They were great in bunkers. They were great rolling down the hill but you could take the base plate out of one and the base plate protruded out of the other enough with a thread on it to screw two together, so you could actually throw two down there. You couldn't throw them that far on flat country but you could throw it a long way downhill. Of course it had a terrible big bang and they did a lot of damage. The Canadians that we took over, they even had drums of napalm buried in the forward sloped of their position and they used to set them

22:30 off by cranking a field telephone, sending an electrical impulse down to an electric det [detonator] in the napalm but I didn't like that because I said if that can set it off, even though they were well down, it could have been a problem for you if a mortar had landed where the napalm was buried in the hill. I can't comment but I've seen people hit with napalm.

**Did you see much of the air support?**

Yes. The air support was there. It was on

23:00 call, the Americans in the main over us. The Australians were going up to 'Mig Alley' up in North Korea until the Meteor jets started getting shot down, so they took them off that but they were great ground support planes too because they carried a lot of ammo and were pretty manoeuvrable. But mostly with us we had Americans. A lot of navy propeller driven planes were there and the Chinese would fire at them. They would have what they called box fire or what we call

23:30 box fire. It's just when every Chinese soldier would lie on the ground and as the plane came in, on a command would fire up in the air, small arms, heavy weaponry, anything they had. They'd all fire it up in a big box hoping that the plane would fly through this and a chunk of it might bring it down. On cases it actually did and of course there have been cases where we've gone out there, the pilot parachuted out, was reasonably close to us and we've gone out in a big fighting patrol back up by artillery cover if necessary,

24:00 and rescued the pilot. If that happened further up, of course the Americans always had us; the other helicopter came in and picked him up, and got him out. Some Australians I believe were pilots rescued too.

**Did you see any enemy aircraft?**

No. There are stories around how the enemy were bombing and strafing, and all that sort of thing but I think maybe they've been percolated by somebody who wasn't there maybe.

24:30 Earlier in the piece there was 'Bedcheck Charlie' and that's a famous story, and it is true. It was a biplane of the old World War 1 vintage. The Chinese, he must have been a larrikin. He used to come down at bed check, last light more or less in the afternoon and fly over the lines doing a bit of reconnaissance work I should imagine, and out of the plane he'd drop a few 60 millimetre mortars. I suppose if one hit you it would kill you but they were more annoyance than anything else and he got the name 'Bedcheck Charlie'.

25:00 Whilst I did not see this personally the story was and I believe it's authentic, that they'd get on the phone, and up would come the American jets, and they'd make a dive for him, still reasonably light, and he'd just do a turn up, and re-enter it, and they'd have to go "Whooooosh" straight overhead. They couldn't get him. This went on for a fair while. Eventually they sent up another propeller driven, much slower type plane and I believe he was shot down. So rather sad I thought.

25:30 I did not see it but I believe it to be a true story because it's hard to spread untruths. That's how we know who was at the Korean War and we can pick fraudsters.

**Have you seen that happen much?**

Oh yes! They're around.

**How does that make you feel?**

Pretty bad really. I wouldn't even get wild. There are some people who possibly got sent home before they got to the front. They played up or did something. That wouldn't worry me but what worries me and upsets me is when they say they're

26:00 something that they're not because there is no shame in anything. I was a witness at a court martial for an Australian soldier, who wouldn't get out of his fox hole and go forward. I felt really sorry for him because as you probably know, fear manifests itself in different ways. One is to get rid of the cause of fear, which is charge forward and wipe them out. The other one is to act like a bird or some animal and

stand there frozen

- 26:30 hoping they can't see you. The other one is put the greatest distance between you and the cause of the fear isn't it? So at one time they used to shoot them I believe in World War 1 but that sort of thing will never happen again because probably they should have been assessed somehow or other but I don't know how you do it before they went there.

**Do you know what happened to that chap?**

Yes. I gave evidence saying how he was a good soldier. I was only another soldier myself and that

- 27:00 he was so terrified, and that he confided in me about it but I believe he was found guilty, and received a jail term, and was discharged dishonourably from the army, which is pretty sad really. He hadn't been there all that long but there were others too, like a reunion in Townsville a couple of years ago, there was a gentleman there about my age. He was standing there and everyone is shaking hands, and slapping backs, and
- 27:30 telling jokes, and everything, and he's standing there. I went up and said, "How are you?" and introduced myself. I said, "Do you know anyone here?" He said, "No." I said, "Well, good to see you here though. What's your story?" He said, "Well, I don't know anyone. I arrived in the company at half past two in the afternoon in Korea and at five o'clock we went out on an afternoon cum night patrol, and the lieutenant and I were captured. We spent the rest of the war in a POW [prisoner of war] camp. So all I know are my captures and this lieutenant,
- 28:00 and he's not here tonight!" I said to him, "Well don't let that worry you. As far as I'm concerned you're a hero. I'm not a hero." He is. Chalky White's a hero. I'm not. But I admire that man you know?

**You didn't question his authenticity?**

Well, I knew of the story sort of thing, yes. I knew about it. I think they were jumped by some sort of Manchurian Chinese, who were very big and strong and there were punches thrown rather than shots fired, so maybe

- 28:30 they were out on a prisoner gathering exercise. I should imagine that our prisoners would be more valuable to them than theirs to us.

**I heard stories also that some of the Koreans were quite large fellows?**

I've never seen them but North Koreans maybe. The people from Manchuria, they were big people. The Chinese were very strong but small. They were small.

**Have you been back to Korea at all?**

- 29:00 No. Quite a number of people...I've been trying to get a free trip because I haven't been able to afford it otherwise but people are getting trips over there, but I can't. I'll wait my time. Maybe I hope to...if you live a long enough life you'll become famous because maybe you'll be the only one left! The last man standing! But I'm very happy to have served in that war. A lot of those fellas went on to Malaya and Borneo, and the Australian Army Training Team, that's the
- 29:30 highly decorated group, I was actually on that but had to give up because of my medical thing. They consisted of in the main, Korean veterans, warrant office types too. A warrant officer is a special rank in the Australian Army or in any army actually. They run from privates to majors or captains, generals rather but warrant officers are out there on their own. The warrant officers wear officer uniforms. They get more pay than a captain
- 30:00 and first class travel, and all this type of thing, and don't dare pick on him if you're an officer!

**Can you tell us about the food that you ate in Korea?**

Yes. It's a good subject that. First off the food in Japan was wonderful. It's what you need. You've got to have good food in the infantry. You can't operate like we do day in and day out, twenty-four hours a day, hundred and twelve hour shifts unless you're well fed.

- 30:30 It is important that it's right, especially if you're in a static place and you don't have access to things like fresh fruit and veggies [vegetables]. So we first went on Americans rations, ration packs, C [combat] rations and each pack had probably three meals in it, ham and lima beans. You could never find much ham! There was another tinned recipe and another one, and there were supplementary sorts of things in it,
- 31:00 plus the American cigarettes. Oh they were you beaut! I smoked a bit then and of course that didn't do me any good. Whenever possible depending on the line...the earlier fellas really had a hard time because they had no time to do anything but Australians being what they, would make all sorts of things out of this you see? They would mix them up and curry was popular with the Australians. You'd go down to the Indians around the hospitals and scrounge some curry because that was mandatory to have curry in their
- 31:30 ration pack, and you'd make up curries. I remember Chalky saying, "Oh I'm getting sick of this food." We were in a pretty quiet area but it was still in the front and this big pheasant flew up just nearby,

same as pheasants anywhere. You see them on the road in Australia. He up with the Owen gun, shot it, put a bullet in it as it fell down in the minefield. He said, "Righto! I shot it. You go and get it!" So I said, "Oh yeah! I guess." So I walked in the minefield. I walked in very carefully treading softly as I could, on air

32:00 if I could and I picked up this pheasant, and I looked over my shoulder, and I said to Chalky "How do I get out?" He said, "Ya bloody idiot! Follow your own footsteps out!" "Oh." "But first," he said, "Chuck me the pheasant just in case." This is how he used to go on. I chucked him the pheasant out and I retraced my steps. The company commander wanted to know what the shooting was about and we held the pheasant up. So we plucked it and after we plucked it, it wasn't much bigger than a

32:30 tennis ball in size. We put it in a ration tin. We put some onions in that we had and we put some ham and lima beans, and we put in heaps of curry, and we fed half the section on it anyway, and it was quite a pleasant change, and a feat of culinary action!

**Besides the odd pheasant were there any other animals around?**

There were deer there, very rare. A deer was known to set off trip wires at night and I believe that some

33:00 of the units had actually shot a deer, and cooked it up. The big machine gunners opened up one night and they reckoned they got a deer but in the morning it was a big old stump that was stuck up out of the ground. Also occasionally hot boxes came up. They were American style hot boxes. They were very good and in it had Australian sort of tucker [food], mashed potatoes, and hot corned beef, and some beans, and those sorts of things. You went from your units

33:30 so many at a time just down behind the hill where they had these kitchens set up and you would line up, and get a hot meal in your tin Dixie, and take it up to your hoochie [tent], and eat it in there. That's how you were fed and that was an occasional hot meal that would come up but those kitchens often copped it from mortars. They were safe as far as artillery going over the hill. The artillery had to go a lot further down but they were often blown up by mortars and many cooks,

34:00 and cook's offsideers, who people have a jack at combat-wise, were often wounded. I believe some were killed. Some of them were awarded medals too. The place burst in fire and they put it out more or less with their bare hands.

**You mentioned earlier that you were cooking in your bunkers. What did you have there?**

For winter you had ammo boxes and you'd punch some holes in the sides, and a hole in the lid on top, and you'd get some fluing to go up out.

34:30 You sat it on some short steel pickets driven into the wall and that was the firebox you see? Outside would be a jerry can of petrol and a hose siphoning it through a small opening into some sand in the bottom, into a drip, drip situation, which you would put a bit of petrol into it, and stop it, and then light it, and then let it drip, and it would heat up. As it heated up the petrol of course would turn to gas earlier and you had nearly a

35:00 slight roaring cooking fire. You put a couple of pieces of wire out and bent up on the side, and you could toast bread. Occasionally you'd get bread rations through. You'd put your tin of ham and lima beans on the top, and warm it up. Occasionally we had a toddy drink from the English sources, which was a bit strong. It might have had a dash of rum in it, cocoa with rum in it or something. You'd heat that up and of course coffee was there, ever present.

35:30 You'd come off a patrol or your picquet and you'd have your coffee or your mate who was in that dugout if he wasn't out, he'd have it ready for you. Everyone looked after everyone else. That's how it all worked. You'd spill ham and lima beans all down your clothing and you could carve your name in that after three months. When you eventually went on leave to Japan you'd be taken off at Haneda Airport. That's right, Kimpo in Seoul and Haneda Airport in Tokyo. I was there when the Comet Airliner came in too. I've got some photos of that. You'd go through and strip all your clothes

36:00 off, and they'd spray you with all these pesticide powders, and God knows what else. Your clothes would go straight in the furnace. Your pay books and that would all be taken off you earlier. Then you'd go through this big shower room and you'd shower, hot showers, and so forth. You'd come out the other end and dry off. Then you'd go in the next room and you'd receive a kit of brand new clothing, shoes and everything, and then you'd go into the next room, and there would be a fellow sitting there with

36:30 all the money, and he'd pay you. "How many Yen you want?" "Oh you better give us twenty thousand!" Ha! Away you'd go out on the town and that was it.

**How long would it be between showers for you blokes?**

Showers to me...the first time I went there, I got there in October, November, December, January, February, March or April, something close to six or seven months and I hadn't

37:00 had a shower at all in that time, and no change of clothing except that you could change underclothes and socks. So on a quiet night you would be sitting out there on picquet in the forward pit, listening more than anything else but you'd take one boot off and you would take that sock off, and then you'd

rub some metho [Methylated Spirits], you had a little bottle of metho, in between the toes and around. You'd do the same between your legs. Johnson's Baby Powder, you'd get Mum to send

37:30 some of that up, a little tin of that and that would keep you from chafing. Getting back to the feet, then you'd do the other foot but you would probably change socks over really. I don't know why or put a clean pair on. You'd often wash things and you'd hang them in the winter months, and you'd say they were dry but they were like they were starched. They weren't dry at all. They were frozen stiff. It was the clothing but we handled all that pretty good. String vests from the British in design were good because they

38:00 kept a layer of air and the friction of the string vest like fishing net, thick, rough, kept you warm. The socks were very good and the British boots had innersoles in them that kept a hot air gap, and the incidents of frostbite declined rapidly after they...but the poor Aussie soldiers, like the original K Force and others around about that first winter, they were the ones who suffered because they were on the move all the time too. Americans tactics like in Iraq, up and down in vehicles, and you'd get hit, then you'd get off, and

38:30 try and fight an enemy who has gone. That's not real good. The Australians also applied their own tactics there, including aggressive patrolling but they still had to keep moving, so personal comfort had to take a second place.

**You mentioned when you were on picquet it was more of a case of listening. How dark would it get at night time?**

The nights are very dark but there's moonlight nights too, which you can see other things. Everything moves. Many fellas have seen things and fired, and nothing was there but then there were others who didn't care.

39:00 You would send out little listening posts, one man once, no communications, no telephone, radio or anything and they were known to go to sleep out there instead of listening, and being alert. The idea was if you hear any enemy formations mucking around, you sneak back up and warn the company, and everyone is ready on stand to in the pits or everyone is loaded ready to go quietly. These blokes would go to sleep, so what happened? The company sergeant major fixes them up. He takes their weapons of them and he gives them an M36

39:30 hand grenade in each hand but he takes the pin out. We all know that if you release an M36 with no pin in it, the handle flies out and it goes off in five seconds, which you can't run too far in five seconds. That'd keep them awake. They'd come back up and then he'd put the pins back in the two grenades. If an enemy snuck up on them they could throw them downhill further but if they threw a grenade downhill and it went off, and there were no enemy there, they could actually be

40:00 in strife for unauthorised engagement. They did all those things but I had a case of an outpost manned by telephone. It was connected to the little field telephone and they were well out towards this 317 where Speakman won the Victoria Cross. The communications went out on the phone. They said, "Somebody's got to get out." The company commander said, "I don't care who goes. Somebody go." Oh well, who ended up? Schunemann see? So away I go and all I've got is a .38 pistol.

40:30 I'm carrying my little wire tape and I'm feeling the wire from the forward platoon going out. It's running through my hands and you feel where artillery or mortars have cut the wire or just damaged it, and then you know that's where you've got to fix it, double wire glued together. Then I'm thinking "I remember those fellas from World War 11 telling me about the Japanese that used to do this, cut the wire and when the signaller came along to fix it, they'd ambush him."

41:00 I thought, "Oh this is lovely! If I go back they'll reckon I'm a coward. I'll never live it back." I got my old .38 out and I'm going along pulling the wire up, which is down over the side, and I just got so far, and it pulled back a bit. I thought, "This is it. If I don't go on those fellas out there, they might all get done over." So I keep going and I'm crouching. I'm crawling forward and I'm pulling the wire, and here it was tied to a greenstick. Sigh of relief!

## Tape 5

00:56 **Were there any cases of malaria**

01:00 **in Korea at all?**

Yes. Malaria was everywhere in Korea. We had to take a Palledrine tablet everyday, which was an improvement of the old...what they took in World War 11. I nearly said Panadol!

**Quinine?**

Quinine that's it, yes. That was enforced by the section commanders or the platoon sergeants, or the CSM [Company Sergeant Major], whatever the case was. It was there but soldiers

01:30 were pretty conscientious of the damages that can be caused by malaria and they took their tablets

pretty well on cue.

**Were there any other medications that you had to take?**

Not really but you had to be careful of mites and other things that lived on rats because they spread disease. There was a fair bit of it, especially in the summer months. Haemorrhagic fever was a dangerous one and one of my friends, he

02:00 went down with that, and he suffered for the rest of his life all the years. That was caused by rats, so you had to be pretty clean there but it was difficult in the dugout system because they lived up in the rooves. I know one soldier couldn't get rid of them, so he just took his main gear out and threw a phosphorous grenade in, cleared them all out, and then went back to live in it later, for which he got in trouble with the company commander.

**What was your living environment like?**

02:30 It was small in relation to the size of the thing, so Chalky and I had our best dugout, that was the deep one with the most logs or whatever on top. We had the equivalent of...dug into the side a small earthen bench, where he slept on one side and I slept on a similar thing on the other side. It was black in there in the day even. You had to have a candle burning. The gap between the two little earthen benches dugout would have been a couple of feet wide. You could stand up

03:00 there. The height, you had to bow your head even with my short height and that's where you stayed. You had a zigzag trench going into it, hence the no light and that was there in case a mortar bomb came down in one of the outer trenches. The first part of your entrance trench was covered, had roofing on it, bomb proof hopefully, so anything falling in the trench further out of course, the shrapnel or whatever couldn't go in but the blast would if it ever happened. But

03:30 we just moved out of one trench in a new position when they strengthened the front and closed us all up a lot, and we'd only shifted our gear from there when a mortar bomb went straight in our dugout, and killed two people, who had just moved in, in fact blew them to pieces, so there you are.

**That was lucky.**

We were. This is the story of it all.

**Did you have any superstitions?**

No.

**No?**

Nup. No superstitions. Fearful a bit here and there

04:00 but that's about it. You sort of put those things out of your mind. You do it with humour too of course.

**Any lucky charms?**

No lucky charms although I saw a fella who went right through with a teddy bear, a big strong bloke.

**How big was the teddy bear?**

I thought you were going to say how big was the bloke! He was six foot odd! The teddy bear was about eight or nine inches long. All the fur was off it. He carried it

04:30 with him for a long time.

**Did you have any pictures from home or anything that you brought with you?**

No. We never had anything like that. I don't think anyone really bothered much with them, though I should imagine there would have been the odd picture in a wallet or in our mail occasionally you got a picture but not the same as what you see the Americans in there. They're all going into battle and they're all having a look at each other's pictures, "That's the wife and that's me son." We don't do those things nor are we so

05:00 sentimental or emotional if somebody gets killed. You see American soldiers all come over if a fella's been shot, they all run over there. If you do that in the Australian Army and the British Army too, I know and you run over there, you'll get a kick in the backside by the platoon sergeant, "Keep moving!" You're there not to make more casualties. You're there to remove the cause of that person being hit. You get the idea? There is a medical team that comes immediately behind

05:30 somewhere to look after them, so all that sobbing and carrying on, it's not done. You get terrible feelings inside sometimes but you control them. They come out forty years later.

**How did you deal with them there and then?**

With the?

**How did you deal with it there and then?**

You sort of didn't entertain it whatsoever. You just shut it out and that was it. It's just part of the job, part of something that's happened

06:00 and it happened. You overcome that. I call it professionalism but as I mentioned to you before, for thirty or forty years I never remembered any of those things. I think that's nature at work you know? It looks after you, otherwise if you dwell too much on them you become a slave of those sorts of things and you can't

06:30 do anything else with the rest of your life. Mine could have been better but I've achieved a lot of things and that's what it's all about.

**Did you see a lot of men not coping with it so well there and then?**

Not really, no. No I mentioned that one who wouldn't go. He was the only one really and all of the group that I know, that I keep in contact with, there's a lot less than what there were in those days poor fellas,

07:00 they're still pretty responsible. There's Jim, how lives in this town, he's been marvellous. He's had a responsible job after the army and he's done a lot for the community, and yet he suffers. He's got shrapnel in him and he's been as I said, wounded three times, stayed in the army three wars, got a lot of medals too he has! But he just gets on you know?

07:30 **Did you have a padre?**

Yes there were padres there. I wasn't religious and there were not too many. When we were doing recruit training they said, "Church services Sunday morning. All those who are not going to church will go for a march around the suburbs." So a lot went to church! Up there they had church services. The padre would come in and they were fine fellows.

08:00 The Catholic padre used to run the SP [Starting Price] book [betting]. You could get a bet on the Melbourne Cup in the frontline in the Korean War. We used to nick down there, Chalky and I because he used to have a Holy Communion. We weren't Catholic but he'd have a Holy Communion and give you a sip of wine. We didn't go all that often because it was pretty crook wine but he was a fine fellow. The Salvation Army representative wasn't actually there for

08:30 spiritual comfort but he was there to provide a lot of others and you'd come out from long nasty patrols, and he'd have his jeep right up at the front with a big urn full of tea onboard. You'd have a cup of tea and a bikkie [biscuit]. Somewhere behind the line down near battalion headquarters he might have a tent where you could go in and get paper, and write another letter home or something, even in my letters you'll see Salvation Army paper, and that's what that was all about.

09:00 **Did you get any comfort packs from the Salvos [Salvation Army]?**

Yes. There were some good ones. I have a writing case from Hoyts Theatres and of course with that, when we came home we had a free pass to any Hoyt's picture theatre in Australia for 12 months. I saw a couple. We received the old Australian Comforts Fund. That was a World War 11 organization. They had a lot of money left over and they

09:30 sent us quite a few gifts, Christmas cakes and things like that. The best of course was from home because I especially remember New Year's Eve, we were in a freezing cold place and I had to go and sit in the command post that night. Everyone came up to see me and the mail came, and there was a tiny parcel from home, and I opened it up, and there was a few bits and pieces, some Johnson's Baby Powder, a small writing pad

10:00 but I lifted the writing pad up, and underneath it were two coffee bottles of Bundaberg OP Rum. So we had a bit of a party that night!

**Can you tell us about transferring to the transport corps?**

Right at the end? Yes, I'd been there twelve months and I had a

10:30 few bits and pieces of time to make up. After the driving the truck out that time, I used that as a lever to get a break because I had worked pretty heavy and been in a lot of nasty situations. I told the company commander that I reckoned I'd had enough and I needed a break, especially before I went home because it's pretty important for me to tell you this. At that time my

11:00 first marriage had busted up and I had a little baby son, and so that wasn't very good. A number of fellas had shot themselves up there, not Australians because it had the highest number of marriage break ups of any war, the Korean one. There was no news about them at home. As far as families were concerned they were probably having a good time up there but I wasn't in that category. It just busted up. Anyway,

11:30 the company commander said, "Right! Get your gear and go!" Away I went down to the rear echelon which is a reserve area where they have a few extra trucks and supply bases. You're not getting shelled there, shelling being the worst thing and I thought, "Well this is a break." I only had a few days to go or a week or fortnight, whatever it was but the first job I got was driving that truck up the very same road where we got



12:00 shot up by the Chinese SP gunner earlier before, so I didn't feel too comfortable about that. Anyway, I stuck it out and eventually it was the day to go home, and the same people I joined and went over with, all of us met together, and we came home together, the ones who were left. There was one group of us in that photo, we met just before that, the four of us and had a few hellos down there, and a couple of beers in the little boozier they had made.

12:30 We all went back to the company and that afternoon two of them were killed out of the four of us, so they disappeared. Pretty heavy.

**When had you gotten married?**

I got married before I went over and I was working on that British Food Corporation in central Queensland here, out around Emerald and Spring Shore. I got married and of course we lived at home, and it didn't work.

13:00 So it was a relief to go in the army too.

**It was?**

A relief probably to join up.

**In what way?**

You know what mothers in-laws are.

**And you had had a child at that stage?**

Yep. That all just finished up, so I just got on with me life.

13:30 I always do. I always get on with my life. I don't sit around moaning and so forth. I know plenty of people who have been lonely men, who died in some old boarding house room, even long before their time. That doesn't happen to me. There are plenty of nice women out there and you go, and meet them, get married again, and you're right.

**Do you think the war had a lot to do with you breaking up?**

I don't think so in that case. I think that

14:00 it was just probably we were too young. Being young those days is older than young is today hey! Young these days might be sixteen or seventeen. Young those days might be eighteen or nineteen. I was eighteen when I got married. I didn't have to get married or anything like that.

**After the transport corps you were coming back, where are we time wise?**

14:30 Well, we were into November, early November 1952. I got the vehicle to take us down to Seoul to fly to Japan on the way home and there were no planes, so we had to keep going down to Pusan, which had a great side burner if you want to call it that because at Pusan that's where all the fellas are buried

15:00 in the big United Nations cemetery there. It's unbelievable to see. So we were able to go out there and see the graves of all our mates before we went. They put us on an old transport type ship to take us to Japan and it took us days to get there after all the flying backwards and forwards but we didn't care. They had us in a barracks there and we went into the barracks, and we had plenty of cartons of beer. We had a big party. The only big party I've ever had in my life. That was it and it was magnificent.

15:30 We were making a lot of noise and singing a lot of songs, no malicious damage or anything but down came this young Pommy [English] officer, and he said, "You will be quiet." We said, "Who are you?" He said, "I'm Second Lieutenant so and so." We said, "Well we're Ned Kelly!" And somebody jumped down onto him from the rafters and he went away. They left us alone after that. It's a form of emotional outlet I suppose and it worked.

16:00 **Can you tell us about some story about you going into a minefield with Chalky, not with the pheasant but to collect some bodies?**

Yes. Well, it was in that July of 1952 and that's getting close to all of us finishing our times. I'm not exactly sure of the date but I think

16:30 I wrote that letter...I wrote a letter from Japan saying that the plane was held up to my mother and the date on that was the 13th of July. I'm pretty sure...I must have been back or just arrived back. There's gaps here in my brain box because there'd be a lot of trauma actually.

**Sure.**

Now, I was a jack of all trades and the company commander used me as such. I used to help by training the new recruits and all of

17:00 these new fellas, hadn't been there long. They came in and I'd reach them radio work and I'd teach them the bazooka or map reading. They were taught most of these things but we used to refresh them to our own level. So I knew a lot of them or more so, they knew me. Anyway, I came back and they said, "Quick get down to the minefield." It was one morning and Chalky and I went down, and they'd been on

a patrol. You have this one wire around but the enemy had cut it, the

17:30 Chinese had cut the wire and made the gap there, and put the wire down a bit further across where the gap was. In the misty morn they didn't notice the mistake and they walked into the minefield, and up went the jumping jack mine. It jumps up about a metre and a bit or so, and it explodes, and it blew the back of their heads out. The record says about three but I reckon there was five there that day. There were five dead. Somebody had gone into the minefield and made it a bit

18:00 clear, and we went in to get them out, Chalky and I, to pick them up. We worked together and here's all these young fellas that we knew. We were a lot older than they were in war experience but they were sort of like under our arm you know? We were looking after them, so whilst we weren't responsible for what happened, we sort of felt really sad about that. Chalky, he had a

18:30 bad session there because when we picked one fella up. I think I picked him up by the feet and he picked him up under the armpits. As he lifted him up you sort of bend. They were only freshly killed and he breathed out a bit. He went, "Uurrrrgh." You know? Chalky dropped him in fright. He thought he was alive. Anyway, we had to go in. There were all those sorts of things that you had to cope with.

**What kind of coping mechanisms did you use**

19:00 **at that time?**

Well, you are pretty tough or you think you are. It seems to me it can come out later in life see? It's a big subject now about stress and psychiatrists judging people to be permanently incapacitated because of stress related things that happened to them but I can't see how people can have stress related things when they haven't had anything to stress them out.

19:30 We had it but you got over it. We drank a lot. We were good drinkers too I might add. You never ever saw us drunk around the place but we did drink a lot. I was reasonably successful afterwards but I drank for many years until after Toastmasters in Charters Towers. I just gave up the grog one night and I drink again now but on better terms.

**I can't imagine what it would be like having to do something like that. What is it that you**

20:00 **say to Chalky, who you'd been through a lot with anyway?**

You just say, "Oh look poor old George has got it." You pick him up and you do what you've got to do with him, away he goes. The sad part about it is you never see him again. That's the worst part see? Because a kid gets killed in a car accident here and that's very sad, and traumatic, especially if he's just finished high school getting ready to go to uni. It has just happened here in the last few weeks on two or three occasions. That's terrible for all of those people, not just the relatives,

20:30 all those mates at school. Mates sometimes are closer than relatives you know but they get to go to the church or the hall, or the crematorium and there's a wake or there's something, but there's no wake for us there. In the frontline that person is gone and of course you're a bit psyched up that that's not Bill. Bill was a thing that moved around and spoke, and whatever, that's just waste see? You had to adopt that sort of attitude but having

21:00 said that of course once they're gone, they're gone. You don't see them again. They've gone away in the Vietnam terminology, in a body bag. We didn't have body bags but they've gone away. You don't see them again. You don't go to their funeral either. There's no funeral service for them. You see in World War 1, they buried them in the frontline and they have a firing party, and those that can get there pay their respects but that doesn't happen.

21:30 In our case they've gone. They've got to be gone. That's how it goes. We were lucky to get to Pusan Cemetery. At least we saw their graves there and some of us were able to get a few pictures to take home to some of the relatives, and I still do that today.

**Was there any kind of religious thing? Would you say a little prayer for them?**

No. I don't know of

22:00 anyone. I hope if any ministers of religion view this they don't think I'm terrible but that's how we were because we never had it in our family, and we never had it in the army. In the more modern army prior to Vietnam they had codes of conduct courses run by ministers of religion and they used to send me home from them. You have your sadness in your own way but when you go there you expect that to happen see?

22:30 And it does happen. There's nothing surprising about it. I have a friend in Townsville. He should have got a Victoria Cross, terrible hand to hand fighting for our country. The bloke had a leg blown off and he carried him all the way out. He died of blood loss. He couldn't stop it because the artery was well up in and he didn't have any artery forceps under those circumstances. He went through all of that. I think he killed six or seven

23:00 Chinese single-handedly in the daytime too of all times. Anyway, the dark came on and he couldn't get to our line, so he and his wife's brother or his wife to be's brother, went back in through the English lines. An English sentry shot his future brother-in-law dead. He went through all that and he's having

troubles. It's a known fact that you get worse as you get older because you sort of...the problem there is as you get older

23:30 you're not occupied as you maybe ought to be. When I came home I got into everything, anything I could get into, Toastmasters and the reserve army, and I went on the trochus shell industry on the boats offshore, and I did anything I could apart from drinking, and dancing. I had a terrific social life and that masks it all. Got the idea? When you get older you can't do those things or you don't do them.

24:00 Probably the most noticeable thing that happens to you when you come home is that you don't go to the rugby league football any more, the finals. The boxing doesn't entertain you any more, the car racing. You've got nothing like that any more. The big thrills are gone aren't they?

**Why?**

Well, you've had the big thrill haven't you, over there, if you want to use that terminology.

**Your expectation of seeing death, was the**

24:30 **reality of it similar to your expectations?**

Yes, it wasn't far out because we've had death in our own family, when the grandmas died and my schoolmates died at young ages, and things like that. You were always there when they died. You saw them. Even when I came home on leave from...prior to going to Korea ...after Korea actually, my best friend, who didn't go in the army of course was killed right in front

25:00 of our farm in a car accident. All his face was torn away but I could handle that all right but before, my other cousin, a young fella, he died of a kidney thing. We all sort of knew. When Grandma died everyone was there. The scene used to be the women would be in at the bedside and all the men would be out on the veranda of the hospital talking about the weather, and the cows.

**Which was worse, the day or night in Korea?**

25:30 The night time. You didn't become involved tactically in the day time too much, not in the static positions because you'd get shot pretty quick. Night time, you went out aggressive patrolling to keep them busy, stop them from having a free run, stop them from planning things to get at you but at night of course...day time you'd have artillery and mortars because it would be difficult to pick from where they were coming.

26:00 There's no smoke or flash, whereas at night you could see the flash of their gun initially firing. You could count or they'd land somewhere over there and everyone would say, "Gee Charlie's off target tonight." or today, or whatever the case may be. I think it's much of a muchness. In the day time you got a lot of artillery and in the night time you had the patrolling but the bullets never worried me. They always say that the one that hits you, you never hear anyway!

26:30 **How close did you ever get to them?**

Very close actually I have.

**How close?**

15 metres, 20 metres. They're just something you go out to get. You've got two types of patrols. One is a reconnaissance where you avoid contact but come back and make sure that you've made as many observations

27:00 as you can, and report back in. The other one is a fighting patrol. You go looking for trouble and hopefully you get it but sometimes you make contact as a school, you go through your certain drills, and all firing, then they'll disengage because they maybe a small number. Sometimes they'll disengage and you'll follow them but you've got to be careful they don't lead you into a trap with a secondary patrol.

27:30 There was never any bayonet fighting or anything like that. We had the long bayonets on the .303s and the short bayonets on the Owen Machine carbines but nobody ever carried a bayonet. That was World War 1 stuff, some World War 11 although I believe in the early part of the Korean War, this is the World War 11 diggers in the first K Force, they were surrounded at one place. It was winter and they all had their gear on including great big greatcoats. They were

28:00 surrounded and they had some wounded with them. They've got to get out of it, so they worked where the enemy's perimeter was weakest and the ground was the best to do it, and they just all charged with the bayonets, the big eighteen inch bayonets. They reckoned the enemy, I'm not sure if it was North Korean or Chinese, just melted, these great big guys in these big outfits coming through the misty haze at you with big knives on rifles! Enough to frighten anyone isn't it?

28:30 **Yes!**

Likewise the bagpipes! Somebody said the bagpipes never...in a press release but they were. The Scottish Regiments played the bagpipes and they played them once going up 317.

**Did you ever have to repair phone lines under mortar fire?**

Yes. That happened to me quite often. Once again, I was the jack of all trades and probably silly enough, and everyone used to watch this.

29:00 A line would go out and you had to get it fixed, so out you'd go and you'd fossick where the mortar shrapnel or artillery shrapnel had cut it. So you would clear it, put a couple of cuts in the insulation with your little pliers or knife and then just grab it and bite the insulation of it, so that you could join the wiring together. Then you'd tape it up and it would be right see? The wires were mostly on the ground. They were safer on the ground than up on pegs or in

29:30 the trees. They'd be watching and as soon as I put it in my mouth they'd ring the handset up at the other end, and give me an electric "Brrrrr" shock. This was their big joke and they'd all laugh like mad or laugh like mad at me while I'm dodging mortar fire out fixing the cables. Chalky and I, we were together in the infantry section but also in the signals side at different times, rotated round. We'd go out and we'd play games too because they had all the signal lines connecting all the units with headquarters,

30:00 and the division, and everything but they had an alternative line too. In case that one went out they'd use the other one. Chalky and I would tap in there and some cultured British accent on one end would say, "Blue One Able here!" Somebody at the other end would say, "Hello mate! Who's that?" That's one of the Aussie ones and in the middle Chalky and I'd go, "Chong wong binga wongy tong long." Then we'd unhook it, tape it up again and go! That was our joke, joke for the week!

30:30 **What were your impressions of the Americans?**

Great people the Americans, I love them but I don't like their military system, their tactics. It's a shame in other words because when I first went there the Operation Commando thing as I said, the equivalent of it was still going on. They called it the Battle of Maryang San. You could watch the Americans still fighting on the flanks and in fact there's something in one of those letters about it. Their idea was to send a

31:00 great mass of people up the hill and one burst of a Chinese machine gun or a couple of Chinese 'potato masher' hand grenades would do a lot more damage to them than it would do to us. They also don't keep the same amount of reserves, that's untouched groups behind in case as we do, so they get to the top and that unit could be depleted with a lot of casualties, a lot of ammunition used. They get onto the position, they take it...of course remember when you get on it, the enemy's

31:30 trenches are all the wrong way aren't they? So the enemy are from the other side coming back. They counterattack very quick the Chinese, so you've got nothing ready. There are no reserves, no fresh people or anything. Of course invariably then the Chinese counterattack and take back the feature, and you have to do it all again, whereas we, the British system too, we have a reserve force and the initial fighting force will get to the top, and they'll be depleted then, and ammo, and everything else

32:00 but then up through them will come a fresh group to take over if needed. So when the enemy counterattacks and they usually do, they're going to run into a fresh group, full strength and plenty of ammunition. It goes on from there, lots of other things. Iraq...that's digressing but we would never do that, drive up and down roads like that. That's just

32:30 waiting until somebody kills you and then the others have got to go out, and try to get them, and they disappear into the moonlight. It's really sad actually for the infantry.

**You must have had a Christmas over in Korea?**

Yes. At Christmas time we were out of the line and we'd done our bit by then. We went back and dug some alternative positions of course, and somebody made a bough

33:00 shack, a bare bar and all that. The Americans supplied us with a lot of great food, a lot of turkey I might add and the beer came through but it had to be Aussie or Japanese beer. We liked Japanese beer and we had a Christmas party and there were all sorts of things, gifts from home, gifts from different Comfort Funds as I mentioned earlier. The Minister for the Army came up somewhere round about Christmas, Jos Francis later Sir Jos.

33:30 He said a few words to us all and on a parade. He mentioned in his speech, "Yes! I've come a long way to see you boys." Somebody from the back row yelled out, "Where the bloody hell do you think we come from?" I was on that parade. We celebrated that, Christmas. I think we had a parade on Anzac Day 1952. We were on the frontline

34:00 again for a while. You have to rotate these units around otherwise you just can't keep going. That should be self-explanatory, give you an idea of what it was like there. We went back and this time the Australians, we had a parade. They must have graded a bit of ground or something. We had a parade and the Australians and New Zealanders, and the British, and the Turks were on the parade. That's the first time ever since Anzac Day

34:30 1915. We had a cenotaph. We had a flight party there, that's four guards normally rested on arms reversed. One was an Aussie, one was a Brit, one was a Kiwi and one was a Turk. Now that's never been done again. By the time it came around again the troops had come and gone. The Turks were very good fighters there and we got on well with them when we got to see them.

35:00 It was very difficult to get to see anybody with the nature of the country and in between all the hills, and the valley, apart from the designated roads and tracks, they were all mined. If I wanted to go over and see Macca, the fella in the wedding photo, he was just over there on that hill. I'd have to walk maybe eight to ten miles to get to see him and then get back. I always remember Johnny Franettovich [?] from Mackay, he had a mate like that on the other side but in the mid-

35:30 afternoon when it seemed to be a bit quiet, and the air was a bit denser he'd come out on his hill and he'd yell across the valley, "Hullo Harry! How are you?" "Bloody good John! How are you?" They'd have a talk across the valley and then of course the commanding officer would come out, and tell them to "Shut up!" You can't stop 'em, can ya?

36:00 **I've just got two questions I wanted to ask you from your earlier childhood stuff. Had you dreamt of being in the army or a pilot as a boy?**

Oh I wanted to be a pilot, yes. I wanted to be a Spitfire pilot. I loved the Spitfires. I learned all about them, aeronautical engineering side of them, how they flew and whatever. I preferred them over the

36:30 German Fokkers, whatever you call them. We used to call them something else! The Spitfire was the plane. There could never be a better plane in the world and when I got to Korea of course the Australians were flying Mustangs, which is not a bad looking plane but it just wasn't a Spitfire as far as I was concerned. Then I realised a bit later in my life that I never had the education. I used to wag too much from school. You have to have that to get to be a Spitfire pilot.

37:00 Darn! I never made it. Then the army of course, I never really wanted to be a soldier. There was no big dream there. I never had any mad dreams about anything. I was always interested in women. That was the good side I reckoned but I was terribly embarrassed because we never got to get any girlfriends, because we never had any money. We never had any good clothes and there were lots of lovely girls around but.

**In Korea?**

No! In Australia at home when I was a kid! When I was a young fella.

**What about in Korea?**

37:30 **Never seen any hardly women there. They were all gone from beyond the frontline area. You couldn't survive there. You couldn't survive.**

**What about in Japan when you were on leave?**

Yes. There were plenty of beautiful women in Japan but they were sort of a bit alien to a fella who'd never seen one before but they were very pretty, sure. There were plenty of girls there and of course we had plenty of lectures too

38:00 from the doctor on what to do, and what not to do, and how to behave, which a lot of people promptly forgot as soon as they walked out the lecture hall.

**What sort of things did they tell you in the lectures?**

The old venereal one and all the other sorts of things like that but they were there plying their trade all over the place because in Japan you could roam around freely. There was no way in the world that the Japanese were going to cut your throats or anything like that, not like in Iraq today.

38:30 They would leave the gate and say hello, and go downtown. Of course you'd go to the beer halls and the girls would all be there, and entertaining you, and dancing with you, and whatever. I suppose it was a matter of economics. They were a bit like the dancing girls where they make some money and there were the other ones down the street but you always had to be careful where you went. I never sort of... you know...

39:00 got too entangled. Although some of the fellas married Japanese girls and brought them home, and raised wonderful families.

**So we got as far as you...so you left, you went to transport corps. Then you left soon after that and went to Japan. How long were you in Japan for before you went back to Australia?**

It couldn't have been too long because the Melbourne Cup was on. I remember that and that's when

39:30 I had a bet with the padre and I picked the winning horse see? I took all the boys who had no money, I took them all out that night and we were drinking Akadama wine, and eating some Japanese tucker, like dining at Chinese only it was Japanese. I had a couple of beers and whatever. So that would have been whatever Tuesday the Melbourne Cup is on, the second Tuesday in November. It wasn't long after that we got on the plane and

40:00 came home. There were a fair number of wounded on the plane. They were in stretchers, seats were taken out and we had to fly from Japan to Guam this time on the way down. I saw all the wrecks there from World War 11 we thought but it wasn't. It was from this typhoon in World War 11. Then from Guam to Port Moresby. At each stop the medics were there to treat the wounded people and then from there

we flew direct from Port Moresby to Sydney. That was a long

- 40:30 flight too and we flew exactly over our farm in the Callide Valley down here. No planes fly that way normally at that time but Mum said to Dad when they were outside and this big four engine plane up high went over, she said, "I bet Ted's on that." She had an inkling and sure enough I was but I had to go all the way to Sydney and catch a flight back to Brisbane, and another one from Brisbane to Thangool.

## Tape 6

- 00:32 **What was it like seeing your farm? Like you had just been overseas in war, seeing your farm, what was that like?**

It was good going back there because it was where we were all raised and all of our early life. Early life lasts a lot longer than middle life and the older part of your life. They go very quickly but seventeen years there as a young person was probably the equivalent to thirty or forty years somewhere else

- 01:00 because that's where all your formative years are. So I went back and it was nice to come home. My uncle, who ran a taxi service in town charged me to go out home to see my Mum and Dad. I stayed there for a while and of course Dad would go to town now and then. I'd get off and go in the pub, and have a couple of beers with a few of my mates. I've never been a great beer drinker but I had a couple of beers with them. He'd pick
- 01:30 me up later and take me home, and he'd make some aside about drinking too much. It used to go on for a while and in the end I got a bit sick of this, and I said, "Look Dad, I know some of the worst drunks in the world and they're dead and buried in the Pusan cemetery you know?" I said, "And they died pretty bravely too." He's never said another word since! So we were sweet then.

### **Was that time hard for you?**

Yes, it was. It was sort of...

- 02:00 it's the extremes. You go from one to the other, the quietness. I experienced the same thing when I came home from Vietnam driving up the road by myself but there were some good points too. The RSL [Returned and Services League] was a tiny RSL there. They invited me to Anzac Day turnout. This was after I had my leave in April 1953 and I was a guest speaker there, and they treated me very nicely, so
- 02:30 that sort of made up a bit but there were no farewells or welcome homes from anybody. There were no family parties or anything like that.

### **So the RSL invited you along?**

Yes. I was a guest speaker at the local RSL and that was nice to be given the opportunity. Of course I

- 03:00 thanked them for all the support and everything else. That's where we left it.

### **Were they supportive the RSL, of the Korean vets?**

I can't recall ever receiving anything from the RSL but then the RSL probably had their hands full with all the World War 1 fellows then too. We were less important because people were going around saying we'd been to a peace action you see, which was entirely wrong.

- 03:30 We were not peacekeepers because I will fight that anytime, that statement. We weren't there between a couple of belligerents trying to keep the peace. We were there waging war on the other side. It was as simple as that and I wouldn't call it a peace treaty. Now the figures come out it's all right to say that fifteen thousand or so were killed in World War 1 in this big battle. When you break it down in the numbers game to
- 04:00 respective amounts you might find that the Korean War was pretty bad too. Then you've got to have a look at it to say the Vietnam War. The number of enemy that we had in Vietnam was nowhere near the numbers we had in Korea. You had sneaking up to four hundred killed in Korea in three years and you had five hundred killed in ten years in Vietnam, and a lot more Australians there, so that will give you an idea but how do you judge it really?

- 04:30 **When you came back from Korea were you demobbed [demobilised] at any stage?**

No I stayed in. I was posted to Rockhampton here on the staff of the 42nd Infantry Battalion because this is where my parents were at that time. They moved up north near Rockhampton. Then they shifted me to Mackay and I worked there at the drill hall for a fair while, did some camps at Saline [?] but we got sick of it because there was

- 05:00 nothing in it after serving in the war zone. It was worse than a dead end job it appeared to be. So droves of us got out and they were happy to let us go because they didn't want to maintain a big army then anyway. The war never ended of course. It was just a ceasefire agreement.

### **What were your thoughts at the armistice?**

Well, we were all glad it was over and the fellas who were POWs [Prisoner of War], of which quite a few of them were ours, our platoon,

- 05:30 we were glad that they were returned safely home. Some of them were in a bad way, Eric Donnelly and those blokes. They were glad to go home. Of course I was already home. So I ended up because of my involvement with the British Food Corporation out here as a mechanic and different other things, I ended up as a marine motor engineer running the engines on a trochus boat off Mackay. I think it was 1956
- 06:00 or something, we went out. It must have been in June and the whole thing went to the bottom. I started in June. It might have been towards the end of the year. We lost it in a big cyclone. We made a thousand pound Australian money in three days in trochus shell and it all went to the bottom, everything I owned. I'm sitting there on the wharf...that's right, on Christmas Day, sitting on the wharf in the Mackay River there in a pair of underpants and a ski cap.
- 06:30 Happy Hawkins and I had six bananas and a bottle of milk each for Christmas dinner! So that was that!

### **Where to from there?**

From there I got out of that and I became a representative. I worked counter jumper in spare parts and I became a salesman, a car salesman, and tyre representative, and just improved myself generally along the way. Then when the Cuban Crisis started I

- 07:00 rejoined the regular army. Whilst I was out I also join the reserves or CMF [Citizens Military Force] as it was called in those days and I became a corporal, and sergeant, and a qualified warrant officer in the 51st Infantry Battalion. So that sort of kept me in touch over the years.

### **What were you thinking at the time of the Cuban missile crisis?**

I thought there would be a major war because Kennedy [President Kennedy - President of United States at the time] didn't give the impression he'd back down and my thoughts at the time were, "Well if I'm going to be

- 07:30 in one, I want to be in a position where I've got some authority." because I like that, not from a standover point of view. Just remember we don't have all that bastardry you see on TV in American shows, where they do press ups and push-ups, and screaming at your soldiers. You never do that. Well you didn't do that in the Australian Army that I know. If you wanted to address your soldiers you stood at attention yourself and spoke to them in a proper word of command as you're taught to, none of that
- 08:00 "I'll kick your bum till your nose bleeds!" stuff. I knew I could handle the rank, so I rejoined and nine days less a year later I had three stripes up in the regular army, so that wasn't bad.

### **That's quite quick!**

Quick yes. I couldn't get on NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] training courses, so I used to go to the company commander and say, "Righto, let me sit for the exam." I'd sit for the exams and top them, then of course

- 08:30 he'd have to promote me wouldn't he! I was made a temporary warrant officer...I forget but fairly soon after that and later on a warrant officer confirmed.

### **What was your driving force at that stage?**

Just a professional streak. I've still got it. That's why I got to Toastmasters and anything, anything I can excel in. I have a go at new things otherwise you stagnate. There are a lot of challenges out there isn't there?

- 09:00 You can just sort of die in a hole if you want to. I see that everywhere I go. Now, the Bachelor of Arts in Australian Politics and History, that's the challenge now. I find that very stimulating too. I might fail, it might take me ten years but I'm having a good time doing it! Of course you've got to have a good assistant!
- 09:30 Your wife has got to be supportive.

### **When did you meet Barbara?**

Well, she came to a party at the Wacol sergeants' mess when I was the area sergeant major and she stayed, as simple as that! That was before I went to Vietnam.

### **What was the lead up to Vietnam for you?**

I was available for a long time but unfortunately the government of the day were more concerned with sending people

- 10:00 who were conscripted against their will to Vietnam. There was no need to do it. There were plenty of regular army soldiers who couldn't get to Vietnam and wanted to go. There were people who had to pull

all sorts of strings to get there in certain positions. That wasn't necessary. Had they needed a large number of ordinary infantry type people and called up a Vietnam force, they'd have had that many volunteers it wasn't funny but once you start conscripting Australians

10:30 you're in trouble. I saw some terrible cases. I was the area sergeant major or my unit and there were people who had a new trucking business going on their feet at twenty-two years of age, lost the lot while they were away. You can't demand that from some person, some Australian to go and fight in another war that wasn't even a popular one really but you can ask a volunteer to do it. That's up to them and then they can't whinge after either can they? I can't blame Menzies.

11:00 He didn't send me to Korea.

### **What about the Australian Army Training Team in Vietnam?**

All right. Well that was a very professional group. I was supposed to go to that. I did the full course and passed it, and then when I did the language segment at Middle Head in Sydney, the dirty kitchen I got gastroenteritis, and I bled to death. I had two and a half gallons of blood put into me. It ate through my intestines

11:30 and my heart, and pulse stopped beating. It's all in my records. I got over that and I caught them up at Canungra, and I ended up jumping off the twenty-five foot tower. They let me go last but I did it and after that was over he said, "Well I can't give you medical clearance yet because you can't be right inside." There was a big scar in my stomach, so I didn't go. I went back to my job as the area sergeant major at Wacol and then I reckoned I had a clearance medically.

12:00 I applied again to go again to the Training Team because that's what they wanted, Korea veterans and they said to me, "Well it's a long time since you did the last course and you've been up there doing the clerical duties, so go and do it again." I said, "OK." So away I went and I went all through it again but at the time I was called up to a knife and fork [officer] interview. That's what they call an officer, a knife and fork instead of fingers. Then the medical course disclosed my hearing stage and I was

12:30 medically down classified to communication zones only, and taken off the course, and also the knife and fork course.

### **What was your reaction to that?**

I was very upset about it because I was just as good soldier as anyone else but my mate Chalky, he didn't go to Vietnam. He was out of the army after being a paratrooper, he said to me, "Well maybe that's how it is because if you'd have went to Vietnam you might have been one of those other numbers, you know?" Then again, if I'd have went to Vietnam

13:00 early in the first time I wouldn't have met Barbara. Don't tell her that will you!

### **Did you think about it fairly fatalistically?**

About not going? Oh yes, I didn't like that at all but eventually they sent me over. I was seconded to the 1st Australian Civil Affairs Unit, which in itself was an acknowledgment of my talents. I'd done two language courses, North and South Vietnamese colloquially

13:30 and I also was pretty good on the clerical side. They made me the administrative warrant officer for the 1st Australian Civil Affairs Unit. We had a budget of two and a half million dollars and I was a bit like a CEO [Chief Executive Officer] of a city council in other words. We built housing and water supply systems, and sewerage, and hospitals, and roads, and on, and on, in Vietnam. So that in itself, to be picked to

14:00 be placed in that job! I sat right alongside a lieutenant colonel. I didn't answer to anybody but him. Whenever the VIPs [Very Important Persons] came up, like Gorton [John Gorton, Australian Prime Minister] and so forth, they would second me from that unit, and I'd go up to the task force headquarters, and do all their stuff, like photographs, and reports of their visit to have presented to them that afternoon before they went back.

14:30 So I was quite happy about that. I became a photographer there I wrote captions. I did a public relations short course in Saigon, so it would help me with writing. I still do that today.

### **What were your prior expectations to Vietnam before you left Australia?**

It was purely professional. It was to go on the Training Team. I didn't like the tactics of course. I could see through them and because I studied the French debacle where

15:00 they drove up the roads, especially Mobile Force 100, which was obliterated driving up the road. Put thousands and thousands of soldiers on the road and you don't secure your flanks, you're just asking for trouble. That's like the Red Indians see? It's inherent in American psyche isn't it, ethos? The Americans and their caravans going around the hills, and out come the hollering Indians with their bows and arrows, and they've got them ambushed haven't they? That doesn't happen with Australians or it shouldn't but it did happen up there. It upset me,

15:30 infantry soldiers all riding on top of an armoured personnel carrier instead of walking behind it or



beside it. That's how it goes. They were all killed.

**What were your thoughts about America's decision to go in there?**

I didn't think it was justified but I never questioned it too much because I was a professional soldier. I had political belief but good Australian soldiers don't get involved in politics.

**What was your political belief?**

I was a member of the Australian Labor Party

16:00 and there were plenty of those in the army in Vietnam, including some high ranking ones but that's secondary. God help us if soldiers start making political decisions. That's not to happen ever.

**How did you just put aside those beliefs?**

I suppose somewhere along the line you weigh them up and if you can't put aside your political beliefs then you ask for a discharge from the army. Then you go and

16:30 demonstrate or whatever you want to do, join a political party, write letters to the paper, do what you want. You can vote for a party and all soldiers do vote, don't they? So what you do is you know your beliefs you vote that way but the rest is your job. That's why they shouldn't ever allow the military to get involved in politics, like strike breaking and things like that because that's getting a little bit too close. That's like religion coming into government, into politics. It shouldn't happen.

17:00 The gap must be there. That's what our system is, isn't it. God help us if it changes and I'm a republican too!

**So you said goodbye to Barbara?**

I said goodbye to Barbara yes. I can't remember much about it but I said goodbye to Barbara and I went to Sydney to catch the plane.

17:30 Whilst I was in Sydney walking around having a look at the place and I like Sydney, I came across the great musical 'Hair'. So I went in, full warrant officer's uniform, the works and I got a seat right on the aisle, right down the front, and I enjoyed it very, very much. I even saw Marcia Hines [Australian entertainer] naked when they threw the shroud off. That's my favourite joke! I did! Then the next thing somewhere in the show

18:00 they were running down and I got a big thing of flowers round my neck. They were running through the audience because the theme was peace but I enjoyed it very much. They had some fine souvenirs and I even bought the big eight-tracker tape after that, and played it all the time.

**That's very ironic that you saw 'Hair' before you left!**

Yeah, well that's me. I don't have any hang ups about anything. I have no religion whatsoever and I don't have any problems. I can't understand why Catholics and

18:30 Muslims are killing each other all over the world. Nobody says a word for us atheists. What about us? We must outnumber them now you know. We've got to put up with them but we go and fight, and we do all sorts of things too. The thing about it all is that I can have all those beliefs, no religion whatsoever yet Barbara and I used to have Catholic priests and Church of England ministers for dinner at our place, and enjoyed their company, and give them a few ports, and hand them a cigar. That

19:00 friendship still exists today because they know what I am and that's how you've got to be in life. All our kids are brought up the same way, no hang ups on anything.

**So you saw Hair, you got your eight track and off you went to Vietnam?**

Yes. I landed there and it wasn't a surprise

19:30 geographically but they are a different people. Of all the people in the Far East, they're different. They're very cultured people. The women are very pretty there. They're much prettier than...don't tell them I said this, than the other Asian ladies. What made it easier, they write in Arabic and not the Chinese, and you can learn to read and right fairly well. The Americans had trouble with the language because their

20:00 voice is pretty flat and static, and they couldn't handle the tonal qualities of the language because "B-A-N", Ban has "Baan, baaan, ban, baaan" all in different tones. Quite often an American would go to a shop and say something to a Vietnamese girl, and they'd all burst out laughing because of whatever it was. It was an entirely different word. I met some wonderful Vietnamese fellows, a

20:30 boy named Suu. He sent me for my birthday a bunch of artificial flowers. I still have that in a big long vase that's somewhere in the cupboard there and he gave me this card, "Happy birthday from a boy named Suu." He'd been educated in France and could speak good French. Ho Chi Minh was a revered figure North or South and

21:00 some of the stationary I'd write home to Barbara on was Vietnamese stationary just to be different, and

it had a little saying in Vietnamese on the letterheads. I couldn't work it out and I took it to this fella who said, "What that means is that Vietnam, our whole country all together reunited." What he meant more or less was we had a good little war going on here until you mob, meaning the Americans came in and stuffed it all up

21:30 because it was a bit like New Guinea natives in the old days, who go and throw a few spears, and pinch a couple of brides here and there, because they wanted in the first place to get their gene pool good, and they all knew that but then there'd be a few spears, and a couple stuck in a leg or a bum, and then that was the war. That's a bit like what I believe it was in Vietnam. The Chinese were making the Vietnamese pay this sort of a ransom. They've got a word for it, a "Tey" or whatever it is, not to invade them.

22:00 The Vietnamese didn't like Chinese and that's how it worked. It was a great experience, wish I could put it all in a book because you've got to have humour with it. The Americans, I met some of them there and had good talks with them. They're very polite young fellas, well educated. These are people...I remember seeing a computer that was as big as this house, a bit different to what we use today.

#### **What were your**

22:30 **first impressions of the state of the cities and the villages?**

Right! Well, we went out in them. We roamed everywhere and first off the health of the people must come first, and those away from the sea could not get the foods that they needed, seafood, and all of that sort of thing. So we tried to get them to

23:00 breed fowls because the old WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK [fowl] cooked is not a bad meal in anyone's language. I've got some photos somewhere of all these betel nut stained ladies from chewing betel nut in the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK pens everywhere. We tried to get the cows involved in farming or farmers get involved with cows and that was a success. Water supplies went in, Southern Cross windmills everywhere. We made their lot a bit better but they had problems there to

23:30 because the Montangards are like the Aborigines, an oriental Aboriginal. They lived in the mountains because they were driven there by these other Vietnamese hundreds of years earlier and they were sort of displaced people too. They were wonderful people, a great sense of humour. I'll always remember in our unit we had an Orders Group or O Group as we called it, debriefing. Every afternoon the colonel sat there and I sat on this side of him.

24:00 The other executive officer sat on that side of him and they all sat around, so and so from the agricultural squad. We had a building group of captains, engineers all in charge of these, very important people all around. What you had to do in the debrief was tell the colonel what you had been doing today and what you intend doing tomorrow. It got around to Captain Pound, that was his name. He was an Englishman and he said, "Well Sir, I've been up at Binh Ba today" and he said,

24:30 "We impregnated four sheep." The colonel said, "Female I hope!" The whole O Group burst out into laughter. That was the end of it. We couldn't go on.

25:00 **What was the official title of your group?**

1st Australian Civil Affairs Unit. It was an honour to be with it too because that was a brand new thing. We were there to help those that were affected by the war get back on their feet and we did it in a very fine manner. A lot

25:30 of the American aid had the big Uncle Sam handshakes painted on the box and it was just handed over. We would never do that. We would hand over ours out of the box, make their infrastructure work together. We would make them apply for assistance; this is the following type of help we need. Then they have to justify, you know?

#### **What was the thinking behind that?**

Well, not to dry up the infrastructure that they had, then eventually when they're on their own they're not able to do anything. They get the "Gimme, gimme" mentality,

26:00 handout mentality. We were pretty successful there.

#### **How did you work at doing that? Can you give us some examples of the types of things you did?**

We could be doing residential housing, so we would have a meeting with the province chief, who was a military person under the circumstances, a province being like a reasonable sized local authority, like a mayor, so we'd have a talk with him and see what his desires were. Then we'd go and evaluate it.

26:30 Then we'd get back to him or maybe some of his staff, or deputies, get them involved. We might have the materials and we might have the money, we might have the expertise to supervise but we involved them in every level of the building of schools at Hoa Long, dispensaries, an idea that I brought back here to Australia but was never used. Small towns like out West in Queensland, there's no doctor there, there's no chemist or anything. What you can

27:00 have is a dispensary as least and then somebody flies around in a helicopter once a week. That's how we did it. It worked very, very well. We had big opening ceremonies. When we opened the new hospital we built in Phuoc Tuy Province, it was a big day. Anyone and everyone was there.

### **What was the structure of your group?**

It had a headquarter structure with a lieutenant colonel of course and then it had a captain adjutant,

27:30 an XO [Executive Officer]. His duties of course would be first off he was in charge of all the other officers down the line and there were majors and captains, and lieutenants, doctors. We had a medical section. Then on the other side of it you had myself, the administrative assistant. I looked after all the paperwork. Under me I had warrant officer engineers. I had sergeants, medical sergeants. I had soldiers. I had a lot of rubbish soldiers too because

28:00 we would send out a signal to the battalions saying we need some and we had the right to ask, and they had to fulfil it, we need X amount of men to help us on these particular projects. They'd send us their worst, which is only natural I suppose. They wouldn't send us their best. They sent us their worst. Of course we had trouble there but I used to have to pull them into gear. That was my job in charge of discipline but I also had all these other roles,

28:30 of photography and report writing. Every afternoon I would go from that briefing with the colonel, I would go down to a little boozier thing they had built in the rubber plantation. All the other ranks call them that. We'd get in there and I'd brief them, and all this humour again comes into it. I remember we had one that went a bit longer and I arrived, and they all yelled out, "You're bloody late sergeant major!" I said in my best

29:00 and sternest voice, "Sergeant majors are never late. You are bloody early!" We'd get on with the job then! So I would brief them on what's happening, what's happened today and what we're going to do tomorrow. Then away they'd go from there. We had dispensaries in the camp. We had trucks. We had five thousand refugees from Cambodia making concrete blocks, wet earth and cement,

29:30 bash them into a steel mould with a piece of three by two wood, then stick them out in the sun to dry.

### **Did the South Vietnamese help you?**

We used them whenever we could. We had a lot on the paid staff too but you had to watch Vietnamese generally because you might be pouring cement to build them some housing...the regional forces got the housing first. They were the fellas who were in the part time forces, who tried to protect their villages at night.

30:00 They had a little uniform and a gun, so you tried to get them a house first off. If you'd pour the cement and if you didn't guard it, you'd come back tomorrow morning, and it would be all taken away. They'd pinch it and use it for something else! There was a Catholic priest at Binh Ba I think. It was a fortified village, one where there was a great big bamboo wall going all the way around it and he had a flock there. They were all a Catholic community.

30:30 We went up there and did a lot of stuff. We grew grain sorghum there and they made everything out of grain sorghum including wine, and it wasn't bad, so they were very talented people. There was no sign of sort of child crime in Vietnam. There was very little crime anywhere. In fact one night when I was roaming around Saigon, which is a dangerous game I suppose but me being small, I fitted in with them pretty well, riding in the little Lambro taxis. I went into this nightclub, music is blaring away and

31:00 they were all sitting down having a drink, a Vietnamese nightclub I might add. I said to one of the Vietnamese fellas, "Why aren't they dancing?" "Oh no! There's no dancing while the war is on." They had nightclubs and everything but no dancing. That will give you an idea of their make up.

### **How often were you reminded that there was a war?**

Well, I knew it was on but it was difficult for me to get close to it because it was an incident type war, here and there, and spread all over. A helicopter might

31:30 have got shot down, there might have been a large contact somewhere else. I know of one major operation. They went out and they only got one enemy. They had a tank hit a tree and it fell down on top of one Viet Cong that was running away, flattened him. That's the only one they got there. It might be the other way like the Long Hai [mountains], where they ambushed our fellas pretty badly but I wasn't involved with that. I flew around in RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] aircraft a fair bit, Caribous up to some places.

32:00 I had a real free hand of course, which was good.

### **How did you prioritise what infrastructure needed to be built?**

That was all done as a result of conferencing. We had our own conferences and then the Australian Task Force, our top commander was that particular commander but in the Vietnam War there were a lot of public servants in Saigon who had a hand in the war too. It could be a young fella or something like that but he put the brakes on because that was the political aspect of it.

- 32:30 Of course Communists had that too, the Viet Cong. They had political commissars and they guided the war from that side because it's not good sometimes to win a battle if you're going to lose a lot of men, and you're going to have a problem at home because of national service or other things. We did not suffer from that in the Korean War but we did suffer from that in Vietnam and of course some senior commanders had said to me that because we weren't able to kill them when we could have killed them, they came back later, and killed our fellas. I know
- 33:00 that's generalising a bit too much but that's how some of them thought at the time. We lost a lot of people in Vietnam, more so than in Korea with the mines because in Korea we laid all our mines to our British system, patterns and once you find one you've got the lot. The records are there, the logbooks and so forth, whereas they just sowed them up there wild, a bit like the Americans do. The Viet Cong were stealing them too and using the explosives, and/or the mine itself against us.
- 33:30 So our fellas...a lot of my friends died. I've got all their photos here. I wasn't with them naturally but it's still very sad. There was quite a bit of debate about it after the war but nothing has been pursued. I was a subject of a disagreement once with Jim Cairns [Labor Party anti war campaigner] of course. He was talking about an ambush at Hoa Long and said that women and children
- 34:00 were killed there. I debated it because I was just from here to there that night. I sort of watched it but I went over the next day and saw the bodies. They were Viet Cong and they were being resupplied from a friendly Hoa Long village, which was just near the Australian main base. They got ambushed. That was it, the same thing as they ambush our fellas. I said if they found the photos and they must be in the 1st Psychological Operations Group, there was another one alongside me, they could see the photos of all the dead,
- 34:30 and there were no women and children there. That was at the time I stood for parliament later. I never ever got to meet Jim Cairns after that but I've got a lot of respect for him of course.

**What were your living conditions like?**

I had a row of sandbags that high and about

- 35:00 this size of a room. I had a bed with a mosquito net over there and a bit of a table there. Out in front of it there was a little dugout with a couple of sandbagged ends that you could get undercover in case of a rocket attack. I never had any of those. That was it.

**Where were you based?**

At Nui Dat, a little place, and we had a prisoner of war camp there, a staging post if you want to call it that, and our task force headquarters.

- 35:30 All the battalions were in there when they weren't out on operations. There were a lot of men in there but it was like a big local authority, that in itself. It had electric light and sort of water systems, and a form of trench latrines. It wasn't all that uncomfortable. They had good kitchens. They cooked up good meals and a lot of American turkey. I don't mind a bit of turkey!

**What about your office or your base? Where was that?**

We had a sort of a tin shed.

- 36:00 There were all dugouts around them and I would just get up, and go across to that, and operate there. I'd go around the lines. You had to keep an eye on the soldiers because a couple of my fellas ate food, one was a health inspector back home in civvy [civilian] life but he ate food from a roadside stall and next thing he went home as a vegetable, his spleen was removed, and everything, infected food. They used to sell rolls, bread rolls off a side road, on the side of a road, dust everywhere too and those bread rolls
- 36:30 became known popularly as 'hepatitis' rolls. So my aim was to send them back home better than what they came and I did, most of them. I used to talk to them. I had one fella attack me one night. You've gotta beat something much bigger than I. The commanding officer, I'm sitting in the O Group and the commanding officer said, "I heard there was a bit of an altercation down in the thing last night." I said, "Oh I don't know anything about it." I had all my hands...
- 37:00 it was all skin but later at a reunion in Sydney he was there. In front of everyone he said, "You're the so and so that thumped me." I said, "And didn't you deserve it?" He said, "Yes I did." in front of everybody. We settled that then. I had some rough customers. I got some of those that I think were involved in shooting the sergeants one night. They murdered them, Australian. They caught them but I think some got away and I think some came...
- 37:30 they were from our unit. But that was my role. You'd go to bed same as anywhere else and I'd get up in the morning in the dark, and I'd get shaved, and everything. Then I'd go and wake them at dawn. They could never work out how I was all clean-shaven or anything, and dressed.

**Were there any**

- 38:00 **entertainment units that came through?**

Entertainment units came round, yes, Little Patty and all those, the old ones you still see operating. They were there. The American girl that's in the movie...not with Elvis. I can't think of her name. There were a fair few that went through.

### **Not Nancy Sinatra?**

No, Nancy wasn't there at that time. I think I was home or it

38:30 might have been before left. The songs were there, all the songs were on. Of course M\*A\*S\*H the movie came out about that time too, which was good. I watched it and it brought me back to Korea.

### **Did you feel like it was a fairly accurate portrayal?**

M\*A\*S\*H? Yes of that party except for any fighting in the hospital. No fighting happened in the hospitals and all the refugees didn't walk to the hospitals either. You couldn't have that happen.

39:00 The Americans weren't that bad. The Indian hospitals were the best. They ran them very well.

### **How long were you there for in total?**

In Vietnam? Just twelve months. The interesting thing about it too is that I didn't find this out until much later. Whilst I was there...the Schunemann name comes from Brunswick in Germany and

39:30 it has spread around a bit since then...or Brunswick as we call it, Brunswick in Melbourne, and New Brunswick in Canada actually over the border isn't it. So I met with James Schunemann, this fella up there in the American Army. He's a helicopter pilot, got shot down and killed, and he's James Edward Schunemann, same spelling. When we went to America I found a senator,

40:00 retired, Schunemann and another Lady Schunemann, who runs the Catholic education system in Chicago. It's not a common name. In Hitler's book there's one somewhere, I was on his staff! We don't mention him! But I wanted to go up there. New Brunswick see? That ties up with Brunswick where they were born doesn't it, so they must have went there too. They're all our family on my father's side. There's no

40:30 differences there, so that made the hair on the back of my neck stand up. When I found out about it, it was a terrible feeling. I felt as if we sort of lost a brother or something. It may sound silly but especially with a name like mine. Being Smith you wouldn't take any notice if you were a Smith but when your name is Schunemann, you notice.

## **Tape 7**

01:47 One of the volunteers in Korea was actually a World War 11 veteran getting on in years. His marriage had busted up but he died his hair and joined

02:00 the K Force, and fronted up in Korea as a private. They worked all this out eventually and took him in as a private, made him a captain, and took him out. They found out that he'd been a lieutenant colonel in World War 11, a wonderful man. So that'll give you an idea. There were volunteers who had the rank of flight lieutenants and won DFCs [Distinguished Flying Cross] in World War 11, who were

02:30 corporals and sergeants in an infantry battalion. There were people there who had been POWs of the Japanese, including my wife's father but he was the British Army in his case. Derrington from Rockhampton here, he was a POW of the Japanese, still went up there to Korea. I can't explain why he would do that. He's gone now poor fella, passed away.

### **When we speak to**

03:00 **blokes that just went to Vietnam they always speak about the smell of the place. Did you notice that?**

Oh there were pockets there that you could...I recall that a convoy and I happened to be on for some reason or another going somewhere, was going through the village, and it had to stop. There was a problem somewhere and the fish markets were right alongside. The smell, oh God! There were people being sick, those that had too much to drink, especially the night before, over the sides of the trucks.

03:30 There were canals there that were actually sewerage canals also and they got their water out of that. I went into a luncheon once with my colonel to the province chief, who was a Vietnamese Army colonel, a well-educated man and a top quality looking fellow. We sat down to a beautiful lunch with him and everything was on the plate, and there was watercress. I like watercress. He was having brandy. They love brandy, Napoleon style,

04:00 French. He said, "Would you like some ice?" I said, "No, I have mine straight" because the ice over there was another source of infection and I have a 'barmy bar', which means 33 Beer here. You would... they would, I wouldn't...they would put big handfuls of ice in that and put the beer in, and drink it like

that, like you would a Scotch and ice. I drank my Scotch straight and I drank my brandy straight, no ice. I'm eating away. I'm

04:30 having a little bit of brandy and I put the watercress in my mouth. Now I don't think you are supposed to eat the watercress but I did. When it got in my mouth it was the vilest taste that I've ever, ever tasted in my life but I couldn't spit it out because the province chief was sitting right there opposite me, so I sort of sipped a bit of brandy and I rinsed it round, and rinsed it round, and I tucked it up the side of my teeth until after I got out of the luncheon.

**How long do you reckon that stayed in your mouth?**

Yeah! But

05:00 the colonel of our unit, we put some new windmills in, water supplies in one place and he was very proud of this. There was a well dug and a Southern Cross windmill put up and the next day there was a big opening, and back he came. There was a bit of wind blowing and they released the hold on the windmill, and around went the wheel, and up and down went the rods, and out came the water. He put his mug under and drank a mug full of water to show them how great it was. That afternoon he was in hospital with the

05:30 worst stomach thing you've ever seen, bug. They found out that somebody overnight had emptied the toilet bucket down the well. Smells and whatever, you had to be very careful, and I was. I ate everything that the army gave me to eat and nothing else, simple as that. That's what I urged all my soldiers to do.

**Do you think food was any different in Vietnam to say what it was in Korea?**

The ration packs weren't all that different, the issue type.

06:00 We had our own Australian ones by then but they were more or less modelled on it. I'd say they had an edge on the Americans ones but once again they were balanced diets and you had to eat everything that was in them. When we were doing terribly hard training here no Olympian would keep up with us, I'll tell you. Fellas would collapse some of them. Some of them lost weight galore. I stayed the same all the way through because I would eat every single item in that ration pack. I would lick out the tin that had the Vegemite [sandwich spread] in it rather than throw it away.

06:30 People would throw those things away. I wouldn't because I knew that they were part of the whole dietary intake that was needed to sustain you for that period of time and I did.

**How did you go for fresh rations?**

Fresh rations in Vietnam?

**Like when you were in camp at Nui Dat?**

Nui Dat? That's where it all operated from. There was plenty of fresh stuff too because they had a big mess building just down the road and they had the best of cooks, chefs they were. Plenty of supplies came in.

07:00 No big problems there.

**With the things that you were doing, obviously that would have upset the Viet Cong and such. How did you go with that?**

I suspect that the Viet Cong were not all that angry with us for what we did because they never really attack or blew up any of our projects. We pretty good at it. I don't know about the other corps areas or whether the Americans were. There were no British

07:30 there of course. I don't know what the Philippine soldiers did in their area but they never attacked or blew up, that I know of, any of our facilities. A few bullet holes were in a tank of a Southern Cross windmill once and that's about it. I think they were there because the Vietnamese put a lookout post, a fella with a machine gun, up on the tank stand and that was an equation that should never happen.

08:00 **You hear those famous stories of the American 'Hearts and Minds' program where they'd be giving the villagers shots in the arms, and the VC [Viet Cong] would come along, and lop off the arms of those villagers that had been treated. Did you ever worry about things like that happening?**

No. I've never come across them but there were some things that were tough. I had a young policeman in my unit, from this central Queensland part here. I knew him before out west and he was there just as a driver. We had to get an interpreter down from

08:30 Binh Ba or somewhere a bit further up from us and I sent him up there, and when he got there, he came home very sick. He said when he got there the Vietnamese were interrogating a Viet Cong woman and she was stripped to the waist, and they were actually flogging her with a piece of barbed wire. He ended up outside vomiting, so that was one story. Of course we heard a bit about the Australian Military Police giving them the old water treatment. That was before I went over. Maybe it

09:00 happened. We hear stories about the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] taking six up in a plane, throw

the least important one or two out and then the third, and fourth, and fifth talked like canaries but I've never seen anything like that. I have stories of one of the groups on our side, the South Koreans [means South Vietnamese] actually skinning a Viet Cong alive and a Viet Cong atrocity was that an American was disembowelled,

09:30 and his testicles, and penis were cut off, and shoved in his mouth. When they found him and he was alive, their own medic just gave him a double, double shot of morphine, and killed him. Now that's a story too. I hate to propagate them if there wasn't some truth but I suspect there was. The acceptable standards to them would make us think that some things are cruel too. For example, they would imprison people in like birdcages, where you could

10:00 only squat but that's how they always did it going back for hundreds of years, so that was part of it. If you played up [misbehaved] you went in there and you squatted in a cage.

**Did you ever feel that there was a problem perhaps with the 'Hearts and Minds' program in that we were almost instilling western concepts into a totally different culture that didn't think the way we thought?**

No, we didn't do that. The stuff that we put in there they already had anyway.

10:30 Even if we put an electricity producing plant in somewhere it was a relatively older style one. The windmills may have been a new concept but I doubt it. No, there was nothing like that. No one interfered with their religious beliefs. I think interfering with them initially that wasn't good was when they relocated whole villages because it's a bit like Australian people who go and live in a mining town. There's

11:00 not even anyone in the cemetery. There's probably no cemetery there. There's no family connection. Well, the opposite of that is to take the inhabitants of a Vietnamese village away in bulk, demolish it all to the ground and shift them to some new place, whilst around that village are graveyards of hundreds and hundreds of years of family members. That sort of stuff but that didn't happen when I was there. They were finished that relocation stuff.

11:30 That might have been a bit of a hangover too from Malaya. I'm not sure.

**The 'Hearts and Minds' program that your group ran, was that in any way aligned with the similar American program?**

I'd say the Americans seemed to be just the handout mentality. That's what they did and they had the big Uncle Sam. We were very, very subtle, to use that word, in how we did it and we're still the same. The Australian Army I bet when they help out in Iraq

12:00 are not out to make a great public relations exercise out of it for themselves. I couldn't see it...I was critical of things. I always spoke out, sure and I certainly wrote home about it but I never said anything about that.

**What sort of security did you have to have when you went out into villages to do these sorts of projects?**

When we went out I always reckoned we should have had more but that was the infantry soldier talking but they just seemed to go and drive around pretty well, but they didn't

12:30 do it at night. There was the odd vehicle that was ambushed and there was the odd vehicle that had a bomb go off here and there but night time seemed to be the dangerous time. We all withdrew then, other than standing patrols, fortified areas here or there, everyone withdrew into that particular stockade. The American mentality of the stockade, I didn't really like that but Nui Dat was all right.

**Did you have any fatalities in the unit while you were there?**

Our unit

13:00 was ambushed. They were working on a windmill and somebody went past, and threw a hand grenade in, and there were a couple of others wounded somewhere else before I went there, sure. They sent me to Saigon to do a course in this photography and a bit of caption writing, so I could handle these VIP visitors, as an extra-regimental appointment they called it. I stayed at the Vinh Loi [?] Hotel, a matchbox construction. I didn't like that! I remember coming down in the morning to

13:30 go across to what they called 'Free World' headquarters. A vehicle would pick me up and here's all these Australian clerical types, I was one of those too then I suppose, standing all out in front. I said, "What are you fellas?" I outranked them of course. I said, "What are you fellas doing here?" They said, "Oh we're waiting for the bus." I said, "Shouldn't you be waiting well back inside?" "Oh no, it's all right here." I said, "Have you ever heard of a satchel throw?" "Yeah." I left anyway and a couple of weeks later somebody went past on a motorbike, and threw one in, and "Boom!"

14:00 It blew a heap of them up, so there you are but I never let my guard down, yet I would go around Saigon at night on my own in civilian clothes, walking to different places because they wouldn't know who I was anyway at the time.

**Do you know why you did that?**

Oh yes! I wanted to know more about the people. I liked the Vietnamese language. I liked the talents that they had. I liked their culture. I liked the way of life they had. They had small families. They

14:30 controlled the number of children they had. The lady never gave up her identity fully because she got married. He and she put part of their short Vietnamese names together, and in with the kids here and there, you knew that that child was the child of so and so, and so and so. That's how it all worked. I was interested in every single aspect, the way they dressed. When they wore a black dress it was certain things and when they wore a white dress there were certain things, the conical hats, the structure

15:00 of it, the air circulated underneath, the rain ran off over the shoulders, not down the back of your neck like we would wear. It doesn't matter what it is, everything.

**Did you find yourself constantly comparing Vietnam to Korea?**

No comparison, no. No comparison but you can't argue that though. I can't turn around to a veteran of the Vietnam War that he got it easy compared to us because he doesn't know what we got.

15:30 I know but he doesn't, so you don't say it. The only time I ever came out of my shell was once at Wacol. A group had come back and out to the mess, and they were having a drink, and this fella said. "I was in such and such battalion and we had the greatest kill ratio of any unit that ever left Australia's shores." Well I couldn't let that one go! I reminded him of the three thousand dead after Operation Commando, dead Chinese.

**Did you have anything to do with the civilian aid from Australia that was over there as well?**

Not directly. Sometimes we would have an input into it in as much as advising them what might be best to send over. For example, the long summer months dry...there's no real winter or summer in a way but one is a wet time and one is a dry time, but it is hot, "Don't send fur coats over and don't send over something

16:30 they don't want." They would take notice of this and of course the packages would come over. Sometimes we would advise on the distribution in our area. For example, I remember we asked people if they had Singer sewing machines. That's what they wanted, the ladies. They were very crafty-wise and they'd make clothing like you'd never seen before. Even if they did receive some clothing from out country they'd sew it up and make

17:00 the stuff they wanted out of it.

**How did that stuff turn up? Was it just that a container would turn up one day?**

Container loads, yes, the connex as we called it. They would turn up and be distributed.

**How would you divvy [distribute] that out?**

Well, through their own aid people. You must exercise their infrastructure. If you don't...they've got Red Cross. They've got the equivalent. What's in Iraq? They've got Red Crescent don't they? They don't have a Red Cross there

17:30 but they have the equivalent to social welfare groups. They just get in contact with us. You know who they are. They're on the register. You let them distribute it. You don't dry up the resources that they've got because the day comes when you move out and the country is anarchy, isn't it?

**Was there ever a concern of political department corruption and that sort of thing?**

Corruption was rife. That was part of their life. You could buy a police station if you had enough money.

18:00 I know people that had some nice sound gear. I bought some lovely sound gear and took it home but I know people that bought lovely sound gear and had it stolen by a Vietnamese person somewhere along the line, tracked down, and it's in the police station, and there's no way in the world you could get it back. You had to pay a lot of money though eventually to get it back. That's how it all operates. That's part of the salary system I think but it was corrupt, yes. There's no doubt about it but they seemed operating through that. I suppose that's how one thing

18:30 breeds another in a situation. They've had war there for hundreds of years you know.

**Did you get the opportunity to speak to Vietnamese as to what their take was on what was happening there?**

Only those that were with us and they seemed, as I mentioned earlier, to think that it could have been all avoided if America hadn't gone in there. The north was Communist and it wouldn't have mattered if the south was Communist anyway. It wouldn't have changed much in the place because the south were ordinary peasant

19:00 type people. Peasant type people in the main were propped up by the American backed regime, so if the Communists had taken over from whoa to go it would have been probably a mild Communism too because Ho Chi Minh originally wasn't a Communist. He was actually locked up by the Chinese. He went to France. He went other places looking for help after World War 11 and didn't get it, so he went



to France, and of course that's where he first met Communists. Then he went to Russia and eventually he's back.

19:30 We call him a Communist but he was a pretty mild sort of Communist, dearly loved by them all, you know that?

**Have you had a chance to go back to Vietnam?**

No. I wouldn't mind going back but it doesn't have the same sort of drive to go back as what it would to Korea because Korea, my real friends and my younger life friends were all there and I haven't seen them since the day they were killed or when I knew of them being

20:00 killed. In Vietnam they're home. I can go down to a cemetery somewhere and they're buried there. Jock Andrews, a great Scottish mate of mine, I have an affinity with Scotsmen for some reason. He was killed and I was there at his funeral, and his son of about fourteen played the bagpipes, The Lament. It broke everyone up a bit but you couldn't do that with the boys at Korea. The infantry couldn't do it. There were people at their funeral services at Pusan

20:30 but they didn't know them anyway. They were just there as guards.

**What do you think should be done with the fellas that are buried at Pusan?**

Leave them there but instead of sending back all the current army chiefs and politicians on free trips to Korea, send a couple of us back if they want to. We'd like to go back and say hello to Vince, and a few others.

**How different was it going to Vietnam knowing that you had a limited tour of duty there?**

21:00 Well, the background to it is in the Korean War it wasn't a hot political potato. It was a legal war. It was a United Nations job. So because of that we were able to in the main, have the logistic support troops in Japan, even though we'd had an occupation there. That had all finished in March or something '52 but we

21:30 were still able to maintain them there. So we were able to use that a staging area, training area, whatever, hospitals for those that were wounded and on and on. So they would have more overseas time. In the Korean War if you were wounded and you spent three months in the hospital, you had to go back, and do three months extra in the war zone but in the Vietnam War being contentious, the war in Vietnam,

22:00 we couldn't have any logistic support troops in any nearby country, see? America had a base in Thailand but that was strictly limited to what it was signed up for. There were some Australians around Malaya in those days but you couldn't go putting troops there to go and fight in South Vietnam. So they all had to go to South Vietnam for a start and they had a rotating system, and of course faster planes, Boeings, and all that,

22:30 where we were able to change them over pretty quickly. So they were able to stick to that twelve months. We had to do twelve months plus in Korea but you might have been three months to four months in Japan too. Well that didn't happen in the Vietnam War, although a lot of people went back for second tours because it's good dough [money] too you know? Tax free. You get a big allowance and you don't pay any tax.

**You left your new wife**

23:00 **back in Australia when you went to Vietnam. How hard was that for you?**

It was pretty hard. It was harder on her too because we had David and I've got an idea she was expecting Barbara, our second daughter, so it was harder on her. It was hard on me too because I'd walk around sometimes at night and look up in the sky, and say, "Hello! How are you Barbara!

23:30 Where are you?" But I put up with it because every day that went by was one less to do but you could ring up sometimes. There were no mobile phones as they've got now but you could. There was a facility where you could get a phone call through on a good day because wherever I've been in the world too, I always rang my mother up on my birthday and thanked her for having me. That's always been my thing. I have to do that and I rang her up from Vietnam

24:00 because they had a phone there. I couldn't ring her up from Korea but I rang her up from Vietnam. Any other time when there was a phone I rang her, Australia.

**What about mail?**

Mail was good, no problems there. There was a postal strike in Sydney once and the word went out that the Vietnam veterans were coming home to kill them I believe.

**'Punch a postie'?**

Yeah! Punch a postie yes! You know all your history! That changed that but a lot of that too was all blown up out of proportion. Sadly a lot of it was blown out

- 24:30 by people who weren't actually in the war and people who learned stories by sitting on a plane alongside somebody else. That's how it goes on. You've got pseudo, if I may use that term, soldiers and they build up legends. They become legends before their time and they build up these myths, and they're not right but they get them from somebody else. Let me tell you now, the only people who do the fighting is the
- 25:00 infantry soldier in the case of the war there and mainly in Korea too because all the logistic support forces that may have been in Korea were way behind the line anyway, except the cookhouse that came up now and then to the frontline. So this business...I was never spat on. I was never criticised. I walked into pubs wearing my uniform. I wore my medals on Anzac Day. Nobody ever said anything to me.
- But you fought in what**
- 25:30 **has become known as the 'Forgotten War' and you also went to Vietnam, which was termed the 'Television War', how do you see the two wars being differently interpreted by the public?**
- The public can only interpret what they see. They saw nothing from Korea. Nobody wanted to know about it much. There were little bits in the paper and you go through the various newspapers of the day, and you won't find all that much, and Australians are probably referred to as United Nations. The others are Americans of course and I do like Americans. I
- 26:00 wouldn't like to live in a world right now without America and I'm not a warmonger, even though I was a professional soldier. With Vietnam, every move was put on television and sent back. The unfortunate part about it was some of the people that received the television coverage were those that weren't engaged in the war anyway. The stuff that I did rarely made the papers but if it did I wouldn't want to claim that I was fighting. "I fought in Vietnam." they say. I didn't fight
- 26:30 in Vietnam. I didn't fight anybody in Vietnam. Fighting is a different thing. "He's a hero!" Everyone is a hero now. I'm not a hero. Chalky White's a hero. Keith Payne, my mate the Victoria Cross winner is a hero. There are heaps of other ones, all those VC winners. I did the same course with Peter Badcoe, who got a Victoria Cross and died. He's a hero. Butch Swanton and
- 27:00 the other fellow that was with him, Butch Swanton got killed. I get a bit mixed up with names now but they were heroes. He stayed there until the enemy came. A Vietnamese soldier said, "Come on, go!" Everyone reckoned he should have went too but he didn't but I'm no hero.
- You spoke earlier also about during the Korean War there was a high divorce rate because they weren't getting news,**
- 27:30 **and then during the Vietnam War the wives were sitting down watching the six o'clock, seven o'clock news and the impact...?**
- That couldn't have been too good for wives to watch it, though they weren't really watching too much fighting really. If you went back through you saw American...and you saw scenes like the policeman shooting that one in the head in the street somewhere, the execution or you saw the images of that little girl running down the street. I've got some colour pictures of the My Lai Massacre by Lieutenant
- 28:00 Calley, you know? You've got those images but there were a lot worse than that of course. But the cameramen, I wouldn't be one of them. They got killed. Don't you go doing that. You have to divorce yourself from some of those things, to use a pun. Professional soldiers are professional soldiers, that's it.
- Did you find that different for yourself having been a professional soldier in Korea where**
- 28:30 **you were engaged in killing the enemy to a completely different sort of role in Vietnam?**
- No, no problem whatsoever. In fact I have been sort of looked at, "Oh you were a pogo in Vietnam." That's some derogatory term. I said, "Yep with the Civil Affairs. You wouldn't have got the job anyway." Then I say to them, "I did my fighting in the big war."
- 29:00 There was no enemy artillery or anything much to speak of.
- What are your thoughts on the Battle of Long Tan as taking the jewel in the crown sort of thing as far as Australia's involvement in Vietnam was concerned?**
- I will stand to attention to anyone that was in the Battle of Long Tan. Similarly we have the Battle of
- 29:30 Kapyong. I'll stand up for anyone who was in Kapyong too. They did a magnificent job. They were both defensive battles. They stopped the Chinese advance in Korea and they extracted a heavy toll on the Viet Cong in Vietnam, and probably stopped them from doing worse things onto the base. I don't know what their original intention was but that's where it goes you see? People from Kapyong
- 30:00 in Korea have said to me, "The war ended then." I say to them, "Where the bloody hell did the other two hundred odd get killed?" The last night of the war in Korea twenty odd Australians in the 2nd Battalion were killed. A friend of mine in Mackay was actually shot and wounded very seriously twenty minutes after the ceasefire at midnight. Now

- 30:30 I'm getting back onto the comparison here. Those two battles...but there were many others. It's not the size of the battle really. You and I could go out in an infantry section of nine, and have a battle that's just as bad as any in World War 1. It's no different only there's extra sections and extra platoons, and extra companies, and it goes on, divisions, and corps, and armies but for those individuals in those groups, and they're invariably the same structure, it's no different.
- 31:00 But you've got to watch out. Some people want to make a legend out of things. There's great debate today over making a legend out of Anzac, which was a defeat. Whilst Anzac was going on July 1915, others had been dying for a long, long time in France and there were some heroic battles there if you want to look at it that way, on both sides and also it went on until 1918 didn't it? That's the thing.
- 31:30 Should Australia being going down the Anzac legend or should we be more like the Americans and have a one day for the whole lot that died? In fact that's how I have just written an academic essay for university, Griffith University, along those same lines.
- We know about the building of houses and the bringing in of civilian stuff, like you mentioned before,**
- 32:00 **the sewing machines, and that, digging of wells. Were there any things that people probably wouldn't be aware of, the sorts of things that you guys did?**
- Coming into the country up there?
- Yes.**
- Everything from agriculture to industry, power plants, vehicles, it all came in to help them and of course the expertise, like the vets to try and get the chickens growing better, and the cows growing bigger,
- 32:30 fishing techniques. There was plenty of fish, plenty of seafood in Vietnam, beautiful crabbing country, the whole works but there was no refrigeration anywhere in the holding centres or warehouses for seafood and people in the centre suffered the loss of that particular part of the diet. That's what was missing, so we helped all of those ways. I don't know of anything in particular really. There was no graft or corruption
- 33:00 with any of our fellas. I'm sure of that.
- How much did you see the involvement of the helicopter in your war in Vietnam?**
- With us? Did we use them? We didn't use them all that much, no but sometimes we'd get a lift here or there to look at something. There'd be a project going in another part of the province and we'd fly up there because that was really the only way to go. From Nui Dat base we used the Caribous a lot to fly to other centre, Vung Tau even, which wasn't far and they were a great plane of course.
- 33:30 They weren't shot down taking off although I believe they had been shot at but we secure out perimeters see, as opposed to what's happening in Saigon now...in Baghdad.
- Spending a year in Vietnam**
- 34:00 **you would have got R&R [Rest and Recreation leave] or R & C [Rest and Convalescence]?**
- We had it from Korea. Three weeks was the main thing in Tokyo but you still accumulated your normal R&R. You had R&R every year in Australia, like any other worker. You had arduous duty extra days off. You may have been going bush a lot training, weekends in the bush, especially infantry units, so that all amounted up and you could sometimes get six or seven weeks off over Christmas. They were pretty
- 34:30 sensible about it all. There were certain units where it might have been a bit dangerous, we'd be on stand by. They had no leave but they'd go later. That was sort of a new trend in the Vietnam War days in case something broke out somewhere else.
- What about in Vietnam when you went on leave? Did you get to go anywhere?**
- Yes. They had the trip home. It was just the one trip home. I think there was a five day one home. That was about it.
- 35:00 I don't think they had the three weeks, just the one home. I forget now.
- How was that?**
- It was great because I arrived home on New Year's Eve and we went out, my Scottish wife and I. When I got on the plane the next day I wasn't feeling so great and I got to Darwin on Qantas, and I drank about two gallons of water there. I was very dehydrated and I felt like a drink but when we got on the plane it was a Pan Am plane. They had locked cockpits and a dry plane, no alcohol.
- 35:30 So I got to Saigon, Tan Son Nhut Airport and they said, "You're going on this Hercules." They got it going and they couldn't reverse it out, something wrong with the pitch arrangements, so they towed it out with a tractor, and it took a whole runway to takeoff, and the pilot was a young Vietnamese kid. He must have been about eighteen years of age flying with some Yankee fella, so we got to Vung Tau. We had to land there. Nui Dat

36:00 airstrip wasn't long enough. So we had to get on a Caribou and out came a fella with a big World War 11...a Pommy bloke with a big World War 11 handlebar moustache flying a Caribou. They couldn't get something...levers going and they're bashing them. So you wouldn't believe it, the same thing again. We flew from there to Nui Dat. We had four goes at landing because he couldn't reverse the pitch to pull it up. Anyway, he eventually got us down, dropped it down just over the trees and hit the brakes. We got down and I went up,

36:30 got back, threw me gear into my dugout, and I went up to the boozier in the rubber plantation, and drank a half a bottle of Johnny Walker Black Label.

**What was the Nui Dat camp like?**

It was a fair size. In acreage I reckon it would have to be a hundred odd acres in there. The units were laid out. The SAS [Special Air Service] were up on SAS hill because they weren't allowed to mix with us, ha, ha, ha, no different to me or anyone else they were. I used to train them once.

37:00 They were up there but all the other units were spread out tactically around the ground. The fighting units were in the extremities because they would be the first to come into contact and they were guarding all the headquarters, and other organizations. So everyone had to be prepared for mortars and should anyone infiltrate, and get in, we had to be able to put up some sort of a show. There were water points, towers with water. There were ablution blocks and kitchens, and storehouses,

37:30 and bunker systems, not all that many because there was no enemy artillery much. There were enemy rockets sometimes but I never saw any.

**Did you think that the army was running differently to the way it was run in Korea?**

It was sort of Americanised up there. I often refer to things at Vietnam as the "Americafication" of the Australian Army.

**In Korea it was more of a Commonwealth British model?**

We always have had British tactics and they are a British style of operations,

38:00 and sizes.

**What about with things like uniforms and weapons, how they changed from the Korean War to the Vietnam War?**

We were pretty distinctive Australians because we never wore tin hats or anything. In Vietnam we wore rag hats. In Korea we wore Borshies, we called them, our slouch hats, except in the winter we put the distinctive Aussie one on in my time. We were a distinctive race.

38:30 **Did you think the gear was any better by Vietnam?**

Well, our gear in Korea was good except that it was a bit old fashioned. I would have liked to have the SLR [Self loading] rifle in Korea because that was a great rifle. The Owen gun was a great submachine gun. It performed beautifully there, especially in the snow. It and the Chinese burp gun were about the only two weapons that weren't affected by the cold within reason. If you

39:00 neglected them, anything would. In Vietnam we all went for...there were weapons initially that were no good. The SLR was great but that gave way to the Armalite, which was very light but they did have to hoof it a bit and the logistics found it a bit difficult to supply the ammo, which was heavier and larger for SLRs or like Korea, .303 type fast firing machine guns, so they used a lighter weight Armalite but I believe that one of the first soldiers killed,

39:30 infantry soldiers, Australian in Vietnam had actually fired his rifle, and shot the Viet Cong, who he came face to face with, but the Viet Cong was still able to pull the trigger, and kill the Australian. Now that wouldn't have happened if the Australian had an SLR because even if he'd have hit him in the shoulder or the arm, it would have knocked him over for a start with the force of it or a 303 would. The other one, I wouldn't like to try and butt-stroke anyone with an Armalite.

40:00 With an Armalite, it's made of plastic you know? But a .303, which is only single shots or handfed or an SLR could really...you can defend yourself with them, wonderful weapons.

## Tape 8

00:34 **What personal weapon did you have in Vietnam? Was it an SLR?**

Yes I had an SLR. I always kept an SLR handy.

**Did you have pistol as well?**

No. Warrant officers can carry pistols but the ones that they had on issues those days were of no value.

I'd rather have a big American cowboy .45 or something like that. In Korea I had an Owen gun most of the time, when I

01:00 wasn't on the Bren Gun and I also carried a pistol when I had to take out signal gear to repair lines or whatever but I also carried some hand grenades in Korea. I never carried hand grenades in Vietnam.

**You also mentioned in the Korean War that one of the worst things was the cold that you had to put up with. In Vietnam you got the exact opposite of that. How did you fare with the heat?**

01:30 After Korea I lived mostly in north Queensland, only for odd short courses down south I was in north Queensland. I was based here. I was based up in far north Queensland. I was based in Brisbane. We went north for exercises and I think I was ruined as far as having a cold shower. I've never had a cold shower since Korea. I haven't. Summer or winter I have a hot shower or a warm shower. When I went to Vietnam it wasn't so noticeable. The rain didn't worry me too much because

02:00 Babinda in north Queensland on one of my sugar mill working times, after Korea and of course it rains there, as you know, now the wettest place title. I was quite happy with rain because it's not cold and they have umbrellas. It doesn't run down the back of your neck. Everyone has an umbrella in Babinda. So that was no problem. What I felt most was when I arrived home, we got on the plane and flew to Sydney, went through customs, and came out, and that's where we were dumped

02:30 until tomorrow morning for me to catch a plane back to Brisbane, and wasn't it cold. It was in the middle of winter and I was wearing summer dress, light trousers and a light short-sleeved shirt.

**Were they polys [polyester uniforms]?**

Yes, the polyesters! We were shivering, so a group of us found an accommodation place next door to a big heater and that's where we stayed, never went out! So we noticed that!

**Coming home so quickly from Vietnam,**

03:00 **other blokes that we've spoken to that went there sort of think that may have been part of the problem with them suffering from...?**

Acclimatisation would have been a problem, sure because it was much quicker. It was a bit unbelievable. I think it was nearly twenty years to the month or something. I think I went to Japan in July 1951 and I went to Vietnam in July

03:30 1970, so about twenty years, and it took us all day or something to fly from Sydney to Darwin. Did I say nine hours earlier maybe? That was a long time but by then we were well and truly up to Tan Son Nhut in Saigon, much quicker. To get from Sydney to Darwin would have been three hours or something, very fast.

**Do you think the time spent**

04:00 **coming back from Korea to say Sydney at the end of your warrant career was the same length of time as from Nui Dat to Sydney?**

No. I think it was three hops in nine hours; Sydney to Darwin...I might be getting confused here because I didn't prepare. Sydney to Darwin, Darwin to

04:30 Okinawa, Okinawa to Japan. Coming back; Iwakuni to the island, there to Port Moresby, Port Moresby to Sydney. I think they were all about the nine hour hops. That's probably about close to the maximum range of the petrol for a four engine plane then but I think it was only two hops; Saigon to Darwin, Darwin to Sydney. I know when we flew from

05:00 Saigon to Darwin it was a night time job. We went over Indonesia and saw all the beautiful lights there. I was up in the cockpit at the time. Of course it wasn't long after one of those volcanoes had erupted and the dust was all sucked into the engine, and one plane nearly went down not all that later. I didn't notice anything all that much. I think because it was a long gap, twenty years between...I didn't do much

05:30 flying in between.

**Did you have any Korean army mates in Vietnam with you?**

There were plenty there, sure. There were fellows from my own unit in Korea, who were in my own unit in Vietnam. Civil Affairs, Hank...Hank Hankford, Hanningson...Hank Hanningson, he was with us in Korea. He was a commando of World War 11 and he was there with us,

06:00 and worked with our unit. There were others too over the period.

**Did you keep up a network when you got back from the Korean War with all your mates?**

Korea? We just went our own ways. I started some of the first reunions ever up in north Queensland. A few of us ran Mackay because they had a high number of volunteers from there. We got together about the year after and we used to always go out and see Noel Costigan

06:30 near Mackay. Noel had a bullet in the spine. He was paralysed for the rest of his life. He died a couple of years back but he learned to play the piano and he had a car he could drive around in. He actually put a big do on for me at the pub out there at Walkerston when I came home from Vietnam. I used to call in and see him each time. Other than that, we never got together really until the '80s when Kev Thomas and I started the first reunion up there in Townsville.

07:00 We are sort of growing from there. We had one here in 2002. We got about three or four hundred and there's one being organised now, and I'm involved in that but as you get older you need it more because there's great therapeutic value in reunions. I do them and I don't worry too much about RSLs [Returned and Services League] because I haven't got a record of holding reunions you know? If you go through the records they sort of organise (UNCLEAR) the soldiers and all that OK

07:30 but they don't have reunions, whereas I thought an RSL might be a sort of gathering place for...it's hard to have a reunion on Anzac Day because they come from all walks of life don't they? You might see Joe you haven't seen for a while. It's better when you have a reunion. There's hundreds of them there together. Now, haven't had a Vietnam veteran's reunion for a long time. It seems to be dying down a bit.

**Was there an instance once where you**

08:00 **went to an RSL and they wouldn't let you in?**

Yes. When I came home from Korea that was, so it was around then. I went into the RSL. We had our new ribbon bars on and still in uniform, and we went in. They wouldn't let us in, so we had a few words with them. We asked why and they said you haven't been to a war. You've only been to a police action. "Oh well! That's fair enough!" Very few of us ever went to an RSL after that, so I rejoined many years later in Charters Towers after

08:30 Vietnam. I went there but I found they're still narrow minded, tunnel vision point of views abound. RSLs play too much politics for me.

**When you came back from Vietnam what was your plan?**

My plan was to stay on in the regular army but the army decided to post me first off to Tasmania, so I protested and I got out of that because of Barbara and I'm a Queenslander. She being

09:00 from Scotland, her mother had died when she was younger and they were all out here in Australia. They'd been out and went back, and the other sister stayed back but I got her out after we came home. They tried to post me to Tasmania. We'd have been away from everybody, so they said, "All right. We'll wipe that." So they said, "Here you go into the university regiment at Monash." I said, "What's there?" They said, "Well you'll be living in a high rise complex there, a housing

09:30 accommodation block." I said, "No I'm not." Then an opportunity came, the elections on the city council in Charters Towers, so I stood and I came second on the poll because I'd been in a lot of things there by then, festival secretary and so forth. I stood. I came second on the poll and I was elected to the city council as an alderman in Charters Towers, and they had to in accordance with the law discharge me in absentia, so I was out of the army. I stayed with the cadet

10:00 organization for a fair while and there it is.

**What did you do with the cadets?**

Instructor, teaching them all sorts of things. I included a lot of safety things, people shooting in the bush and shooting each other, kids getting wounded when they shouldn't be, though I'd like all the guns to be taken away but they were around.

**How do you see the cadet movement within Australia?**

It was quite good as long as it's voluntary. They enjoyed it but it depends on the type of instructor.

10:30 I've always had the ability to talk to kids, young people. I just talk to them like I talk to you. If you talk down to them, you've lost them. You just talk to children the same way you talk to adults. You don't talk to babies in baby talk either, so you don't talk to young people in baby talk. They're all right. They're not silly. I had aboriginals. I had all sorts of people. They were pretty good.

**Can you tell us about joining the Labor Party?**

11:00 I've been orientated that was for a long time of course but it was on hold naturally but I used to sneak to a few meetings in Brisbane. One time I'm in civvy clothes handing out how to vote cards on the Stafford Heights School gate and a big staff car came up. There was a bloke with a red band there, so I handed the driver a how to vote card and he took it, and I handed one through the back window to the bloke with the red band that could have been a brigadier or higher, colonel or higher. He said, "Thank you Sergeant." How the hell he knew I was a sergeant, I

11:30 don't know. He must have known me. I never heard any more about it but I think it affected me a little bit down the line because I think the hierarchy in the army if they knew you were a Labor Party man, would assume that you would be a danger to them in Vietnam.

**In what way?**

You might rattle them some way or another, or disclose things that you shouldn't. There were some high-ranking ALP [Australian Labor Party] blokes there in the army I can tell you.

**12:00 Can you tell us about that incident at Trades Hall in Brisbane?**

That was before we went to Korea. The Communists, it was a bit of a tongue in cheek thing. The Communists were into a war in Korea and we were training, and we were going over there. We were going to do our bit and we went into town on May Day or Labour Day, and here was this big red flag flying at the top of a locked up Trades Hall. I think it was Wickham Terrace or

12:30 somewhere up there. "Oh look at that flying, a bloody Communist flag!" I said, "Let's get it!" They said, "You can't get up there!" I said, "I can!" So up a gas pipe I went, right up to the top and took it down, and we took it up to the Courier Mail [newspaper], and had our photo taken with it. We got a bit of publicity, there you are! We were...what do you call it? A publicity hound, a media tart! A media tart in those days! Anyway, we tore the flag up and we all took a piece.

13:00 I had a piece for years. I don't know where it is. It could be still around but as it turned out there was a story about it in the paper all right. The unions, that was their headquarters claimed that...and I was a unionist too, not a silly radical or anything but they claimed that it was a May Day flag, and had nothing to do with Communism, which is true. So there you are! It was a bit of dare devil stuff.

**13:30 With the photographs that you would take in Vietnam, was that all for army public relations?**

For example, the prime minister visited, so I would go with them and take photographs of the prime minister looking at grain sorghum being grown. We'd go with the prime minister visiting a hospital and I'd take photos there. I had a big camera for quick developing things, a big classical one and I had another

14:00 top German job. The prime minister might meet the province chief, just follow them around and take all the photos. Then I'd do some captions up and they had to be accurate. I developed them and put them all together in a sort of album and the officer in charge actually would present them to the prime minister or whoever was there. The foreign affairs had a function in the headquarters and of course acknowledged me.

**Did you ever see any polties [politicians] in**

**14:30 either wars other than the prime minister?**

We had Jos Francis up to Korea, of course a bit harder to get to Korea in those days. He was there. We saw a few ministers and Gorton in Vietnam. There were plenty there. In fact our unit was blamed for Gorton's demise or something at one stage of the game. They reckoned he'd allowed us to go over into Cambodia to operate, which wasn't really accurate.

15:00 That started a debate. Of course as you know he used his casting vote to vote himself out.

**How different did you see the Korean Wars and Vietnam Wars being fought?**

Tactically they were entirely different. There were no soldiers lining up against soldiers. It was smaller groups in jungle fighting. We had sort of jungle fighting in Korea because you'd be out in the valley at night and there's not much difference between

15:30 that, and being in the jungle in Vietnam. We also occupied the high ground in Korea and that had to be defended. Both sides occupied it. Patrol fighting, fire fights in the valleys in between and every now and then there'd be a major assault on something. That would be preceded by air pounding and artillery to soften you up, and napalm in the case of

16:00 the poor Chinese. Then there'd be the big attack at H hour, usually at first light in the morning. Away it would go from there but as the war went on they slowed those down. They did snatch patrols to try and get prisoners. I don't know why. That has been criticised in some of our books. There was none of that in Vietnam. There were no great artillery regiments. We had plenty of artillery and we used them but there was no artillery on the other side

16:30 really firing. They had rockets. Some of those rockets just fired from a slush [?] in the ground. They had RPG [Rocket Propelled Grenade] type weapons, shoulder style rockets for tanks and they were capable of firing those out of a tree, and hitting everybody lying on the ground in the vicinity. There was also the story, which sounds feasible to me and I believe it. The ambush was set and down come these guys from the Viet Cong, and there's the fella with the big

17:00 RPG long tube strapped to his back. They were hit in the ambush and they hit the deck, and as they hit the deck one of our weapons or one of our bits of shrapnel hit the igniter set strapped to the back of this Viet Cong, and "Swoosh", away it went, and he went the other way straight into a tree with his head. So I don't know how feasible that is either. The rocket, the force of the rocket

17:30 drove him along the ground or whatever. Maybe the rocket was jammed in the tube I should imagine, so that might be a story.

**Do you think all the talk that Vietnam was more of a political war wasn't so much formed by commanders on the ground but by politicians? Do you feel that?**

Yep. There's a lot of truth in that. Any war where you've got to keep the casualties down so you don't upset them at home is a good thing but it's not necessarily the way to fight a war. It could prolong a war.

18:00 Maybe we should be tougher in Iraq? They're picking them off at ease now. I don't like that.

**Given that you knew the history with the French with the Vietnam and just mentioning the way the war was being fought politically, how do you think it should have been fought?**

It would have been a difficult one because it was a sort of revolution between north and south. Nobody invaded anybody.

18:30 It was a war between north and south in Korea but the north invaded the south. In Vietnam the north freed itself from the French you see? Then of course what happened after that was the north tried to infiltrate their political regime into the south and of course it would have just happened but the Americans stepped in. Maybe it was the Domino Theory [theory that communism would spread rapidly country to country] or something but they stepped in there to stop in and then we were embroiled in a pretty awful

19:00 war. It went too long actually.

**In the years since the Korean War, when we talk about the Korean War being the 'Forgotten War', how did that make you feel? Everything was Vietnam this, Vietnam that but nothing was really spoken about...?**

Well we didn't notice it all that much until the fellas from Vietnam started getting recognition. They said they were treated like rubbish at home too, though there is some truth in that but they weren't treated anywhere near as bad as we were. We were really forgotten and it took us that long to get our

19:30 memorial thing up in Canberra. The other thing of course that put the stamp on it was recently when we went down for that memorial about forty years late, we had a function at Government House and they sent each of us a bill to pay, about thirty odd dollars before we went to have drinks and snacks at the Parliament House. Some of the fellas jumped up and down. A few were emotionally upset about it because we found out

20:00 this just a short time before that they feted a lot of fellas from [East] Timor, who hadn't been doing anything like we'd been doing and only recent had a big function at Parliament House in Canberra, and paid the tab for a big function. Here they are billing us! So they then weakened and they only charged us half but by the time we got there they dropped it, and I got my full amount of money back. I collect plates. I have a big collection downstairs of plates with propriety

20:30 badges on them. I want one from the Titanic. I can't find it. I want one from Hitler's Berchtesgarden but I can't find it. I've got them from shops and cafes, and hotels, and the Tilt Train. I don't steal them but I said to my wife, "Those mongrels at Parliament House in Canberra, I'm going to pinch one of their plates." When we went into the new Parliament House to the function they only had plastic cups and plastic plates! But I

21:00 was glad I got the money back.

**Do you think it is because they know Aussie soldiers have a reputation for getting souvenirs?**

Yeah well, they got a lot of bad press out of it. There you are.

**What did you personally learn from working in the civvy unit?**

Over there? It honed up my administration because I was able to apply a lot of that back home when I was a councillor, alderman on the city council and I also was able to use what I learned there in applying for assistance

21:30 in the National Trust to reconstruct a lot of the historic sites around Charters Towers. I was secretary there for a long time. Of course you're able to walk up to people and talk to them in a better manner than what you could before you went. I suppose you're somebody in a way and I could write reports. I could write to the town clerk, put proposals to him as an alderman and made sense. I could go down and talk to

22:00 government ministers in Brisbane when I ran the development bureau on new projects that might benefit the area, to stop some other closing down. Of course it was natural from then on, I had a go at politics. I wasn't disappointed but I didn't win of course.

**Apart from that Civilian Aid Unit, what about your broader army/war experience? How did that affect the rest of your life?**

Well it didn't really because the army life, the

22:30 army experience for me was set in Korea and that's where it still remains because that was the violence



part of my infanteering. I wasn't really an infantry man in Vietnam, so there was no clash there with that. It was a civvy sort of a job really but you could get shot I suppose.

**So you see your Korea experience as a completely different chapter to your Vietnam experience?**

Yes. It was good for me. Two things I belonged to; I belong to the first

23:00 British Commonwealth Division ever formed in the Korean War as an infantry man. I belonged to the first Australian Civil Affairs unit ever formed and that was in the Vietnam War. So that was pretty good. I got around. I visited every second Sunday; they had an RSMs [Regimental Sergeant Major] Conference in Nui Dat. RSMs from infantry battalions and artillery regiments, they were all there and me. We'd all talk and discuss things, and talk about the

23:30 military life generally there, and discipline, and everything else, and then we'd adjourn to the bar. They had a beautiful seafood luncheon on for us and the drinks would flow, and then we'd all go home.

**All practice your gruff dry humour?**

Yes!

**What about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder? It's a term that's been used a lot with Vietnam guys. What about the Korean guys like Chalky and yourself?**

The percentage...Chalky gets it and

24:00 it was pretty bad for him. I suppose the night that he got the Military Medal, should have been the Victoria Cross, would have possibly tipped him over but when he applied for it they asked him where did this happen and where did that happen, the whole lot of it. They said, "Can anyone substantiate this?" He said, "Yes! Curly Schunemann." That's me. This went on all day with the psychiatrist and in the end, the psychiatrist said, "Well how's this Curly Schunemann?" Chalky said, "As

24:30 far as I know he seems all right" but you're not. You hold it. There's been terrible times with my wife and she's put up with it but I try and contain it.

**What sort of symptoms?**

You know, she might give a silly answer and I'll get really wild. I never got wild before but I've sort of got it under control now, but I still do sometimes and I used to have a fight about once a year. Some poor

25:00 fool would pick me and he'd wear the brunt of it, and I'd be good for a year. It would have to be something to sort of upset you really, outside your home. Within the home it could be...of course deafness was associated with it. It made you worse but the percentage of TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated pension] pensioners from Korea is pretty low and a lot of them of course are those who have been seriously wounded.

25:30 You have to get your leg blown off, both legs blown off to get a TPI but I noticed that there were no psychiatrists around. The psychiatrists that were around were usually Indian psychiatrists in the Australian Army, who tested you psychologically prior to going over or before you became an officer. A fella said to me, "How can...I don't know how that can work. How can a person from another culture actually psychoanalyse somebody from a different

26:00 culture?" I said, "Well I don't know anything about any of it." So I did notice that after Vietnam the percentage was very, very high and I'm quite surprised about some of it. We never expected anything from the community. There you are, nothing. If we got a project we'd raise our own money for something. We built memorials. I've got them up in Townsville, air crash memorials other places. We just got the money from ourselves. We never asked the government, demanded nothing from them, never

26:30 went to any RSLs for any pension thing. Only recently I did my own anyway and I got a slight rise because of my hearing, and I've got a bronchial thing from Vietnam.

**What do you think of the way that you guys have been treated?**

I think I've been treated all right. I've got no complaints. The people I feel sorry for are those that were called up to go there, see? They're the ones. They really suffered but some of those signed on, stayed on and became high ranking officers, and

27:00 sergeant majors too, but there were a lot of them that couldn't handle it. We were better trained. You can't take a person almost forcibly into a training camp and turn him out in three months time as an infanteer to go and fight in Vietnam. You can't do it and that's what they did or tried to do. Then the interference started and the young public servants in Saigon were having a say in how the war was conducted.

27:30 Infantry colonels had to check with somebody at that level before they could go ahead with some sort of operation or they were warned not to risk lives in this operation, and what I said earlier about

sometimes that trouble spot should have been removed earlier in the piece, even at some loss. All operations, it's weighed up what the percentage casualty rate will be and it's not

28:00 then gauged against the reaction at home. It's gauged against the value of what will happen in that area after, either by securing it or limiting the enemy, or they won't ever come back again sticking their nose in our barbed wire, see? It's a whole entirely different thing but for a long time we laughed at the Communist side because we said they had political commissars. There were a few around our side.

28:30 **Still on the subject of stress disorder, did you have problems with sleeping or anything like that?**

Well, I drank a lot of grog, so I slept good but I handled the grog all right, and I always ate, so my health didn't suffer all that much. If there was trouble, a marriage break up or something and I always worked hard. It didn't matter what it was, whether it was running the sergeants' mess or officer

29:00 training. The end of the night might come and I'd be too psyched up to go to bed, I'd sit down with a bottle of brown Muscat or something, put a bit of good music on, and I'd sit back there, and sip away by myself. When I met Barbara that was a different thing but I'd sip away and then eventually I'd go to bed, and I'd be right tomorrow morning. I wake up at dawn everyday of my life, right here and now. I don't have any

29:30 problems like that. Sometimes I go to bed earlier at night though! I've heard people say...somebody recently, "I get the stress pension, the TPI one." His father said, "He'll never work again. If a helicopter goes over he hits the deck." The strange part about that

30:00 we all know that the enemy had no helicopters in Vietnam. The only helicopters that were there were those that were on mercy flights to take you out or take you home, or they were there to help you get out of a sticky bit by directing a bit of gunfire on somewhere and easing the situation. So I can't understand that. I love the sound of a helicopter. I

30:30 think that the Iroquois Helicopter is the most magnificent thing I've ever flown in. There you are, very safe. Then when I see people who were never even in the war zone, spent two years in the army, receiving a pension. Up in the Territory [Northern Territory] there are some good infantry soldiers, high ranking, I was talking to the other day up in the Cape York in the camp they've got up there. I said, "What do you think of that?"

31:00 "Oh idiots." You see pictures of them having their own Anzac Day but they always head up north in the colder months you know, in their Land Rover what do you call them? Hi-luxes, GL Models. When they put their medals on not one of them have got the infantry combat badge on. No, you can get stressed out working hard. I know that. My son in the RAAF, he works very hard on aeroplanes. If he puts a screw in upside down

31:30 they'll lock him up. So I can imagine it happening sure but some of these others have got me amazed. When I went to one place myself recently, all this camp and that is there, and everything to get away on a retreat. Get away from who? I don't want to get away from anybody. I said to them, "You've done a good job." They said, "Yeah" and they're looking at me of course because infantrymen stand out in a crowd. I said, "Who owns all this land and everything? You fellas?"

32:00 He said, "Oh no. We don't own this." I said, "Who owns it?" Right near the beach. He said, "Our psychiatrist." So don't you go asking these questions of some Vietnam veterans you might be talking to. The psychiatrist owns all the land!

**We've been told about that land.**

Oh yeah. I feel like talking to somebody up high. It's not right but it's got them over a barrel because you try and disprove it. They have a network, the old email network? It's on, all over.

32:30 It's on, all over. We just carry on.

**What about Anzac Days? Have you always marched?**

I've marched in a few Anzac Days and I've got no complaint about that but I can see it's changing. I see people marching who shouldn't. I think that's losing the plot really. They say the kids should march but it started off as a march to acknowledge those who were returned servicemen. That's what it was.

33:00 They were getting a bit short on that, so somebody else would march and somebody else would march, and it becomes a parade. We'd be better off having a remembrance day. I gave the dawn service away because when I went there I was being subjected to a lecture by some hairy bummed minister of religion about twenty-five years of age on how to live a good, healthy law-abiding life. You know? That's at the dawn service,

33:30 with a few oaths chucked in for Gallipoli. I didn't want to go to a dawn service to listen to that, so I don't go. When we have our reunion we have a service because it's demanded of me. I get a Salvation Army minister or something and I brief them, and they say their bits and pieces but the main purpose of my speech is to welcome those who are there, and tell all those others who are there, like the mayor, and the

- 34:00 other VIP visitors, and other family, to tell them how good these fellas were without making it too hot, and acknowledging probably those who we've lost along the way that we've known, and that's it. Then we all go and get drunk together maybe, and tell a lot of lies! I make a special effort for the next of kin, that's the wives who lost husbands there or who have lost husbands since and they come along too. They played a valuable part in all of it
- 34:30 but I suppose when it's all boiled down, the fellas who only went to Malaya think their war is important, and I suppose it was. I can only think that our war in Korea was bad. I can compare it with Vietnam. I can't compare it to Stalingrad. I've read a lot of books about that. Oh my God! In World War 11 there was an Australian found dead in the jungle up there in New Guinea and he was surrounded by thirty-eight dead Japanese. Thirty-eight of them he'd killed and
- 35:00 he was full of bullet holes, and the last Japanese soldier was clutching at his trousers, and then he died. Now there's a fighter, as silly as war is. It's stupid I know. The fear of dying is a terrible thing really and of course the other one is, the two main ones,
- 35:30 we want to reproduce don't you, and you want to live forever sort of thing, so the fear of dying isn't a natural thing, and when you're confronted with it, it's pretty bad but after it's over you know you've felt it.

**Did you find after being on the razor's edge in a battle that you approached life differently?**

You can't stand a fool afterwards and you become a bit abrupt. You

- 36:00 like quick results. I hate a committee that's a committee formed to come up with a decision on one particular subject and they keep adjourning it. There's something wrong there. They haven't got the ability to make decisions and you must make decisions in life. You shouldn't hanker around for a long time doing them. That's where I wasn't all that popular as an alderman, a few things like that but other things where I could put a stamp on things, like
- 36:30 being the chairman of the Reconciliation Committee or the [UNCLEAR] Festival, or the 125 Year Celebration. We won an Australia Day award for that. That's a bit different because there I can sort of say, "Righto! This is what we're going to do." but you still palm it out. "Fred, I'll leave you with that street march parade aspect, so are you willing to take that on? Mary, are you happy to...?" You delegate the responsibilities out.

**37:00 And you ran with the Olympic Torch?**

Yes, I did.

**How good was that?**

That was probably one of the greatest rewarding things that has ever happened to me but I'm hurt because they no sooner had that than the previous 1956 Torch Bearers formed an association for themselves, because they ran so many kilometres or whatever it was and you had to be picked on your stamina. That really upset me! They've got

- 37:30 memorial stones all around the place for them. It took all that time mind you, from 1956 to 2000 to do this. This is humanity for you! It's silly. They're trying to make legends out of themselves because their previous legend status has been eroded away by us who carried the torch all those years later! You see this? We were selected on how we served the community.
- 38:00 You wouldn't get a better criteria than that would you? And you didn't have to run a long way if you weren't capable. A Korea, Vietnam mate of mine here, in a wheelchair just finishing his Bachelor of Arts, carried the torch. Why not? There it is. That's my most precious bit. I've got a Centenary Medal. That's pretty good! That's the first medal I've got for doing something I was never paid for!

**38:30 When someone mentions the Korean War to you what is the very first thing you think of?**

I think of Vince Cherry. That's about the first. Then I think of the artillery and whatever. I think of it nearly every day. It's intrusive. Some nights...I don't have trouble sleeping but you develop a technique of putting anything that might be worrying you

- 39:00 out of your mind. You go to bed and you think about something else, sex or something like that! That wins every time.

**A cure for all. Rightio, that's it!**

I hope I haven't bored you!

**INTERVIEW ENDS**