

Australians at War Film Archive

Edward Oldfield (Jim) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 19th January 2004

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1450>

Tape 1

00:37 **So Jim can you give us an overall summary of your life thus far?**

An overall summary thus far, yeah, sure. I was born in a place called Gloucester, which is on the mid

01:00 north coast, New South Wales. After the war my father was in business there. Prior to that he used to work for the only shop in town called Street and Parish. I went to school in Gloucester

01:30 until I was fourteen, where I obtained my intermediate certificate. When I left school I went to

02:00 the Gulf of Carpentaria to "Uncle Bill". You know how you have these uncles that aren't uncles and aunties that aren't aunties but because they're good friends of your mother and father and I went to work for Uncle Bill, commonly known as "Billy the Rager" on a cattle station.

Why was he called "Billy the Razor"?

"Billy the Rager".

Oh Rager.

Because he used to rage and rant and carry on

02:30 but that's what he was known as "Billy the Rager".

And sorry Jim, when did you say you were born? Or you didn't?

I probably didn't. 1937, okay. 16th December. You haven't quite missed out on my birthday yet, if you want to give me a present when it's all over, that's no problem.

I'll remember that.

03:00 Can we pull up for a minute.

Sure.(TAPE STOPS)

I went to work on Iffley, owned by Kidman Angus Company, everybody has heard of Sir Sidney Kidman and William Angus. I went to work on an adult wage which was at that stage six pound ten,

03:30 six pound ten a week, that's incorrect. It was twelve pound ten a week, which was six hundred and something pound a year. We went to town twice a year from there.

04:00 I was a stockman, right, okay. We didn't live at the station. It was quite a large place, just mustered around, came back, got new gear and mustered around, came back, got new gear, food and etcetera, etcetera, until the end of the year when the Wet Season came and then we took holidays. And Townsville was the big place to go on your holidays then

04:30 so we used to, there were only three whites on the place and we used to come together and come down to Townsville for the holidays and Billy the Rager's son had a daughter working at the Townsville Hospital and his son, Nelson, was also one of the white blokes working on Iffley.

05:00 So we came to Townsville, through him we met lots of other nurses and we told some atrocious lies about how many of millions of acres we owned and cattle we owned and it worked. We made lots of friends and when we finished our money we went back out to Iffley and waited until the work started again

05:30 and started getting paid and we got our food and everything for nothing. Once the work started, we started again and we did that year after year. Then Billy the Rager, he put in to manage Alexandria, yes in the Northern Territory, the largest cattle station in the world

06:00 at that stage. You could fit England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales into Alexandria and you'd have room left over. It was, memory, right, eleven thousand square miles, right? Eleven thousand, it had a police station in the middle of

06:30 it. It had a not so much a pub but it was a licensed establishment and he worked on a gallon licence. You couldn't buy anything under a gallon, so if you wanted to buy a beer, which was South Australian West End Beer, you had to buy six bottles. Six large bottles constituted near enough to a gallon. That

07:00 was no problem, didn't worry anyone that one. Yeah, that was the police station and the store. It had two outstations, one called Sudan and the other one called Gallipoli. Nelson, George and I, the three from Iffley, we went out with Billy the Rager when he went there.

07:30 Much as I didn't like him I suppose, he was pretty good and he taught us a lot, he was good value. I ended up over on Gallipoli working on Gallipoli for, can't recall the manager's name over there now, but he came under Billy the Rager.

08:00 The famous or infamous Pat Mackie from the mining industry used to drive past, through our gates about every six or eight weeks with his big, battered old truck full of silver lead, taking it into the Mount Isa mines to get processed. Anyhow I suppose I was there for a couple of years, I guess and

08:30 where did I go from Gallipoli? Oh dear, I think I came down to Townsville because I had heart palpitations over a young lady that was a nurse down there at that stage, still know her name too. Anyhow the money ran short

09:00 so had to work, nothing was the best. I used to stop at, oh there was a hotel there called Buchanan's. It's not there anymore unfortunately. It was heritage listed but somehow or other it got knocked down. We used to stay there, didn't matter, money was nothing. If you had it you spent it, if you didn't, you went out and worked. It was no trouble to get a job if you were good enough.

09:30 Anyhow when the, when I ran out of money I went back out and I worked on several other places out, back in Queensland at that stage. I then went to work on another place in the Territory called Avon Downs owned

10:00 by the Peel River Land and Mineral Company, who at that stage used to supply horses for the New South Wales Police Force. All the horses had a, their brand was PR over C, I think it was, or PRC, PR over C, Peel River Land and Mineral Company. They were on all the police horses. They came from the one place. Beautifully bred horses.

10:30 Anyhow I left there after about eighteen months and I went droving and I went back out to the Northern Territory and I worked for a bloke called Ian McBean, Ian McBean. I went

11:00 out there with him with the plant, as in horses and everything, to Brunette Downs and he was the boss drover and he was to take delivery of fifteen hundred head of cattle, steers. To take and deliver right down in the channel country at a place called either Spring Vale or Springfield, I can't remember

11:30 which it was now. It was sixteen weeks on the road, I know that and we were paid twenty pound a week all found going down and I was one of the one's that bought the plant back and it was ten pound just to sit behind a mob of horses and bring them back to where he used to spell his horses, his plant, which was pretty good money.

12:00 A long, long, long, long, long, hours, very long hours. And that took me back to there. I then went back to Gloucester for

12:30 a little while and fell in love again, the usual thing, stole this lady, no, not a lady, she's was my wife, God, I'm divorced from her, stole this woman from someone else,

13:00 went away back to Queensland again, of course. Got a job with a boss that I'd worked for before, took over the looking after of an outstation. I was just me and her, went from place to place for a while and finally a vacancy, well it was advertised in the paper for a manager for Moorstone Downs which was owned by

13:30 Lord Lesty, or Lord Lesty and his companies. I put in for the job, met a character while he was changing planes at the airport out here at Townsville, can't think where I was or how I got out here but anyhow, got the job and went out there as manager of Moorstone. And it was

14:00 at Moorstone, oh by this time we had two children, of course, a girl and a boy, and by this time it was getting towards education for the girl and it was School of the Air, or whatever it was called in those days, something different

14:30 but anyhow. My then wife flatly refused to do it, so there wasn't much choice except go to town for education. I didn't have a hell of a lot but I knew that it was pretty important, even in those days. So we came to town, to Townsville,

15:00 I went and saw Australian Estates in their stock and station agency, said, "How about a job?" They said,

"Would you like to be an auctioneer?" I said, "Oh Christ, yeah, not bad." So I practised being an auctioneer, got my licence within about eight

15:30 months and then used to go from Cloncurry to Charters Towers selling in the yards and then to properties north, east, south and west and sell and buy cattle in the paddock for somebody or take a buyer out.

16:00 Built a house at Stuart Drive during this time. I bought the land quite a few years before and it cost me five hundred pound, it cost me seven thousand, so it was after 66, cost me seven thousand dollars to build the house, to have the house built. So seven thousand to have the house built, add a thousand on for the five hundred pound,

16:30 eight thousand dollars. Still looks a really, really nice place today. I lost that when I got divorced of course, but anyhow. Where was I? Got off the track a bit there.

Jim, did you draw the plans up for the house that you build for eight thousand dollars?

No, it was just Doyle Constructions, they're in Townsville, still in Townsville, the son does it now, but it was old Jimmy Doyle

17:00 I think was the father and it was, "There's a plan, there's a plan, there's a plan, let's have a look at your ground." It was perfectly flat block, quarter acre blocks in those days too, plus it had, ran down into a little creek and I cleared all that and built it all up and it gave me another half acre. Mowing grass took over and the kids could play there,

17:30 all that. Then of course, by this time Vietnam's really in the news and even though I liked my job I thought, "Gee I wouldn't mind going over there, just for a look." So anyhow

18:00 I got permission to go and find out about it and I came home and I told a few lies, white ones. I joined the army. And twelve months later I was

18:30 yeah, I was in Vietnam. And thereby started another career.

What year was that Jim?

I went to, 1970,

19:00 I've lost my arm. I know it was 70 anyhow, 1970, 1970, 1970 and 71 I was over there.

Can I bring you back to, we'll get into obviously, we've got the whole day to talk about your enlisting, your training, what happened in Vietnam, but I'm just going to bring you back to your very early childhood. Did you

19:30 **learn how to ride a horse in Gloucester?**

Yeah, but I don't remember it, it was just natural. My father had horses, I think everybody had a horse.

So it was a way to get around?

Yeah, the kids used to ride to school and all that.

Now for somebody who grew up in Sydney city, like myself,

20:00 **can you explain the difference, I mean I have an idea but can you explain the real difference between being a stockman and a drover?**

Yes, a drover takes cattle from point A to point B and he takes a thousand head and he delivers a thousand head, and if he doesn't he's not a good drover and doesn't get any work. A stockman works on any given place,

20:30 during the mustering and branding and cutting out or moving your older cattle to another paddock, ready for turn off to go to the meatworks to make money. Turn off as in take them in, put them on the train, send them down to Ross River or there were two meatworks here then, Ross River

21:00 or Alligator Creek, and sell them. That's the difference, but you can be both.

But not at the same time because?

Oh, well I guess you don't ever stop being a stockman, because that's just how you learnt. To be a drover

21:30 the mob that we took from Brunette Downs and it was actually the first year that Yanks bought it too, we had fifteen hundred head and there was five of us, five people. There was the boss, Ian McVien, there was myself, there was a fellow we used to call George Formby, the jackeroo, I've no idea what his name was. There was Bluey,

22:00 there was the cook, don't know what his name was either, had red hair. There was Rusty Russell, Rusty I presume because his name was Russell, he was the horse tailer. We had about, we would have probably

had eighty horses I suppose, between

22:30 fifty and eighty horses.

And those horses were basically commandeered by you to get the cattle?

I had my horses, right? I had eight horses, you had eight, you had eight, you had eight, there were some left over, you had what you called night horses, which you rode at night because they could see where they were going and they wouldn't trip over and cattle rushed for the first two weeks, so

23:00 my group of eight horses, I had to shoe them, look after them, make sure there were no sores on their back from the saddle rubbing. If it was put some yellow sulphur, put some sulphur on and not ride them for maybe even a week or ten days, until it had cleared up right, because if you had eight horses with sores on their

23:30 backs and withers you probably would have got sacked, because he would have run out of horses.

How do you control the eight horses when you're riding one and you're trying to get the cattle to go a certain direction, I'm assuming, do you have ties to every horse?

No, you've got a horse taylor, Rusty Russell was the horse taylor.

And what's his job?

To look after the horses. He'd

24:00 just have the horses. He'd take them ahead to what we called dinner camp, lunch time, dinner camp, don't know how they got dinner camp out of it? But anyhow they'd take them onto dinner camps and he'd have them all settled down and if any of them wanted to wander away, he'd hobble them. Do you know what hobble means? You put straps around their legs with a chain

24:30 in between with a swivel and they can move around and get fit. They can't go far anyway. He'd hobble a few of them, do that and you'd come in to dinner camp. He'd take over the cattle and they'd go straight to drink and that's it, they have a big spell. So he'd just ride around and around and around while we're having our spell and

25:00 we'd just be there, saddle off, head on saddle, have our kip at lunchtime because you're up half the night anyhow. Cattle would start stirring when they were ready, they'd go in and have another drink and we'd take the cattle and he'd get his horses and he'd go onto night camp. The night camp was in the open.

25:30 He'd cut down bushes and trees and make a big windbreak around a fireplace where a cook would cook without getting blown away and where we could lay our swags if it was cold and it was cold, I can tell you.

Did you like that life?

Oh yeah, magic, yeah. Two things that a young adult should do.

26:00 two things that male and female should do, they should work in the country on a station of some sorts, preferably cattle and not sheep, but anyhow, for whatever time, I don't know. Some time to learn, so they can take it all in and know what it's all about. They should then go back and the males should do probably

26:30 eighteen months would be enough, in the army, the female get married, have kids or whatever. I don't like females in the army. I didn't like females in the army, I still don't. I wasn't allowed to say it in the army but I can now.

Absolutely, here is where to say it.

Yeah, they were a pain in the butt, believe you me. They had so many troubles.

27:00 **Because of men perhaps fighting over them or?**

Oh yeah, that was always a part of it. You had, well it started off, well let's say one of our small units might have had, make it twenty eight guys to, twenty eight guys you might have had two women, three women or something.

27:30 Bzzzz, like a mob of bees round a honey pot, I mean. And I'm not trying to be rude or anything like that but if the girl was receptive, she fell in love with one of them well Jesus, it was even worse because the other twenty seven were still bzzzzing around.

Now women didn't fight in the front line in Vietnam?

No.

So are you talking about nurses

28:00 or?

Sorry?

Are you talking about nurses or administration staff?

I'm talking about administration staff mainly but however I must be careful now because prior to me getting out they were, well they did anything that I ever did. No, they didn't but they did any sort of work that I ever did, whether they did it well enough, that's not for me to judge

28:30 because they hadn't been in the system long enough.

We've talked, Chris [interviewer] and I've talked a bit about it and it's a hard one isn't it because I suppose there is this natural genetic thing for men to look after women, that you can't?

Of course it is. That's natural and there's other natural things too.

29:00 Christ, I can recall, what happens if I say this now?

Doesn't matter, it's fine. We've got all day.

I know, but is it going on tape or is it been?

Everything's on tape unless you don't want it on tape.

Oh well, no names, no pack drill, okay. I was on an exercise once up at Marlboro, above Rockhampton and

29:30 one of my section commanders, I had two, he wasn't young. He asked me if he could go down and get the water one day, do the water run, but you know, the water run. You'd say "Geez what have I done wrong, they've sent me on the water run?"

30:00 And I said "What do you want to do the bloody water run for?" And I said "Who else is on the roster?" "Oh Corporal so and so". "Yeah, righto, away you go." Anyway Corporal So and So was a female of course, and it got longer and longer

30:30 and longer and they weren't back and they weren't back and they weren't back, so I hopped in the Rover and went out to the water point, no-one there and I went up the road a bit. I thought "He's not a fool this bloke, what's he doing?" So I got on the radio and I called him, say one Alpha will do, "One Alpha zero alpha what's your location, over?"

31:00 Wait out and he comes back with a grid reference, "I'm at golf romeo," this is a grid reference, "one, two, three, four, five, six." "Roger that, wait out," and I get my map out and that's where I was. He gave me a bodgy bloody grid reference. He just picked it out of the air and it happened to be where I was. And I said,

31:30 forget about radio for procedure, "Listen pal, that's where I am, get home." Well he was home before I was, like a dog dragging it's tail, both tails but anyhow, like a dog dragging it's tail and I said "That's the last time Blogs, no more," and he said "Oh, does that mean I can't go on gun picket either?"

32:00 Oh Jesus Christ, because you had gun picket of a night, in a little dug in, not little, a little, big enough to put your M60 out, cover your arcs of fire and as the roster came up it would be Blogs and Blogs and Blogs and Smith and Jones and so on and he used to do the roster for that.

32:30 He was a bloody nuisance, I'll tell you but you see, she was receptive. I think she was in love with him actually.

So what you're saying is that they're a distraction to the art of actually doing the job?

Definitely, yes.

Okay.

This I believe and I believe

33:00 it definitely and I've seen it first hand.

Well Chris and I were talking a few weeks back about the Israeli Army where men and women both serve and we were saying how difficult it would be, how do they get over the natural inclinations that men and women both have, not only sexually but in a genetic sort of chemical way

33:30 **of women being shot in front of men and how would that, what would be the ramifications of that. We were talking about that and I think there's no easy answer.**

Yeah, but they've been soldiers for a long time the Israelis. It's normal for them to be in an army unit of some sort and no doubt the longer ours goes on it will get easier

- 34:00 and easier and we'll have, easier to get on with I suppose and it's a modern army, which means everybody tells everybody everything. Billy Bogs goes home and says something to his wife and she goes around the road and tells Jenny Smith, and Billy Smith comes home that afternoon and the next morning he goes to work with two
- 34:30 black eyes. It depends on the risk that you're prepared to take on that sort of thing. I would class myself a female in the Israeli Army as good as any of them, cause they've been at it for so long and it's well,
- 35:00 it just comes natural. For the blokes too I mean, sure you're going to have, not hiccups, but you're going to have pairing off. That happens bloody everywhere, weather it's in the office, in the army, in the navy, in the air force, in bloody, people doing war archives.
- 35:30 **So what you're saying is the Israeli Army, it's part of their culture so if it's been?**
- Well I think it is yeah, I really do, for so long.
- I agree. I have an Israeli friend who was in the army, a female, and I asked her about that and when I lived overseas and she said it's just a duty that you are bought up to believe that you've got to do, so it's like laundry in a way. You've got to go and do it.**
- 36:00 Yeah, we had a girl, it was in Southern Command anyhow, actually it was on that same exercise that I just spoke about and we had duckboard down so the water would go on it and you wouldn't dig in the mud and you could shower
- 36:30 and everything like that and they were, there was no ladies or gents but, the thingo came up that high so you could see whether it was a woman or a man or whatever or by the head and you stopped away until they went out and then (demonstrates). And then two of you rushed in there because there was two duck boards down and I was in having a shower one day
- 37:00 and this probably attractive, yeah, this big, very big girl she was but well put together and she comes in and says, "Hi sir," and what was her bloody name. And of course I go (demonstrates) "Hi" and she's off with the bloody jacket,
- 37:30 off with the trousers and the duds and threw them over there in the dry corner and gets under the shower, the showers are that far apart, okay? And she (demonstrates) and I'm thinking, "The cow broke it's leg, the milk bucket tipped over, we've got no food." Oh geez, that was the quickest shower I've ever had, I'm telling you. I went for my quoit, my Jesus, Rosie,
- 38:00 that doesn't tell you too much, no, and bloody hell I never got caught again. I mean I didn't embarrass her, she bloody embarrassed me. Oh, oh, you've got no idea.
- I've got a fair idea from that story. Did you grow up with brothers and sisters Jim?**
- Yeah, I've got two sisters and a brother.
- 38:30 **And where are you in the family?**
- Second eldest, sister, me, sister, brother, yeah.
- And are they all alive?**
- Yeah.
- And live in Queensland?**
- No, no, sister lives in, elder sister lives in, she's married and lives in Rouse, I think it is, somewhere near Liverpool
- 39:00 near Sydney. Younger sister married a couple of times, two or three times, whatever, she lives in a unit on her own. She's well off, she's worked for the bank all her life. She only retired this year. Younger brother he worked for the Commonwealth Bank all his career, and still lives in Canberra,
- 39:30 never moved out of Canberra. He married Major General Hayes' daughter and I said to him "Jesus Christ, here's your go now mate, get in, join the bloody army, you'll be an officer straight away, absolutely no bloody doubt." And that's just the way it goes with the old boys. He would only have been a lieutenant but go
- 40:00 from there. He said, "I don't think I'd like the army Jimmy." Ponce. And I said, "Who cares whether you like it, think of the fiddly dids when you get out, what you're going to get," and he said, "No thank you, Robyn and I area quite happy like we are." Robyn was a (demonstrates) big, fat. I
- 40:30 remember when he bought her home, once, to Gloucester when both my parents were alive and I must have been down there on leave, or holidays or something, I don't which. I can't remember if I was in the army or what. I must have been, yeah. And he said to me, "What do you think of Robyn?"
- 41:00 And being, not thinking and being a bit rough I suppose I said, "Jesus, she'd be a bit ruddy smelly at bloody summer." I don't think he spoke to me for about four years, because she was a big porker and

yeah, poor old Phil.

We need to switch tapes.

Tape 2

00:31 **Okay Jim you were just telling Heather [interviewer] about your brothers and sisters. Did you get on when you were kids? What was the sort of age difference between you all?**

Yeah, but, what was the age, my sister's probably two years older than me, my younger sister's two years younger than me

01:00 and my youngest brother, heavens above, he must be, I think he was a mistake, he must be twelve years younger or something like that, yeah. I never had much to do with him.

It was mainly your sisters?

Well I grew up with my sisters and then yeah, he came along.

01:30 Yeah, we got on like normal kids, dobbed each other in and all the rest of it.

What was life like in Gloucester before you went up to the Gulf?

Well it was a very small town. Its population in those days was three thousand, that's with all the outlying dairy farmers, cattle properties and however big the imaginary line they drew. It had two hotels and

02:00 why did I pick on those first? It had two hotels, it had an RSL [Returned and Services League] club, a reasonably new RSL club. It had a picture show, an SP [Standard Price] bookie,

02:30 it had what we called a large grocery store. My father had a grocer and hardware business but not a shop on the corner but still only a small business.

03:00 A couple of fruit shops, there was a café, I suppose it's still there, I don't know. There was a Greek café anyhow, a menswear shop.

What sort of things would you get up to for fun?

Well there was a range of, or a spur from the Great Dividing Range, ran back out, Gloucester's in

03:30 a valley and the spur ran right along where once again famous for infamous bushranger called Thunderbolt. He used to hang about up in the caves and he would then, the other side used to take him over to Armidale and Tamworth. Back this side you'd be in the Gloucester Valley

04:00 and Hunter Valley and that area. He was a white person who took up with a, she was a yellow gin, as in half caste. He was ostracised of course because of the relationship, so he took to knocking off things that he needed that he couldn't go to town to buy, food, groceries, money,

04:30 and so forth. My father's mother was a Britton. Her mother I think it was, so that would have been my father's grandmother, it might have been her grandmother, doesn't matter. She was very

05:00 sympathetic towards him and she used to leave food out near an old church, which was miles out of town, I don't know what it was bloody doing there and she'd leave food there for him to pick up and take away. She helped him, well good on her. She wasn't doing anything wrong, that was old Granny Britton as she was known.

05:30 Yeah, there used to be dances there out at what they called Forbesdale Hall, which was about eight kilometres from town. There was a school there and I think it was to do the graziers come dairy farmers kids. It was either every Friday or Saturday night and we'd go out there with a

06:00 bottle of sherry. That was our nearest and dearest we could buy. A bottle of sherry and have great old times. We used to fight like bloody mongrel dogs and cause all the trouble you could think of. We had one policeman in Gloucester at that stage and his name was Les Boozavoir[?] and he had a foot about that long and I reckon

06:30 I've had it that far up my backside where he used to slide out to Forbesdale Hall and the mongrel used to walk, he only had a bloody old, mongrel bus thing that he used to drive. He'd walk and if you were a bid tiddy you were gone. We weren't supposed to drink.

How old were you at this stage?

Well I probably would have been thirteen or twelve or something. We had fun. You make your own fun in

07:00 the bush. Every afternoon or nearly every afternoon at Iffley, when we finished mustering and come in

and had a good as wash as we could with whatever water was there, we used to wrap towels round our hands and used to box, just for something to do. And I mean hit each other, not just blow and go, (demonstrates).

07:30 **Were you any good?**

Oh yeah, not bad.

Held your own?

Yeah, yeah, the last fight I had was about five years ago. I got done. Quite funny that one. Yeah I let a, actually there was a young kid up getting some stuff out of the back of the truck.

08:00 We'd all gone up to this place up on Princess Charlotte Bay and I said to someone, "You watch this, watch bloody young Mark, he'll jump out of his bloody skin," and I had a 30 30 and they make an unbelievable noise and I'm there "boom" and he went up in the bloody air and back that way and he nearly dropped dead of fright, but his father was down the creek fishing. I didn't know and he

08:30 must have got a fright too and he came up raving and ranting and carrying on like a pork chop and one word borrowed another and we got stuck into it. Must have looked like two bloody old broken down roosters or something, but I've got all steel through here, in my guts and my back and that and anyhow he threw me

09:00 down on the ground and that was it, I was finished, last one, but we're mates again, no problems. So now let the tongue do the talking and if you look like getting knocked down, sit on a chair. No, we had it rough because we made it rough and it was great. I mean believe it or not I know you're only young but you

09:30 wouldn't dare be, what's the word, sissy. If you were a sissy your life wouldn't have been worth living, honestly and truly. You could not be, like my brother, see I call him a ponce. There's probably nothing wrong with him, apart from being a ponce but.

But what would constitute a sissy back in those days?

Oh a bloke that didn't get in and have a go or ran home

10:00 and told Mum or something or the next day you'd get called up to the school, he was a First World War veteran he was, he had half his head blown out and a well, a false plate but with hair and everything on it but it looked like it was done in the First World War too

10:30 and it looked bloody terrible but my geez he could give the cuts. One of the kids went up to and dobbed you in, you'd get it. My father's family were always known as, well they never took a step backyard. Incidentally my grandfather, that's my father's father

11:00 he drove the first mail from Raymond Terrace, which is an outer suburb of Newcastle, to Gloucester with a six in hand, that's six horses. Not too many people can handle a six in hand, four in hand, yeah, no worries, but old grandfather Richard he was obviously a

11:30 very good horseman and not just riding but a good horseman and this six in hand he drove from Raymond Terrace to Gloucester. I don't know how many times he changed horses, quite a few I would imagine. Yeah, he was the first. They were the first mob sort of there, the Oldfields, not that it would mean much, not many

12:00 of them left now.

Oh no, it does, something to be proud of.

He went from coaches, like he worked for, who were they? Cobb and Co and then he had a taxi. God, you should see some of these photographs of these bloody old T Model Fords and that and he had a taxi and the medical examiner was

12:30 Doctor Maisey [?] and he was designated as Doctor Maisey's driver. Quite obviously he got paid by the Government I suppose, don't know how he worked it out but that was his, as well as the taxi business, the taxi was used as the medical officer's vehicle. I don't know whether the medical officer was actually in Gloucester, I can't imagine so, probably

13:00 would have bought him from Raymond Terrace or Newcastle, somewhere like that, don't know.

Jim did you get on with your Mum and Dad when you were growing up?

Yep.

How were they to you kids growing up? Did you have to do chores and stuff like that ? Were they strict?

Yeah, I had to bloody mow lawns when it was my turn. The bloody kykua grass, oh Jesus, I had to

- 13:30 chop chips for the bath heater, used to have to split wood, that was all blocks sawn about that long and in our house we had, righto, one, two,
- 14:00 we had three, four, five, we had five open fireplaces, it was a pretty big flash place, and they were all tiled, all, what would you call it? All shiny tiles like that French polished table there, which
- 14:30 is actually that's, what is that? Some sort of good wood, cedar. Yeah, I just did my ordinary chores.

Was discipline strict in the house?

I didn't do anything I wasn't supposed to have. I can never remember getting a hiding from my father.

- 15:00 I can remember getting about two thousand off my mother, but they never hurt. We just yelled and screamed and hoped that she'd stop soon, because it was getting towards the hurting stage, no, no, but I was the favourite too. No bull, I was the, I was Mum's little Jimmy.

Why was that?

- 15:30 Oh well I suppose, I forgot about that, I had rheumatic fever when I was very young. I can't sort of remember it. Sometimes I think I can but I'm not sure, but even today I've still got a, what do you call it? A missed beat in my bloody heart, it's got a name,
- 16:00 because I was dead scared that I wouldn't get in the army when I wanted to go to Vietnam and not a problem.

Did you know much about what went on I guess during the Second World War or Second World War in general?

Yes, because my father was in the Second World War and I think every child of that period read Khaki and Green,

- 16:30 the book, which if you've never read it, read it. It's just called Khaki and Green. I used to go through his kit bag in the shed, a big old shed up the back and read all the letters and all the things and I knew a lot about it.

Did he ever tell you anything of what he went through?

- 17:00 No, never mentioned it, never. I know he got wounded but that would be all I bloody know.

Now going from Gloucester up to the Gulf of Carpentaria,

- 17:30 **Carpentaria's a bit of a difference in country, climate, going from five fireplaces up to none?**

It was when I got there. Well I got on the train in Gloucester. Trains used to stop there then, they had a refreshment room, a boozier and all that sort of thing and I can remember my father was over at the station with me and I can remember him saying

- 18:00 to me "do you want a beer Jimbo?" and I nearly fell arse over head, because "have a beer" and I was that sort of shook up I said no, but anyhow.

But of course you'd already been drinking by that stage?

Oh gallons, Christ, I wasn't the only one, everybody did it.

- 18:30 I used to pinch bacon bones from the shop, you'd get a side of bacon with the ribs still in it and you'd have a little piece of normal wire, say, where does it go? Say sixteen gauge wire and you put a pair of little wooden handles on them and you just cut under the end of the bone, slip it in and go (demonstrates) and out comes your bone with hardly
- 19:00 any flesh or anything on it and I used to take them, in past they had stables next door at the pub and I used to go in through the stables and Mrs Smith owned the hotel and I used to give her the bacon bones and she used to sell me the bottle of sherry. That was the agreement and she'd used the bacon bones for the soup for the all the
- 19:30 people that stayed there. She probably would have watered it down and everything, knowing her. But yeah, yeah.

She knew you were underage but bacon bones made it alright?

Of course she knew, my old man was probably finished work and in the pub having a couple of beers. He used to go there every afternoon for his couple of beers and they had the bar, and they had the hallway. Well all the businessmen stood in the hallway away

- 20:00 from the riff raff, Jesus, so he was only from here to the front door away from where I'd be delivering the bacon bones. Old Mrs Smith.

You mentioned to Heather one of the fellows you were working for up in the Gulf?

Billy the Rager.

Billy the Rager.

He was the first bloke I worked for.

Did he earn his name? Can you tell us about, did he earn his name?

Did he

20:30 earn his name?

Yeah.

Bloody oath he did, he was a rager. He'd rage and roar, he was a very bad tempered man. He was actually a baker by trade. He came from Gloucester and he did his, old Mrs Young his mother, she'd been there since Christ played fullback for Jerusalem I think and

21:00 yeah he was a baker and somehow I guess he didn't like baking. I know before he went to Iffley he was on St Albans Stud, which I believe is a pretty high faluting place and I didn't even know him, I didn't know him until I got on the train and I came to Townsville, got on the train and came to Julia Creek.

21:30 There was a room booked there for me. I'll never forget there was a wash basin in the corner and the tap like that and I turned the tap on, and boy, bloody hot water, gee this was alright. It was hot water, cold water, it was everything, it was bore water, wasn't it and you couldn't get cold water, that was what it was. If you wanted a glass of water you had to put it in

22:00 the morning and perhaps drink it in the afternoon, sort of thing. But anyhow I was there that night and the next day not knowing anything about what goes on in rooms of hotels, I knew all about hotels, because I went in and I, that night I ordered a middy and

22:30 they'd never heard of middy's in bloody Queensland. I felt a real fool, geez I felt embarrassed and the woman behind the bar said, "You want a big one or a small one love?" and, "Oh a big one thanks," and that's what they used to sell, big or small. Not middy's or ponies or lady's waists or any of that stuff, it was bigger or larger, and

23:00 the big one was, I only had the one anyhow. The next morning I got up and made the bed and I thought, "Gee I'd better not sit on it, I might muck it up or something." Because he was supposed to be coming in that day and there was a mat on the floor alongside the bed, so I just lay down on the mat and went to sleep and the next thing, "Get up you young bastard," and here's this humungous

23:30 giant of a man. He was big, he was a big man, boy oh boy and he used to wear what they call a ten gallon hat. You've heard of them? They went out of fashion because they got called other hats but ten gallon hat was a big hat and it was white. He used to wear white ten gallon hats, blue shirt and white moleskin trousers.

24:00 And I stand up because I was still only little then, I was still only growing and "Mr Young?" "What are you doing laying there bloody asleep?" "I thought I might muck up the bed." That sort of won him over a bit that I could go to sleep on the floor and it didn't worry me. Anyhow we got in the,

24:30 it was a Ford ute, we got in it and went home to Iffley. Fifty three bloody gates and guess who opened every single one of them? Well naturally he wasn't going to get out and open them was he? Fifty three gates, Jesus, and it was a hundred and fifty three

25:00 miles. A hundred miles to Normanton, and a hundred and fifty three miles to Julia Creek, cause Normanton was our town sort of thing because you never went into Julia Creek unless you were trucking bullocks and sending them away to the meatworks. Yeah, it was a bit different. I remember the first day he put me in the yard with this horse.

25:30 He was bloody snorting and carrying on and I've got them, I'm telling you. I'm thinking "my God, what am I going to do here?" I thought "bloody hell". I walked straight up to him and touched him on the forehead and he went (demonstrates), struck at me and I've hated it ever since and I wouldn't have a horse that struck you, I'd shoot it and I went down and he raced around the yard.

26:00 And I'm tumbling around and of course it's all sandy there, all sandy and the sands built up to the bottom rail and I'm trying to bloody well get out, and I got out eventually, I didn't get hurt or anything, terribly frightened and scared and he says, "Are you hurt?" "No, no." "Well get in there and catch the bastard then." Well the horse had had his go and I'd had my go and I was a bit,

26:30 if I'd come in from the side like I should have done in the first place, so I learnt something right there and then from day one. And he was a very good rider and he expected everybody to be the same. His son wasn't, he was useless, which made him terribly disappointed, but

27:00 he used to pass it along to me and it made, well Nelson and I weren't the best of friends because Nelson was pissed off, I guess because I could ride, no worries about that but I learnt to ride as in a rough horse up there.

- 27:30 And I don't blame Nelson, he got jealous and we had a few punch ups over it but got over it I suppose.
- And what about girls Jim? You mentioned to Heather that you lined up a few nurses on holidays in Townsville but when did they first start catching your eye?**
- When I was about ten. Well you want the truth, don't you?
- Absolutely.**
- Okay,
- 28:00 when I was about ten.
- Do you remember her name?**
- Yeah, Margaret Watts. Where? In the shed at the back of the yard, house yard.
- Was she the same age or a little bit older or younger?**
- 28:30 She knew a bit more than me. She could drive.
- That's got to be inspiring.**
- Ay?
- That's got to be inspiring at the time.**
- I don't think anything happened but you know. I talked about when we came down on our holidays from
- 29:00 Iffiley but Barbara was his daughter, she was a nurse and she introduced us to these other nurses and one in particular, this little redheaded one called Margaret Balmer. I don't know, when you were out on the station you didn't worry about them, you didn't think about them but when you got to town
- 29:30 well you didn't think of anything else. I used to take her over to the Island, book the hut for the weekend, still keep the room at Buchanan's Hotel, no problem. Then to cut a long story short there,
- 30:00 one of the times I went back to work on Iffiley she left Townsville and went somewhere else. She did say where but I forget now but anyhow it was, "Don't bother writing to me or anything."
- And what was Townsville like all that time ago?**
- Small, fifty thousand people it had.
- 30:30 The cutting through Sturt Street that was just a big rock, the rock used to come bump that side, and bump that side. The road stopped at the end of the rock coming down from the Castle Hill. Actually there's, I think there's a church, a Seventh Day Adventist Church I think up on the cutting,
- 31:00 well that rock used to continue right down virtually to Flinders Street. Flinders Street, Sturt Street, well Sturt Street used to go there and then the rock went fifty or sixty metres probably and the other road, bump and that was it. That was there for years, and years, and years before they dug that out, years. Actually they've had a couple of goes
- 31:30 at it. They went through it and they made a road and years later they went through and widened it and then they did some more when, what is he? A financial advisor, a Greek, what's his name? Anyhow he built a Spiro's house on this thingo and they had
- 32:00 to get in and blow rock again and level it out and that's only a matter of probably five, six, up to ten years but not that far. I forget his name, that doesn't matter.
- A lot of fellas we've spoken to in World War II spoke of Townsville as a bit of a rough old place?**
- Well it was a country town you see, it's always been a country town.
- 32:30 Even now, see they say, "What's the population of Townsville?" Okay, what do you think the population of Townsville is?
- Oh God, couldn't say.**
- Marie?
- Eight hundred thousand.**
- Shit, you go to bed of a night, don't you.
- 33:00 It's about a hundred and sixty five thousand, but you see there's two cities here. You're not in Townsville now. You're in my city, you're in Thuringowa, but they count Thuringowa as part of Townsville.
- As part of the population really?**

Yeah, they split it up when it needed to be, we've got two councils, two mayors, two da di ah, did ah,

33:30 only one railway station, only one paper, only one this, only one that but two mayors on a hundred and fifty grand a year or something or other and all the councillors on who knows what, and what's the population of Townsville? A hundred and sixty thousand, baloney, it's about ninety something thousand and Thuringowa's about seventy but it sounds better if you say a hundred and sixty, doesn't it?

34:00 True. So Townsville is only a small place unless you add Thuringowa to it.

And was that the case back then? Was Thuringowa just as separate from Townsville?

Thuringowa was always separate in the fact that it was all grazing country and all this up here was just shiny apples, shiny apple bushes and rubbish and

34:30 all graziers country up here, towards the twin peaks up here and the bowling out here, that was all grazing. Thuringowa has grown in the last, well I came back here from Canberra in 1989, or 1990,

35:00 the end of 1989, yeah, and I'd been away for eleven years and I couldn't get over how Thuringowa, cause I said I couldn't get over Townsville had grown, but Thuringowa goes miles and bloody miles out here and turns around past the dam and goes right out until you can't go any further.

35:30 There's just billions of dollars being spent every year on buildings and more so in town now. They had a high rise parking building in there, I think it was about nine or ten stories high and they did some fantastic engineering and turned that into, it's now units,

36:00 town units. And Jesus, every one of them is taken up and they're building units in the city everywhere, because the city was just dead. The shops were closing, coming out here, eight kilometres from here to the Willows and there's ninety six shops in the Willows and there's nothing you want that you can't get at the Willows, nothing.

Has there ever been any rivalry between the two places?

36:30 No, not really, only rivalry is between Townsville and Cairns, well Townsville-Thuringowa Cairns.

What's that about?

Well it started off with I think it was the Treasurer, yeah, Keith De Lacey was the Treasurer and he came from Cairns and everything got done in Cairns. They got a brand new international airport because of

37:00 all the Japs coming over and they grabbed them and it was a bit one sided, no doubt about it and of course it started from there and still goes on today. We've got, Townsville's got mostly government officers, government personnel, like the army out at Lavarack and what have they got?

37:30 I'm guessing now, ten thousand probably. They've built houses right around the barracks now, like the barracks is one side of the road, but the houses, big beautiful houses, the army bought houses. They put the price of houses up here by about fifty thousand dollars. They just went out and bought houses and paid unbelievable bloody money for them, ridiculous.

38:00 **Was there a strong military presence in Townsville when you were first here like on holidays?**

No, there were none. I think there might have something at Zeehan Barracks as 51 Royal Queensland Regiment, but that was an Army Reserve type thing for Thursday night for drinks and weekend to go out and sit by the river type of thing.

38:30 No, Lavarack Barracks started in about, roughly the same time as Vietnam because they generally, anybody generally goes from here, come up here, get acclimatised, cause this is the hottest place on bloody earth, Townsville and then they go to wherever they're going to.

39:00 Plenty of room at the wharves, they bring their submarines in. I went down on a submarine there one day, got invited down, and nearly passed out with the smell for the start of it. Talk about body odour, Jesus Christ. I mean we were sitting in, what do they call it? State room I think and there's one on the right and you're sitting there like that see and they

39:30 have these big twenty six ounce cans of beer and they go (demonstrates) and that's right, they had no zip top, you had to get a little (demonstrates) and the twenty six ounce (demonstrates). I didn't smell any body odour when I left but I know I was flat out walking, Jesus.

40:00 The HMAS Ottway it was, oh brother, it was pretty good.

You've never been attracted to life in a submarine?

I couldn't live in, I couldn't be a submariner, no way, Jesus, no way, no way.

Okay Jim, we'll just pause there so we can switch tapes again.

Tape 3

- 00:32 **Something that occurred to me was in the time that you did the droving and you were a stockman you must have dealt with different personality types quite a lot and were you in a position there at all to manage the men?**
- Yeah I was head stockman on several places before I became a manager. Some people have an overseer, head stockman, manager,
- 01:00 well they're the flash ones I suppose. The one's I worked on was head stockman manager.
- Did that experience help you later in the army when you were managing men?**
- Oh definitely, yeah, definitely.
- So what's the secret to good management, do you think?**
- Don't have favourites is one and that's a very, very hard thing to do, is
- 01:30 not to like some person, some person better than another. I don't mean hate them but it's hard not, if somebody's your really good friend outside the army, but they are in the army too, very hard to, look you've got to be a strong disciplinarian.
- 02:00 And what did he say about me that time "I rule by authority" or something or rather, I thought it was quite good. And don't suffer fools gladly because a fool will loose you your job. It's hard, you can't sack anybody in the
- 02:30 army. If you were outside in a store or café or whatever, sure, what do they do now? Give them three letters or three warnings or something or other, and "this is your fourth, goodbye." Well we can't do that in the army, the big boys can, if it got to that. It would be out of your hands anyhow. I don't know, I think you're either a manager or you're not,
- 03:00 regardless of what it is. I think it's in you. Somehow people like, what's his name? Roberts, Roberts, from Big W, no, Lofty, whatever, doesn't matter.
- 03:30 How does he earn one point three million a year? He can't be that bloody good, I don't care what anybody says. Impossible, I mean he's got so many people under him that must be doing a wonderful job. He obviously knows how to keep them in that fantastic triangle that goes down and spreads out but I mean, wow.
- 04:00 Corbett, Roger Corbett, anyhow.
- I was just going to say that a lot of those corporate associations have all those PR courses where bosses learn, what is it conflict resolution and all that kind of stuff, so do you think in a very kind of rustic way that that was already there from working as a head stockman?**
- Yeah.
- 04:30 Oh yeah, it had to come from somewhere didn't it, as much as I say you're just born to it but yeah, it does have to come from somewhere. Whether you go to school and become, what do they call it?
- A prefect?**
- A prefect, yeah, or something like that, I don't know. I went to reform school so I wouldn't know that, don't know.
- 05:00 **So tell us about enlisting then. Where did you go to enlist?**
- Townsville.
- On your own?**
- On my own?
- Did you go with any mates to enlist?**
- No, I just went in there on my own and they put me through a few tests and they said, "Can you read, write and count? Here you are, go and see
- 05:30 Doctor Brinell tomorrow." Oh they did ask one question, "Because of your age how do you think you'd go taking orders from somebody a lot younger than you?" And I just lied and said, "Not a problem." Well I wanted to go, oh here's mother home, so I said "not a problem." Can we just have a break.
- Sure.**
- 06:00 **(Tape stops)**
- Went down to the office in Sturt Street and said I want to sign up, took the particulars down, whatever

they do, gave me one of those tests, aptitude tests, put you through the little dots on the paper, reading the numbers, yeah, had some maths, well not maths, some arithmetic, add

06:30 up some numbers, divide something and then addition, division and subtraction, that was it, yeah, yeah. And went over, made a phone call, must have been to Doctor Brinell, he was the GMO [Government Medical Officer] then, so

07:00 I went and saw him the next day. Apart from the heart murmur that was it.

Did he pick that up though?

No, no he asked me whether any, had I had dada da, dada da,

07:30 rheumatic fever, dada da? "Yes". I decided to tell the truth and if it wasn't, I could probably try the navy or whatever, I don't know and he put the thingo on and he may have given me an ECG, he did, I had an ECG there. And

08:00 I just turned out alright so it was just a murmur that's been there and it's there today, still there.

What did you know about the communist uprising in Indo-China at the time?

Well not so much what I knew about the communist uprising but I knew they were getting pretty bloody close to Australia, and I

08:30 know northern Australia like the back of my hand, northern Australia, Northern Territory, part of Western Australia. I could go anywhere there and if you have a look at it from the air, you could put in five armies before they even knew you, before you even knew they were. The logistics of obviously getting

09:00 an army in would be obviously not being seen, first and foremost but apart from that, I mean watch Indonesia in about thirty years time or sometime, and you'll understand what I'm talking about. So it wasn't so much the communist part of it, I don't think, it was just

09:30 what was happening to the people, how they'd been run over by the French, which turned around and stuffed the French anyhow, because they didn't win, they lost, as simple as that. Yeah, and I wanted to go and that was it, so I guess I didn't know a hell of a

10:00 lot.

Did you feel that you wanted to go primarily because of protection of Australia, and therefore your family, was that the main reason?

In that way, yeah, yeah, because it's not far. Yeah, I'm not saying I was waving the Union Jack or the Australian flag or anything but however that was there, that was

10:30 my excuse or part of my reason I suppose, excuse. Might have been excuse, I just wanted to get there, I wanted to have a look, see what was really happening.

Maybe it was a bit of an adventurous spirit as well, just wanting to?

I've got no doubt, sure, but I knew that I was signing on for three years.

11:00 I knew I wasn't just going over there and coming back or going over there and getting killed and not going anywhere. It wasn't just a twelve month job and then come back and go somewhere else. I signed up for three years so yeah, I was fully aware of that.

Why the army though, Jim?

Why the army? Well one of the reasons why the army

11:30 was at school, prior to leaving, probably two years, twelve, that would be right, I went, they had these aptitude tests and whatever, whatever, whatever. Anyhow I ended up in Sydney at some RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force]

12:00 recruiting office I suppose it would have been, yeah recruiting office and at school they said "suitable for the RAAF", so I don't know how I got there, I don't remember that but I remember being there and I remember getting knocked back because of the heart murmur.

12:30 But I knew there was nothing wrong, well I didn't but as far as I knew there was nothing wrong with me, because I'd never, I played football, I played cricket, was bloody hopeless but anyhow. Football, I played a lot of football and anyhow they said, "No, that was it." Once again I can't remember whether I told them that

13:00 I'd had rheumatic fever. Maybe I didn't tell them and they found out or something. Don't know. Anyway went back to school and I think I was only down there for a day. I can remember being on the station catching the train home to Gloucester. So that was, I didn't want to go in the navy. I'm not dropping the soap for anybody

13:30 and that only left the army. And I suppose maybe my father being in the army but he didn't talk about it or anything, so I don't know. No, I just had to get there.

How did your wife and your family and your friends

14:00 **react when you told them you were going over to Vietnam?**

Fifty, fifty. Some thought it was a great idea, some said, "If I was younger I would go myself," mind you they were pretty safe. Some

14:30 came back with the old, "All you'll turn into is a mob, a bunch of murderers," all I did was kill kids, very good. Mind you some of the little bastards wanted killing anyhow. So I reckon fifty,

15:00 fifty on that question. Some said, "Good on you oldie, go for it," others reserved. And then come home on leave and of course everybody loves a soldier, the uniform, bits of colour on it everywhere,

15:30 wow.

You'd become a chick magnet with the uniform on?

Yeah.

We'll talk about that later but with your wife, was she upset about you joining up? She must have realised that you'd be going overseas for quite a while?

No, I think she had a plan even then to go her own way and get what she could get and go her own way and that,

16:00 take the kids. I was pretty sure it was even, now looking back in hindsight. I think she had the plan in her head then. She had to have had. I mean she was already gone, finished, it

16:30 was all planned, all done, even to renting the bloody house.

You mean Jim when you got back from the war all this had taken place?

When I came back there was no one to meet me at the,

17:00 I think it was the airport. I think they flew us from Sydney to Townsville, I'm not sure. There was no one there to meet me, I got a taxi, went home, knocked on the door, sliding door like out the front and she said, "What are you doing here?" And I said, "Hey, I'm home, I'm a bloody hero."

17:30 Not really, so I rearranged some walls, and a bit of furniture, I was pretty wild and she went round to her girlfriends place

18:00 or whatever she was and I got called into the unit, that's a different story. I went to Brisbane and I asked that I be sent straight back to Townsville because of marital problems.

18:30 Whoever the spy was told her I was coming back on such and such a date and I'd be there at such and such a time and when I arrived she'd gone. The house had been let or given to an agent to let, so not only did I not have a house I had to live in bloody barracks.

19:00 And she'd gone and that was it and the next time I saw her was at the lawyers in Brisbane.

You didn't even get to see your kids?

No.

So now you're thinking that she might have had an idea of taking off at some point anyway?

Oh definitely. That's what I think anyway.

19:30 I might be wrong but she wouldn't be smart enough to plan it in that short a time.

So you'd been away for a year at that time, is that right?

Mmh, hmmh.

A tour is twelve months?

Oh no, no, no, no, sorry, I'd been away at six months at that stage. I mean six months, I came home for four days, or whatever it is and back again for another six months.

So would that have been the leave you had

20:00 **after doing the Kunghur course? Or that was after Vietnam, after actually being overseas and coming home?**

After being overseas, yeah.

After being overseas.

No, the Kunghur course was just, if you got through it you went over, that was it. I don't know, it was maybe seven to ten days, it wasn't long, it wasn't for long.

20:30 You knew everything except what a village was like though they had a village built there so you went through the village and practised your drills and that was it.

I'd like to ask you more about that later actually but just out of curiosity, were they right in constructing those villages, were they like the ones in Vietnam?

Yeah, yeah, they were done by, like the instructors

21:00 at Kunghur were ex Vietnam veterans who'd been over, been through it, knew what it was like, came back as instructors to put the other people through, so yeah, it was right. Everything was spot on as far as I was concerned anyhow.

Did the army have quite a few blokes joining up in their late twenties, early thirties

21:30 **or was it mainly young guys?**

No, the young guys were mainly Nashos [National Servicemen], because twenty one, whatever it is, the marble drops. No, no there was a lot of people over there a lot older than what I was, please.

What about the conscripted men, how did you find them to be?

22:00 Most of them pretty good. But if they wanted to be mongrels, boy it was a waste of time. You could have done anything to them and it wouldn't have mattered. They would have been like that bloody gutless Simon Townsend. He just wasn't going and that was it,

22:30 but most were, and you'd be surprised the amount of Nashos that came in the army, did rookie training, did the course at Kunghur, got on the boat or the plane, whatever it might have been, went over there, did their twelve months service, came back and joined up.

23:00 Dozens and dozens, hundreds, hundreds of them joined the army, so it did some good things to some people. Well I reckon it did because joining the army was good to me.

Could it also be though, just looking at perhaps another side of them doing joining up after doing the twelve months, it was pretty intense over there,

23:30 **I mean maybe there was a feeling that's where they felt accepted or that it was safe, if you know what I mean, rather than come back on civvy street?**

No, we had civilian policemen who gave their job away and joined the regular army, and that was a pretty secure job.

24:00 I'm trying to think of someone in particular, Curly a motor mechanic, another one, and probably if I thought longer but

24:30 there were hundreds that went in as Nashos and went out as regulars.

And you were talking about some of the guys, the men that made it very difficult, do you think perhaps the army should have perhaps stopped them? I mean the Nashos that were so keen on making a nuisance of themselves, perhaps stopped them from being a part of it?

No,

25:00 because once you give in, you've lost and you would increase the number of, remember everything is discipline, discipline, discipline and once that crack in discipline comes by sending him home because he's no good, he's just going to be a troublemaker or something, no bugger him, use him while he's there and use him to the full extent of what you can get out of him. Don't stop him because you'll have others, those

25:30 that aren't quite sure will probably go that way or their mate speaks to them and says, "No, bugger it, I'm going." "Oh I'll come with you, bugger it." Definitely not stop it, that would have been a big mistake. All this has got to be said in my opinion of course.

Just when we were talking about the management issue before, do you think understanding

26:00 **each man's limitations is perhaps a good part of management as well?**

Understanding his limitations? Yes, you have to train them to do the job he's supposed to, up to his limitations, yeah. Yeah, that's part of management. Management covers a multitude of sins really.

26:30 It's just a big, big thing. There's a lot of, you can say to a manager, "Don't you think that would have been better there?" "Well he was in the place at the time and he made a management decision and no, he shouldn't have even be asked." I'm just putting a hypothetical case up of course, but he's a manager,

27:00 he's made a decision.

Is that how it works in the army, it's not the foot soldiers that get the blame if something mucks up, it's always the managers? It's their fault for not thinking ahead

Well the bucks got to stop somewhere and it shouldn't stop with the bloke down at that end, it should stop up here, or in between somewhere, yeah, definitely.

27:30 Yeah, if you tell your soldier to go out and do a reccie from point A to point B and they come back and their figures are used on an exercise or something and it's all ballsed up and obviously they've done it wrong. They need a great reef in the backside but somebody should have checked it, so their superior to them and up it comes to the point where it has to stop and yeah,

28:00 you take the blame. Or take the blame, well you make sure it doesn't happen again. And that can be done two ways by moving the person or group or by more deeper training or more wider training, it

28:30 just depends. You'd have to work it out with whoever you were dealing with.

Like Spiderman, with power comes responsibility.

And money.

Okay tell us, you enlisted and you saw the doctor, what did they say? They said, "Okay go away and we'll

29:00 **call you up," or?**

Yep, I think so. I got a letter with a train ticket in it and an address in Brisbane to be at. Now, you enlist here in Townsville, you're in the army in Townsville, in those days you had to go to Brisbane and, "I promise to be good and not kill anybody,"

29:30 and all the rest of it. You had to actually, you had to actually do that in Brisbane, yeah because all they had here was a recruiting office. So we got on the train, well I got on the train. I met one, Kenny Nuggan, he had a bottle of Green Ginger Wine.

30:00 There was Nuggan, there was me, there were three of us anyhow that ended up, we didn't know each other but we just got on the train and I guess they bought the tickets at all the same time and we were in that carriage and so on so forth. And we had a terrific trip down on the train.

On Green Ginger Wine?

Well refreshment rooms

30:30 were all along the line then. And you bought grog there and everything. We made it an easy trip.

Were did you go down to Jim? To Sydney?

Brisbane.

To Brisbane.

Yeah.

So you went to, is it Enoggera

31:00 **barracks?**

No, we didn't go to Enoggera, to in town somewhere to actually sign on the dotted line, to say we were soldiers. Then we went to the clothing store to get uniforms and then Kulungra, Brisbane,

31:30 right. Then we got on a bus that took us to, where's that? That's in Sydney.

32:00 No, we got on a train, sort of straight away sort of thing and we went to First Recruit Training at Wagga Wagga. We got off the train at Central, got on the bus and took us to Wagga Wagga. We got on there

32:30 just going onto dark and some angry, I want to be bloody Hitler bastard came out and bored up everybody and I thought, "Jesus Christ". We then got allocated our rooms,

33:00 and did our uniforms, the best we could, because we had no irons, or no ironing boards, which you had to get, you had to do all that yourself but we didn't know. And yeah, that was it.

Had the effects of the Ginger Wine worn off though by the time you got to Wagga Wagga?

Yes, oh, yes, yes,

33:30 shit yes, worn off by the time we got to Brisbane, yep.

Now that time in Sydney, so was this 67, 68? You were thirty?

Sixty, I went over there in 70, so 69.

So now a lot of that time in Sydney was all the university

34:00 **student demonstration that were going on. Were you aware of all that happening when you went in?**

Yeah.

Was it all over the TV?

Yeah, it was just happening, that's all.

What did the soldiers think of it?

Well the regular soldiers thought it was a load of crap. Some of the Nashos

34:30 thought it was a lot of crap and those that weren't sure about being a Nasho they didn't get up and demonstrate or anything like that but probably could have sat down and told you why they thought it was right to be able to demonstrate, to have their say, if you like.

But did any of the blokes come to fisty cuffs about

35:00 **it?**

Civilian and army, Christ yeah, yeah. They were throwing buckets of God knows what over bloody people, yeah it was stupid.

What do you mean, you'd be walking along the street and someone would insult you?

People would spit on you.

35:30 I kid you not. You know we had a welcome home parade in 1987, I think that was twenty five or thirty years, twenty five years it might have been, it took them twenty five years to welcome us home. We had no welcome home parades, none at all. We just flew in of a night,

36:00 those that came by plane, through customs and it was sort of midnightish when we got into, a bit after, maybe one or two o'clock in the morning and you just went on your way. A mate of mine met me there and had a room booked for me at a motel.

36:30 But others just, they just, I guess they found their own way to where they had to go. I mean I had to go back to Townsville the next day, and I honestly can't believe, I can't remember rather

37:00 whether I came by train or whether I came by plane. I know one of the times that I came home, I came home in the middle for four days, went back, came home for good, one of those times, I went by train.

37:30 Maybe it was when I came home they gave us a ticket and said, "See you when you get in Townsville," because it was about, in those days it was about a two and a half days trip from Sydney on the bloody train and you didn't get a sleeper, that's for sure.

What about the

38:00 **women in civvy street, how did they treat the men in uniform?**

Oh in various small groups, no problems. In large groups with some idiot leader if you like, like rent a crowd, do this, so they did that, "you killed my son," "my son was killed."

38:30 Christ bad luck.

I'm just trying to get an idea cause it was down at Wagga Wagga that you did your initial rookie training, is that right? Now the people on the streets there, were they as bad as the ones in Sydney?

No, no.

So they were much more?

No, they were just ordinary. One would imagine because without the army and the air

39:00 force there would be no, it would just be Wagga instead of Wagga Wagga. There'd only be half, yeah, they were good.

So it was mainly when you came to big city areas?

Yeah, yeah. And the some of them were fair dinkum but a lot of them were rent a crowd, which made you bloody wild.

39:30 More than half of them wouldn't know what they were bloody talking about, that's for sure.

But you were witness to, you did witness this yourself?

Yeah, yeah, I'm talking from first hand experience right now,

So people would just come right up and insult you, whatever, spit on you?

That's right.

40:00 **Would it be men or women or either?**

Either, either. It was terrible. It was, shouldn't go off the track but imagine somebody spitting on you? You haven't done anything, you're just walking down the street and someone goes (demonstrates) or maybe a (demonstrates), even better.

But how would you deal with that?

40:30 Oh you learnt to walk away. I mean if you did what you really wanted to do, for a male person, you'd probably be up on assault. There's absolutely no doubt you would have been up on assault cause you would have gone crazy and just flipped back to where you just come from and probably try to kill the bastard.

41:00 **Okay we have to switch tapes.**

Tape 4

00:33 **Alrighty Jim, what were your expectations of the army going in, what did you think you were in for?**

Well I knew a few blokes that had been in the army. I'd had a mate killed in Korea. I had a brother-in-law that did that first lot of National Service

01:00 in the 1950s I think it was and they seemed to have a great time. I don't know. I didn't have too many expectations. I just thought keep your nose clean and you will be alright. I wasn't scared of anybody, like some big bastard glaring down at me and saying, "I'll break you neck or whatever, whatever," because

01:30 they wouldn't have and so I certainly had no troubles thinking about myself physically. Mentally I didn't know whether you did your exams with your feet or whether you actually did them with your feet, so I didn't

02:00 have any worries. So I took it, when it came, that was it, sure.

So what was your initial training then?

Initial training was to learn how to put a uniform on, believe it or not and with that uniform to learn how to have creases in the trousers so they just about cut your finger

02:30 when you ran it over them, a lot of bullshit that was but anyway. It taught you drill movements, with and without weapons. It taught you what weapon was what, how it was used, when it was used, what it could do for you.

03:00 One saying was, "It is an extension of my arm", so okay (demonstrates). So the initial thing, okay. They then went to education, this is through Kapooka,

03:30 they went to education. Those that had, it used to be called ACE, ACE 1, ACE 2, ACE 3. ACE was army Certificate of Education. If you didn't have ACE 3, I'm not sure about this one but let's say ACE 3, which would have

04:00 been equivalent to Intermediate Certificate, New South Wales, then you did, you went on the Education Course. If you had enough education to satisfy them then you did guard on the front gate, you did all the good things. You got to know the guys that were the Regs in the hut at the front

04:30 gate there and yeah it really made things easy. And I didn't do any education in the army, I was lucky I suppose, so I missed out on that and that was probably three weeks, where I was doing all different little jobs for all the corporals

05:00 around the place, "Listen clobber can you do this and go there?" I mean every morning I just reported to the front gate and whoever was the guard commander either told me to sit outside and read a book or you want to go on the gate for half an hour or whatever, yeah it was really good. Then after the education bit

05:30 finished, I think we just practised for a march out parade. Now at no time was there any mention of going to Vietnam. This was just a recruit training course,

- 06:00 like they did for every other person that had joined the army except they probably put a few different moves in, but it was a recruit training course. When we practised for our march out parade, probably for a week I suppose, when that was all down pat, then they called us all outside, my
- 06:30 platoon was 13th Platoon I was in, 13th Platoon Charlie Company and they told us where we were going, as in, "You're going to ordnance, you're going to infantry, you're going to infantry, you're going to signals," and etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. Prior to this we'd had a form to fill in to say what you wanted to do. I put in for artillery,
- 07:00 bugged if I know why, but I did anyhow and when it was my turn to come round they just said "Oldfield RAA PRO [Royal Australian Army Provost Corps]", so I was a policeman, just like that.

Now what experience had you had of the MP's [Military Police] before?

None, whatsoever.

- 07:30 Only man management, that's what I'd had through my civilian jobs, as in the pastoral industry.

So did you know, once you got told that you were going to be military police did you know suddenly what that meant?

Yeah, because the bloke that said "military police" he said "Ah ha, a fuckin' screw hey?" And I thought, "Here we go, this will be right."

- 08:00 But it didn't worry me, you could call me whatever you liked, it doesn't, it would within reason, but it never upset me. We went over to red berets and we just used to wear a slouch hat before and we went to red berets, yeah red berets and somebody thought up the idea they'd call us "med heads".
- 08:30 We all thought that was as funny as buggery. It never touched a nerve or anything, it was a beauty, some smart bastard could think that up, and that's fair dinkum, yeah med heads. Meat head was another one, a favourite one, I don't know where that came from but med heads, well work it out your bloody self, that one. It never upset one person. So whoever was trying to stir the pot didn't succeed, no.

- 09:00 **Now did this affect at all any mates you'd kind of made, now you were kind of given the responsibility to kind of keep them in shape, keep them straight and narrow, kind of thing? Did this affect any mateships that you might have made with, friendships you might have made?**

No, none whatsoever. Most of my mates were fellas I was in charge of anyhow. "God, you're a

- 09:30 cranky old bastard," and, "have another beer," and not that I drink bloody beer much but no, it probably cemented the relationship more than anything else. It certainly never ever damaged a relationship of a person of who I was either a friend or a mate, no,

- 10:00 not at all.

Did you give any thought to the prospect that now you're military police you might be hated more than?

Well having read different books and especially Khaki and Green, yeah, I mean there was no doubt people hated you, but most of them couldn't tell you why.

- 10:30 In other ways they'd heard their father, or they'd heard somebody in a pub saying, "Bloody Provos, [MPs] all they do is bloody well get you in and belt you up. I know a mate of mine who was belted up," and he knows a mate of his that was belted up but you never ever find this bloke, he doesn't exist. It was all bull. Yeah sure,
- 11:00 we were hated by people that didn't know what they were hating us for. Yeah we were hated, yeah, yep, but do you know what? They get into town and they get into trouble, do you know the first bastard they go to? The MP, first bloke. In three days time they're probably in the pub with somebody talking about MPs and saying, "Yeah, them mongrel bastards."
- 11:30 He doesn't tell you about the ride he got home to his unit or anything or how they took him away from blokes that were going to bash him up, no, that would be giving in, he wouldn't be a mongrel then, would he? That's what they were like.

This is good to get, this is good to hear.

It's true. "I can't say he's a good guy because they'll reckon I'm a bloody weakling or something," so

- 12:00 they take your help and in two or three days talk about you again.

So once you were selected to be an MP did you get any specific training?

Oh yeah, sure did, oh boy.

What was it?

Oh in law, for a start, civil and military law, and the Commonwealth Crime Acts.

12:30 We had to know them off by heart, for people who may or may not have been trespassing in say Victoria Barracks, if you like, or inside taking photos or whatever, impersonation of bloody, impersonation of a, 13:00 impersonation of a serviceman or something, whatever that was another one. Blokes used to go to the second hand shops and buy bloody set of greens and a bloody slouch hat and a pair of boots and walk round like they'd been in the army, especially when Vietnam was on. They wanted to be heroes to their girlfriends or boyfriends, whatever they had.

13:30 **Really?**

Oh shit yeah. Christ, it was common. You could pick them out like dogs nuts on a cold day because they wouldn't have had a proper haircut, the same way you could always pick a Digger up. He could be dressed in a dress or whatever, "There's a digger there."

14:00 "Why have you got a dress on? Come with us." But no, these heroes used to do this. There's one running around here now, they're trying to find, they can't find him. He's disappeared somewhere, they think Cooktown but out of Cooktown somewhere, cause what's in bloody Cooktown? There's nothing there, two pubs

14:30 and a club and twenty five people or something.

And they're after him because he's impersonating an army...?

Yeah, impersonating a soldier, he got a medal, ribbon and everything. No half way with him mate. Two rows of bloody ribbons, Jesus.

I guess if you're going to put it on you might as well go all the way?

15:00 Well yeah, but you've got to be a little bit, a sandwich short of a bloody picnic haven't you to do that, I mean, jeez.

That's crazy.

Crazy alright. No, this bloke reckons he's been in the SAS [Special Air Service], wears all these bloody ribbons, he's supposed to have a Bronze or Silver Star from

15:30 the US, which is not him, but it is quite possible, it's feasible. But he'll surface one day and they'll grab him, he'll go.

Now apart from the theory that you were being taught as an MP, was there other

16:00 **kind of practical training that you were doing specific for MP?**

Oh we got taught police holds. And we just, we always trained for infantry minor tactics so you could always go with infantry if they went somewhere,

16:30 if they had need for you for any reason. With IMT [Infantry Minor Tactical] you did exams on it every year, once a year, every year and what other, well you did the usual things like map reading, drop you out in the middle of nowhere and say, "Here's a map, find out where you are."

17:00 That was a bit horrifying for a start but if you can find a church steeple, a funny shaped hill and go back to your map and find it and once you can find that, you can backtrack for want of a better word to where you are with your angles and that and you can find out exactly where you are. All those sorts of things,

17:30 they're quite fun. They make them fun days and one particular time I remember we went up, we crossed the river above Penrith and we hit the end of the old convict road, the road that went right along the range, before they built the road through, up near the Wattagang Forest. And

18:00 all the old bridges that are still there, well the parts of them that are still there that are cut out of sandstone. They must have had some brilliant craftsmen, who were obviously convicts to build these bloody bridges, it was unreal. And the road in one part, up the top,

18:30 the two wheels of a Land Rover are on the very side of the track and half an inch either side it just goes (demonstrates) down like that. Imagine to build that for a horse and cart or a bullock or cart or something but we had blokes actually walking in front and, "Come on, come on." It was about two or three hundred yards, or metres,

19:00 yeah. The old convict road had a name, but we'd be out for a day doing a bit of map reading or something and we'd find something like this and we'd make a day of it.

Sorry Jim, just to clarify this is at Kunghur after Kapooka?

19:30 No, this is after Vietnam, this after Vietnam. I was just talking general MP thingos. You asked about training. I sort of ran away a bit there.

What were the weapons of an MP?

Weapons? We had a GPM GM60, which was a machine gun.

- 20:00 We had the SLR L1A1 L1A2, which is single shot or semi-automatic, semi-automatic or L2 fully automatic, in other words hold your trigger and (demonstrates) and we had a French
- 20:30 nine millimetre SLP, self loading pistol, I think it was thirteen rounds. You could fit fourteen in it if you put one up the shoot, one up the barrel, you had fourteen rounds. In Vietnam we carried all those and also the M16
- 21:00 because it was lighter. Some blokes stayed with their SLR's because whatever they hit they'd blow it to bits. A twelve gallon drum used to be an oil drum, a twelve gallon drum filled up with water, we had this demonstration at Kapooka but anyhow, fill it up with water, bloke got back (demonstrates),
- 21:30 Jesus, it was like a bloody bomb going off at Hiroshima or something. He just blew it to bits, bullet into and I suppose the water just, expanded but such a terrific force, bloody hell. I thought, "Jesus, what's that going to do if it gets into your guts or something?" You'd have a little hole goes in that big, right, they're a seven point six two.
- 22:00 I saw a sheila, well I had to pick her up once, and didn't seem anything wrong with her, apart from it that she was out to it, she wasn't talking. She had all these little points around here, like this. We'd gone out in the chopper, and down, and shoved her in and I don't know who it was I was with, yeah, Dennis Horn,
- 22:30 and he stuck his foot under her and gave her a roll over and the little thing in the front and these great big hunks out of the back where they come out. It was just took half the body, entering didn't do anything. When it entered it exploded and to go out,
- 23:00 just big chunks.

So was she dead or alive?

Oh she was dead as it turned out, but the infantry got her. She was taking food through the track somewhere and they shot her and they called us in, a gun ship came out, cleared the area, as in they just went around in a circle and (demonstrates),

- 23:30 the chopper just dropped in, well they smoked, dropped in on the smoke and straight up again and the gunship (demonstrates), just doing around where the blokes were from the section of the infantry. We took her down to the hospital, to the chopper pad at the hospital at, what's the town?
- 24:00 Vung Tau, and yeah they just put her on a stretcher and they went and we went and she was dead, dead as a maggot. I think they might have had a bit of a shoot up on her because she had quite a few holes in her and she was on her own, no weapons. I think they had what they used to call a yippy shoot.

24:30 Can you expand on that for us? What's a yippy shoot?

Yeah, a yippy shoot is a, let's call it a stack of balloons in a corner and ready go (demonstrates) and just blow everything to bits, that's a yippy shoot.

And there were no weapons around her when you picked her up?

No, she had nothing.

- 25:00 She had food, whatever she had, would have had rice, you see. She was a VC [Viet Cong], she wasn't just one from the village that was going out in the dark or anything, doing the job. She was a proper VC.

How could you tell or is it from identification?

Well they look different, they were dirtier of course.

- 25:30 They were dirtier because if they used to wash you could smell them. If they were dirty you couldn't smell them. Might sound a bit funny or a bit arse up but not so.

It makes sense, they'd smell more like the jungle.

Spot on, spot on, yep.

- 26:00 It's like if you're out doing a four day exercise and there's no water to have a dobhi in, right, you can just get enough in your, well what you generally do is get a big mouth full of water and (demonstrates) and squirt it into your hands and wash yourself that way. But if one happened to
- 26:30 say, I don't know how but find water and have a bath, as in a creek or a puddle hole or whatever, then you couldn't stand him because he stunk and you didn't. That's just normal, like you and me and probably would be exactly the same for you. Yeah, they never washed,

27:00 they were just caked on, all the crap.

You were mentioned to Heather before that when you were at Kunghur they had, I mean it was the ex-Vietnam guys that helped to set up the village, so did you actually have ex-Vietnam fellas instructing you while you were at Kunghur?

Yes, oh my word.

What did they tell you about what you were going to get into?

I think they tried,

27:30 they didn't actually tell you what you were going to get into but what they did was try to impart to you how dangerous it was and how everybody looked like everybody else and don't stop looking, keep looking all the time because you just don't know. It's not like say the

28:00 Japanese going into New Guinea because you can certainly tell them or a big square headed bloody Kraut, these just looked like bloody Gooks and they looked the same except in the case of where they were true VC and they were out, been out for months and they were just dirty,

28:30 dirty.

What kind of, I guess, particular tactics were you taught in terms of dealing with the physical enemy?

We were given a

29:00 little, that's funny, I wonder where that went, I thought I had that. We were given a little card, what do you call it? With, you know plastic covering around it, what's it called? You put it through a machine and.

Laminated?

Laminated, yeah right. We called it talced , when you say talc,

29:30 people say "talcum powder", but yeah, laminated and okay and that card had "stop", "dung li," "put your hands above your head", "get down on the ground", "lay on your stomach" "advance" and things like that

30:00 which was issued under article something, something, something of the Geneva Convention and that was our bible. That's what you were supposed to do. I always tell the one about there was a priest,

30:30 it was on the northern road, on the sea front and there was the Yank guard on the gate to let them go into the pier, and this jeep, this American type jeep came out, turned, just went straight through the gate, a hundred miles an hour and here's this bloody priest sitting in there,

31:00 like a Vietnamese or Laotian. I don't know what he was but a Gook anyhow and "dung li" is stop, "dung li, dung li," and this guy he just goes (demonstrates), killed him and he was talking afterwards and he said, "God damn, he must have been deaf that bastard." "Yeah, why's that?" He said, "Didn't

31:30 you here me sing out dung li before I fired?" "No, oh yes, yes, it was loud too." He never sung out at all the bastard, he just shot him, but he was probably a VC getting in there to do something. I don't know. You knew he wasn't supposed to go in there so old Yank boy didn't muck around, he just blasted him.

32:00 Yeah, it was supposed to be "dung li, dung li, (demonstrates shooting), dung li."

The little card that you were just telling us about, was that part of your overall?

I've bloody got that.

Oh you've still got that?

I'm positive I've still got it, positive.

32:30 **That was part of your overall training, of your rules of engagement?**

Yeah, yeah, yes. I used to have it in the cover of that notebook on the table, whether it's still there or not. It was in with that posting order that I showed you.

You can have a look for it at lunchtime maybe.

I know it's here, it's in this house,

33:00 I know that. I've seen it here.

After you were given over, I guess to the MPs, told you were an MP, when did those duties or I guess your life as an MP, in that sense kick off,

33:30 **in training, before you left?**

No, at Kapooka told that I was going RAA PRO, apart from a few remarks from the instructors, nobody else said anything. I think probably two or three days later we had our march out. I went on the bus and they dropped

34:00 off at Central in Sydney and an MP wagon pulled up. I was just sitting out the front on the seats they've got there. MP wagon pulled up, a bloke said, "Your name Oldfield?" "Yep." "Come and hop in mate, we'll take you out to the barracks." They'd obviously been wised up that I was heading there and from then on, that was it,

34:30 I was an MP.

What were some of your first duties?

To patrol Kings Cross mainly, as they were coming out on, no, no, no, because the American soldiers were coming down on R & R [Rest and Recreation] and they just lived in Kings Cross and holy bloody hell, and the sheilas used to rip them off, it was

35:00 pitiful. And we used to go and park there near the fountain for maybe an hour, an hour and a half, do a run around to some other place, up William Street, where the Whisky, no, no, no, it's not Whisky, was it? Whisky a Go Go, whatever, there were a few more clubs there where

35:30 army used to meet up at. We'd go down, get out and have a walk around there and go into the clubs and have a look around and see that nobody was too inebriated and likely to cause a problem. If they had of been we'd just take them out and take them back to their camp. And then our main thing at that stage was the Cross, this was mainly of

36:00 a night time. Of a day time we did guard duty at the cash office at the airport. We had, of all things a bloody nine millimetre sub machine gun with a twenty five round magazine,

36:30 in the middle of the bloody airport, protecting the money from, the money that, see cause R & R planes were coming in every day, maybe two or three a day and there was hundreds of thousands of dollars that were given out to the guys for their play money and that and

37:00 what happened before, MPs weren't there, there was no MP guard or anything. Not even a bloke just sitting in the office, so what happens? Somebody comes along and robs it, don't they. Fired one shot, smashed the window where the little "give us your money" job was and the shit hit the fan and the next thing they've got bloody MPs there with bloody, what did they call them?

37:30 M1's, no, SMG, sub machine guns anyway, twenty five rounds of them. If you pulled the trigger the whole twenty five rounds would go (demonstrates) and I tell you what, if it had of been robbed when I was on duty, I'd have never pulled the trigger, never.

Because of the damage that would have been done?

Well you would have shot some bloody poor innocent bystander.

38:00 I mean they spray, they're a horrible thing and they used to use them for close fighting in the jungle.

What was your preferred weapon?

Probably the M16 which was the, the SLR was seven point six two and as I said it would blow an elephant to bits, but it was a little bit heavy.

38:30 The M16 was a seven point six two, five point five six, five point five six, different calibre, lighter, you could carry more ammunition with you, a lot easier to clean and a lot easier, lighter to carry. That was my preferred weapon.

39:00 If you were in a fire fight, you'd certainly want an SLR because she packs the power, well and truly. And the pistol, we used to, MPs carried pistols of course.

39:30 You could stand at the door and you could just about put your hand out and catch the bloody rounds as they were going out, bloody useless things they were, honestly and truly. Bloody hell.

Okay Jim, we're going to have to stop there for lunch.

Tape 5

00:33 You're not obliged to say anything if you don't wish to do so, whatever you say can be taken down in pencil, torn up and thrown away.

Is that one of the lines from being an MP?

You're not obliged to say anything unless you wish to do so, whatever you say may be taken down in writing and may be used in evidence against you, yes.

It's a scary kind of speech isn't it? I've heard that a few time on The Bill.

01:00 Yeah, you would, yeah.

Now what did you know about, this is a curiosity question about the MPs in the Second World War, were they vastly different to the men that were MPs in the Vietnam War?

Well from what I've read and what I understand is the MPs at the start of the Second World War were sick, lame, wounded and bludgers and

01:30 not very well liked and bits of, they weren't very nice people either. Then I can't recall who it was, one of the commanders, said that no man will join the Provost Corps until he has done at least six months

02:00 in an arm. An arm is artillery, infantry, armour, okay, so that got the better people into, if they wanted to, into the Provost Corps. But yeah, you certainly get some old blokes that don't like them, that's for sure.

02:30 They've either been involved in something where they got picked up or they just don't like them and they can't tell you why. That's about it.

How long were you in the army before you went to Vietnam?

03:00 A bit over twelve months. Fourteen months.

When you got the order, well the news that you were going, was it a relief that you were finally going?

Bloody, well I don't know about a relief,

03:30 I mean it was a, I jumped for joy.

Can you tell us about the passage over? Did you go on a plane?

Yeah, I went over on an Australian plane. Did we? Yeah, I think we went on an Australian

04:00 plane over there. We left Mascot about midnight and we pulled up in Darwin and Singapore and then Tan Son Nhut in Vietnam.

Were you part of the group of men who were told to change, I think the tops?

04:30 Yes, shirt.

Your shirt? So they said take all your army tops, army shirts off and what? Put on t-shirts.

It was, I think we had to leave them hanging out to, it was a, yeah, we definitely had to have a shirt, a civilian

05:00 shirt, yeah, so it would mask the fact that you were in the army, with your black boots and your, what were we wearing? Must have been, yeah polyester trousers, sorry, we may have had shoes, shoes, polyester trousers, we had to take off our polyester shirt,

05:30 and put on a shirt like this.

And what were your first impressions of Vietnam?

Oh bloody hell. Well we pulled up at Tan Son Nhut, out in the middle of bloody nowhere and all there was was these people with black trousers and bloody tops on,

06:00 you remind of it actually, and the cone hats digging little patches of dirt up here and there and moving away and stinking hot, absolutely terrible and I thought, "Jesus, I'm not going to be able to put up with this, holy hell." I wished that moment that I had not of been there.

06:30 But after a couple of hours of waiting on the tarmac somebody bought us a bit of bread or whatever in a box and went away again and then they came and took some of the crowd off the plane that were going somewhere else. I was going

07:00 to Vung Tau, so those that were going to Vung Tau got on the plane, another plane and went up, went down to Vung Tau. And the pilot, fair dinkum, holy bloody hell, he came in and he just put it straight down like that.

07:30 Straight down, and went (demonstrates), I thought I was dead, I thought I'd die of a bloody heart attack, I honestly and truly did. Jesus, no doubt he was trying to scare the shit out of it but, he succeeded, oh boy.

What did Vung Tau look like?

08:00 It just looked like five or six streets of brothels and a couple of streets of markets, with food and whatever.

Really? That many brothels there?

Oh hundreds.

08:30 I mean I didn't count them all but there was, side by side by, they called them barber shops and they called them whatever, something else and something else and something else. But yeah, they were bars right, you'd go in and buy a drink and some little shoge would come along and say, "You buy me Saigon tea?"

09:00 Which was probably about ten piasta or something and if you wanted to you did but Saigon tea was supposed to be Scotch and that but it wasn't. It was just bloody tea, cold tea with no tea leaves in it, that's what you were paying for,

09:30 those that bought them.

But if you bought the Saigon tea did that mean she would remain in the bar talking to you as company or did it actually mean sex?

It meant she would stay there talking to you and making sure that you drank plenty, but yeah, but it was a pick up, yeah, it meant sex in the end, yeah, yeah.

10:00 **No, I'm just thinking, how did you go from Saigon tea to the sex? I mean after the guy was really drunk then the woman would say "how about some hanky panky?"**

Oh no, the guy didn't have to be drunk. He might have only had one Salty Dog or a bottle of Bami Ba or something and

10:30 he said, I don't know what he said cause I never did it.

Righto, let's go.

He said, "Yeah okay, tell mamasam I want you, okay," that was it and went up, paid, Jesus, I'm giving this away. My mate told me this. You went up and

11:00 paid and she took the money down and gave it to mamasam who obviously gave her her cut back and you did something.

Were these women taken care of medically?

Yeah. They had to have a medical certificate

11:30 on the door of the establishment. Each girl had to go to the doctor or hospital once a week and have a certificate. She had to have a certificate, but if she went on bloody Monday, she still had Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday,

12:00 so I suppose it was a way of cutting it back a bit. If they didn't go to the doctor then the sign came down off the door.

Would they still operate though? I mean would there be bad brothels and good brothels?

Oh yeah,

12:30 I mean in the main part of town there was a place called "The Flags" and Truman Yang and Truman Key, it was a street, "The Flags" were in the middle and that was in bounds and that was out of bounds.

13:00 Don't know why, suppose they didn't go to the doctor. I mean maybe they didn't pay enough to operate, maybe they didn't want to pay a bribe.

But would the men still go to the out of bounds one?

Yeah, yep.

Did the army give the men a lecture on what kind of stuff they could

13:30 **get by doing all this?**

Oh yeah, you get that at Kapooka. All these horrible bloody looking films and you look and go, "Oh shit" for about five minutes. Yeah, you got all that, all that was given to you, yeah.

So when the men got their packs of

14:00 **goodies when they joined the army, were they given a whole lot of condoms?**

No, I weren't given any to my knowledge. You could get condoms from the RAP [Regimental Aid Post] if you wanted them. I mean there was, they were available but you had to go and ask for them. I think, yeah,

14:30 in Vung Tau we had some sort of container, a box or metal container where you could just, it was filled up everyday from the RAP and you just went and take what you wanted and use about six or seven a night or something I suppose. Why do you laugh? You don't believe me do you?

15:00 **Six or seven a night?**

Yeah.

I guess they're all very young men.

It didn't affect me, I wasn't too young. I mean I wasn't eighteen or nineteen. You want the truth, you got the truth.

Were there men that didn't wear condoms and ended up getting the pox?

Oh yeah.

15:30 **Did you see that?**

See them?

Well not with their pants down but know that they got VD [Venereal Disease]?

Yeah, we had one of our blokes in our unit at Nui Dat, which is in the middle of the rubber plantation and we were just fenced in, and to get it there you had to go into town

16:00 to, well probably Baria maybe and Brian, Brian Holden, H O L D E N, he went down to the RAP one morning, which was behind our unit and he come back up, "Oh, oh, oh Jesus Christ." "What's wrong

16:30 with you Brian?" "Oh my sinus mate," and he's holding his arse, "my sinus." I didn't know anything about sinuses anyhow. I said, "Your sinus? I thought that was in your nose?" "No, no, this is a bad one, this one," and he went and lay on his bunk and someone said, "What are you moaning about?"

17:00 Big bastard he was, but he was a big wimp and someone said, "What's happened to bloody Holden?" and he said, "He's got the jack." "Oh bullshit, how could he, blah, blah." "Hey remember he went down to bloody Vung Tau the other day on the escort?" "The dirty bastard," and then of course everybody knew. "Hah, hah, Brian's got the jack". But they'd given him some sort of

17:30 penicillin, it was called crystalline, or crystallised or crystalline penicillin and for some reason, I don't know what it was, I wouldn't have a clue, I've never had one, it used to really, really hurt. Whether the old doc did it to teach him a lesson or not, I don't know but I know another bloke that had one on an

18:00 SAS exercise in the Territory once and he went into town and got into some black sheila and he got the same thing, crystallised penicillin and he just laid on the bed for about two days and couldn't move. And that was just in the bum, didn't touch anywhere else, yeah. So yes, plenty of them copped it.

18:30 **Was there any form of army punishment, I mean besides obvious pain from medically but?**

Well if it interfered with their duty there could have been but I've never ever heard of it happening but it's a self inflicted injury,

19:00 I've never heard of it happening. I mean you'd laugh more than you'd bloody well do anything. But lots of them were in, we had an anti-vice squad in Vung Tau and their job was to just check on the girls

19:30 to make sure their certificate was right, and most of them had permanent girls. The boss, his girl was, she was just an ordinary, bloody ugly but anyhow, she was a normal bloody Gook and her name was Snow and he had her the whole time he was over there.

20:00 **We've heard about some men actually even moving in together like a married couple, like a de facto couple with the Vietnamese women and then going back when the war was over to their wives, in sort of effect had two wives, did you come across that?**

Yes, I did some paperwork for a bloke that came home whilst I was still there

20:30 and he had a girl that he wanted to marry and I had to take them to an embassy or a, I think it was the embassy, to try and find out when she was born.

21:00 Tony got out of the army and I'm sure he went back over, he got her home to Australia anyway somehow, but I mean moving in with them over there, I know blokes that have sort of gone in for the weekend and stayed there but no, not move in as husband and wife, I mean, Christ. You'd be, it would be

- 21:30 a bit dangerous. Some did have, as I said, a permanent girlfriend and if they were missing you knew where they were.
- So no one actually ratted on them, they didn't write to their wife and say, "Look Johnny's playing up."**
- Not to my knowledge, no, Christ, I mean
- 22:00 I suppose there wouldn't have been too many that didn't follow the course of nature as it was, bugged if I know.
- Did you see any of the, you know when you see in a lot of American films on Vietnam, you see the fresh recruits arriving and then the sort of body bags being put on a plane, did you see any of that?**
- Yes,
- 22:30 stacks.
- Oh you did?**
- Yeah.
- When you first arrived, or later on?**
- Oh not long after I arrived, yeah. Yeah, the old body bags, that was nothing. That was just a, you became pretty hardened. You lost your sensitivity, I suppose.
- 23:00 **Would they pile all the Australian bodies together with the American bodies and put them on one plane and then stop in Australia and get rid of the Australian bodies or, how would that work?**
- No, I've never or ever saw and I was here and not in Vietnam and they unloaded body bags and there was never any Americans on it, so can't see
- 23:30 why they'd do that.
- So we had our aeroplanes dedicated to?**
- Yeah, we had planes going backwards and forwards all the time. We had the Hercules go back and forwards. We had what they called the "Freedom Bird", which I think was TAA [Trans Australia Airlines] in those days, and that carried people over there and back from there.
- 24:00 No, just if there was a body bag it was a body bag and it was Australian, it was Australian.
- Were the body bags black plastic, is that what they were?**
- Mmh, with a zip, a zip full of
- 24:30 fluid in there I suppose. I would imagine they'd probably drain them before they put them in the body bags. They would have had to.
- Can you help us understand what you first did when you arrived in Vietnam? You were taken to, when the plane went down to Nui Dat,**
- 25:00 **what were you told you had to do?**
- No, it went down to Vung Tau.
- Sorry, Vung Tau, yeah.**
- Yeah, Vung Tau, the bloody airport there, okay I just got picked up in a jeep by a couple of blokes and taken out to the unit and
- 25:30 do the usual thing, say good day to the RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major], who took you in say good day to the CO or the OC, get issued a bed space, blankets, sheets, map, wardrobe, tables personnel and that was about it, in amongst
- 26:00 twenty odd others, maybe more, more than twenty I think, one side, oh no, about twenty.
- And with you they were all MPs?**
- Oh yeah, we had our own, we were all us, we were all us. Our own cook in the kitchen, our own kitchen hands, the gooks,
- 26:30 and yeah, yep.
- How did you get on with the other blokes in your compound where you were, the MPs? Did you get on alright with them?**

Yeah, because you knew most of them. Oh there might be the odd one that you didn't like, so you didn't go near him. That's a hard question to answer.

27:00 I think everybody sort of liked everybody really.

What had actually happened, this was 69, 1970, so had there been Long Tan, yes, there'd been Long Tan?

Yes,

So now what part of the year of 1970

27:30 **you were there, the middle of the year was it?**

July to July, yeah.

Now were they preparing you for anything that, some kind of conflict that was bound to happen soon or did they just...?

We were prepared for everything. We had a briefing every afternoon up at headquarters. Usually one of the corporals went up and was there for the

28:00 briefing and he then came back and de-briefed and told the unit what was going on, where anybody had been seen near the back fence or Gate Three or Gate Four or whatever they called them. So yeah, we were fully aware of what was happening

28:30 twenty four hours a day. From Nui Dat we also used to escort the convoys from Nui Dat to Vung Tau and back to Nui Dat again.

29:00 It was just a bit of a swan, get in your vehicle and we used to take like the education officer, we took him into Vung Tau one day and he was feeling a bit fruity, so we said to him, "Sir, would you like to go to Vung Tau with us for the day?" And he said, "Oh I'd love to." We said, "We're going tomorrow morning

29:30 at such and such a time." And he was there and we told him where to go and, "Then you're on your own until such and such a time this afternoon," which was okay as we were allowed into Vung Tau on leave. If you had leave, just weren't working, weren't rostered on, you went into town.

30:00 You then drank, you did aerobics.

Water ballet?

No, not quite water ballet.

What happened if you were on leave, like for instance you were on leave?

What do you mean, on leave or off duty?

Off duty, you're off duty and you're in Vung Tau and you happen to see a bunch of young Australians mucking around and being idiots,

30:30 **or something like that, was it part of your make up then to say, "Okay, stop it," or did you have to let the other MPs that were around take over?**

No, no, no. If the circumstances looked like something might get out of hand or they were hassling or harassing a girl, or even, they didn't harass the bloody boys because they were little mongrels,

31:00 little cowboys, but no you just went over, provided you weren't too full of scotch or something. No, you went over and told them to shut up and get on the next bus and go home, back to the camp. Nobody was allowed out of a night, wrong, curfew was ten o'clock I think,

31:30 so they couldn't have leave for the day and half tomorrow. They couldn't go out and just shack up somewhere for the night. That was not on. You'd often get them coming home late. They'd broken curfew and they were obviously onto a good thing and didn't want to go but eventually they'd come home and some of them would try to get through the fence.

32:00 And some of them would just come up to the gate and just take it as it was. I mean he shouldn't have done it but it was no great crime. Mind you they'd probably cop forty dollars and a rep or something. Well forty dollars in those days was bloody forty dollars, I'll tell you

32:30 but as a rule, yeah.

Well what was your, let's say a day in the life of you there in Vietnam? I mean would you work shift work, would you work nine to five like a regular job or...?

Me?

Mmh.

When I was over there?

Yes.

No, it was all shift work, yeah. It was seven to three, three to eleven, eleven to seven,

- 33:00 and around again, but you got a day off somewhere in there, so it would have been three to eleven, so you start at three o'clock this day, Monday, and you start at, wrong, you start at seven on Monday, you start at three on Tuesday, you start at eleven on Wednesday, so you've got that night off in between there,
- 33:30 Thursday you start again at seven, so the day you had off was in between the last two days of your shift. There was plenty of time off. If you weren't working you just sat back at camp, so you were better off doing something.
- 34:00 That was at Vung Tau and Saigon was the same. Nui Dat everything closed down overnight and come five o'clock the gates closed, that's it. No in, no out, the whole camp was closed, that was the
- 34:30 sharp end. It was, I mean that's where all the VCs were, the regular army and the what did they call themselves? Peoples Federation or some bloody thing.

How did the Australian men fare against the American men for mucking up in pubs and bars and what have you?

- 35:00 Oh, well we used to do joint patrols with the Americans in Vung Tau, in Vung Tau, Americans, Australian and an interpreter. They were pretty hard on their guys.
- 35:30 See we could wear civilian clothes into town, they weren't, they had to wear uniforms, which they didn't like. They were pretty brutal on their guys, for something quite simple they were just likely to grab them and throw them in the back of the jeep and take them to the PMO's office and lock them up.
- 36:00 The PMO's office is the provost marshal, provost marshal's office, PMO, whereas we tried to talk to a guy, "Now come on, ease it up," but if they were too bad, well you just grabbed them and put them in the back anyway. But generally speaking
- 36:30 I think they were about the same. The only difference, as I said, was the way the Yanks would treat, the way the Yanks would treat their own. I could see them being hated by the way they used to operate. Big bully boys they
- 37:00 were, and most of them were pretty big too. They were chosen for the job, yeah.

Were the Australians, you know how Australia has a bit of a reputation for having drinking problems, did the...

Only the women, I never heard anything about the men.

Did the Australians have a bit of a rep over there for boozing?

- 37:30 No.

So then it was pretty equal between the Australians and the Americans, they'd all drink?

Oh yeah, yeah. The Americans loved Australian beer and that. They'd give you anything. They'd give you a helicopter for a couple of cartons of VB. Don't laugh, it's true. If you wanted a jeep, a bloke came up to us, a bloke from civil affairs

- 38:00 came up to us one day and said, "Jim, can you get me a jeep?" And this bloke was a captain and I said, "Christ, what do you want a bloody jeep for? You've got the best of jobs, bloody civil affairs. Christ Almighty." He said, "No, it's to do with ..." I said, "Shit," and he said "We haven't got much money but
- 38:30 we'll be able to give you a bit anyhow." I said, "It will cost you a carton." "A carton?" I said, "Yeah, a carton." This is an Australian mind, so I said to my mate Bobby Baxter, who was a Yank, I said, "Do you think we can get him a jeep?" He said, "Yeah, no worries," so we drove around and found one that was parked alongside and got his bolt cutters out and they had a chain welded from
- 39:00 the gear lever onto another hasp sort of thing down there. So he just (demonstrates) cuts it and he said, and when we did joint patrols with them we were always in there vehicle, for some reason or another. I don't know why. He said, "There you go, all yours," and I said "Shit,
- 39:30 what am I going to do with the bastard?" He said, "Well you wanted one." "Alright," I said, "I'll meet you back at the PMO." He said, "Righto, I'll be there at," whatever time and we had a little paint shop round the back of one of the alleyways, where we used to pay a hundred piasta to get a number plate painted on, because all number plates were painted on. And we used to call them "tiger plates".
- 40:00 They had this yellow background, black writing, T one, two, three, four, six and once you had a number plate on you could drive around and piece of cake. No such thing as registration. Anyway we took it

round to Dutchy and he was more than grateful. We didn't get our carton of beer, we didn't want it anyway. So he got a vehicle. We had one of our own, of course.

40:30 I went with a bloke.

Hang on Jim, we'll have to switch tapes.

Tape 6

00:31 I'll tell you what, they're bloody dear to get the really, really top of the range.

Jim we were just talking about the generosity and gullibility of the Americans, I mean you told us about the jeep but what other kinds of things were available, if you needed them or wanted them?

Well I started to say about the fellow from

01:00 CID [Criminal Investigation Command], from the American CID. I met up with this guy and we became pretty good mates. Off duty I'd meet him and we'd have a bloody drink and this night we decided we'd stop at, well let's call it Number One Hotel, and I wasn't panting him or anything, don't get that idea.

01:30 He was not a woofy boof. We had partners in this hotel and the next morning I met him after he'd come out of his room and we went downstairs and had breakfast and everything and goes outside and his jeep's gone. Jesus Christ, I forget

02:00 his name, let's call him Terry. I said, "Terry, you're bloody jeep's gone." He said, "Ah shit." I said, "Jesus, you'll get into trouble for this, won't you mate? We'll go and pinch you one, we'll get one for you." He said "No, don't worry, I pinched that bastard anyhow." I thought "Jesus Christ, who's good and who's bad?" So he wasn't worried because he'd knocked it off from somewhere.

02:30 He said, "I'll get one". I'm thinking, "Poor bugger, he'll get into trouble here," but yeah. Well I can probably tell you a story about, the Americans love the Green Death, VB. And they'd give you anything for it.

03:00 This bloke was going home to Australia and he used to visit their mess, out at the airfield it was and he asked them if they wanted any Green Death and of course they all said, "Yeah, yeah, man, how much can you get us?"

03:30 And he said, "I can get you a pallet if you want it, a pallet of Green Death." I don't know how many is on a pallet, probably be, Christ how many cartons? Four dozen cartons, four dozen cartons, well a lot anyhow and remember we used to buy a carton of beer over there for two dollars seventy I think it was, two dollars seventy.

04:00 A forty ounce bottle of Bacardi was a dollar fifty and it mightn't have been, it might have been a dollar seventy, anyhow the tax was added to it and he came up with a figure, they gave him the money, hundreds of dollars, and about two days,

04:30 he told them it would take about three weeks to get there or something and he'd come out and drop it off and about three days later he hit the plane and came back to Australia. Changed his money at Tan Son Nhut, you changed your money, changed the money and came back to Australia. What a rotten mongrel thing to do.

05:00 **Yeah, that's pretty nasty.**

Won't tell you his name but used to be known as Jim. They were gullible. Everybody took them before they went and that was just one instance that I know because, yeah.

Now I've heard a bit about the American's having a bit of a drug habit over there, did you see much of that?

Yeah, especially in the,

05:30 especially at Saigon, because we lived in a hotel, several hotels but we lived in The Golden BEQ [Bachelors' Enlisted Quarters], what was that? BEQ, Battalion Enlisted Men's Quarters, no, BEQ, yeah, Battalion Enlisted Men's Quarters. We lived there with

06:00 the B 6s and above and it was mainly the Soul Brothers. If you happened to be going down to see bloody Sammy Davis and you knocked on his door and went in there might be, and I've done it myself and got a hell of a shock and back pedalled, there might be six or seven of them in there and they are absolutely

06:30 stoned. Christ knows what on, wouldn't have a clue but their eyes just went through you, like (demonstrates), there was hate, there was, Jesus, it was terrible. This particular night I bolted anyhow and never ever mentioned it to the bloke again but they just used to get in their rooms and get high. Or

they had bars where it was purely for Soul Brothers. If a

07:00 white Yank went in there they'd probably take him out the back and slit him with a knife or something. We could go in, they didn't mind Australians, the Soul Brothers, they quite liked us, but not their own, as in the white American. In those places they just used to go out of this world

07:30 and I've heard stories of them going on patrol with radios blaring and going on like a, I've never seen it. I really do tend not to believe it but it wouldn't surprise me but that's a three way answer to the one question, isn't it? It's fair, it wouldn't surprise me.

08:00 **What makes you say that though, given you knew them?**

Well if they were still a bit shot the next day or something, especially the Soul Brothers, they're so bloody casual. Like they didn't want to be there and they, "Shit, tomorrow's tomorrow, mightn't be here on Thursday."

08:30 And so they just either shoot up or puff up or whatever they might have been on. That's why I answered the question or answered the subject like that. It just wouldn't surprise me, but never seen it, don't know anybody that has and I know a lot of people have talked about it,

09:00 but never actually struck one that's been with them while they've been on patrol doing that, so yeah.

Now did that kind of swing both ways? Did the white Americans have their own bars or did they have as much trouble?

No, no they just had, they all had a mess back at the base where they could drink but,

09:30 and most of them probably drank back at the base but if they were in town, they were in uniform and they didn't like it. If they were in town no, they just had normal bars like, they didn't have a bar like "The Koala Club, that's ours, don't you bastards go in there, right?" Whereas the Soul Brothers they had Heather's Hoedown and you

10:00 wouldn't go to Heather's Hoedown, not for a million quid because you know what happened at Heather's Hoedown, you'd be surprised, but no, they just used a bar, the same as we did, there was hundreds of bars.

So was the Koala Club a real place?

No.

No? Just making that up?

Yeah. There was Lilly Too

10:30 and there was the Dew Drop Inn, oh Christ, yeah I think it was the Dew Drop Inn, but it was spelt as in dew on the ground, Dew Drop Inn.

11:00 There was the Lily Too, the big one on the corner, there was the Grand, which was absolutely black inside, no lights, full of smoke and they had café seats all around the walls of this particular room, huge room, and

11:30 we used to go in there on patrol. You couldn't see. We could hear them giggling and carrying on and that. It was unbelievable. It was as black as black.

What was the point of that bar?

I guess the point was nobody knew who was with whom, or something, that's all I could surmise. I wouldn't have gone in there for a drink off duty,

12:00 for love nor money. You'd have lung cancer after being there for half an hour, smoke of all different types, as in marijuana and, you'd walk out of there half pickled anyhow. I suppose that was just, yeah a way of doing it in peace

12:30 nobody could sort of worry.

So just with your unit of MPs in Vung Tau

That was our headquarters.

That was your headquarters, how many fellas were in?

At the one time in where?

In your unit I guess?

I think there was about fifty and then they'd change of course.

13:00 **And I guess what was your scope in terms of where were you laying down law and order and?**

What was, scope, okay. Our job was to control discipline outside unit lines. There was a unit there, a unit there,

13:30 another one there, and they go to town, they're ours. They're back there we had nothing to do with them, don't care what they do, oh unless there was a murder or something, okay, yeah, so it's the control of discipline outside unit lines, quite few words and as simple as that. And that meant everything, every sort of discipline whether it

14:00 be motor vehicles, theft, bloody murder, rape, yeah, whatever.

That's a question that I've got, was rape something that happened a bit? I ask that because I'm curious because of all the brothels that were there?

Yeah, rape did happen a bit but it was sort of,

14:30 you think of a paedophile, you think of an older person, well not so. There were a lot of young people who were paedophiles too and it happened to young girls. Mind you I mean they're working when they're about bloody fourteen but young girls were

15:00 the, they were the ones that would be involved in that sort of thing. Oh not unless the bloke took her money and she screamed rape or something or another and the blokes used to knock them off. If she went outside to the toilet or something or other, they'd put their hand under the pillow and take

15:30 the money and stick it in their pocket, don't worry about that. That's the Australian, American's probably too, I don't know but the Australians certainly did.

And how would you hear about the rapes if they were young Vietnamese girls? I mean how would news get to you?

Well by a parent, by a sister, by a brother,

16:00 verbally by someone if they thought it was an Australian. Yeah, communication was no problem at all and bearing in mind that we always had an interpreter with us who they knew worked with us, he

16:30 lived around and wherever and they knew he worked for the Australians and he was sort of the unofficial policeman in their little village or whatever. It would come different way. We had one interpreter in Saigon, Calvin Li, to this day I reckon he was a bloody

17:00 Viet Cong.

What makes you say that?

Oh I don't know. It's just a gut feeling. He just, he just didn't, I just couldn't trust him. I couldn't, he was very brainy, very smart and I reckon he was a plant. Our office in Saigon was at the

17:30 Free World, inside the Free World, we had a building inside there. No, the Free World was the FW, Free World Military, FWMAO, Free World Military something Organisation, A, Free World,

18:00 FWMAO, Free World Military Assistance Organisation, yeah and yeah our office was in there in Saigon. And I still to this day reckon that that bastard was a plant.

Cause that was a common problem in Vietnam?

How would you know.

18:30 I mean, Christ, bloody old and young women would be working in the fields, planting or harvesting or doing something with rice all day and go home to their mud hut and the next thing in the middle of the night they're following this little dog track up along through the hills and taking supplies to the

19:00 Viet Cong. The next day they're home again, they're in there, how could you tell? How could you tell?

Must have made it very difficult?

Frightening. I can remember I was with Brian Holden on this particular afternoon and we were coming back

19:30 from Hoa Long. There was a village there which was a C class village which was classified VC and let's say A was friendly, B was suspicious, C was VC and we were driving the Rover

20:00 back through this village this afternoon and the Rover's were all stripped down, no doors, no frame, no back flip down door or anything, they were all taken off. And you had, well depending on what you were doing you had sandbags on the floor in the back to stop any, if you ran over a bomb or something to try and keep some of the bloody

20:30 metal down or you had your M60 mounted in there. And we were coming back this afternoon and the bastards left off a Claymore and I've heard a Claymore and I've seen it being set off but until it's set off just after you've passed it and it's shaped like that and goes like that, there's the enemy.

- 21:00 We were the enemy, there it is and it goes (demonstrates), all these bloody hundreds, thousands, thousands, no, tens of hundreds of bloody ball bearing and they come shooting in the back of the bloody Land Rover and bloody Brian was driving and he rammed his foot on the accelerator
- 21:30 until it nearly went through the floor and it just seemed like we weren't going anywhere. It seemed like everything was in slow motion and anyhow we got through the village, thank Christ, and whether it was an accident or not, don't know because we used to go through the village as if it was nothing. We knew it was C but it didn't matter, just eyes open and listen and whatever. Anyway
- 22:00 we stopped up the bloody road and here's all these bashed in bits of ball bearings. And Brian said "I've got to get some of that mate, got to get some of that." I said, "What for?" He said, "I want to get some and put it in a matchbox and take it home and show," what was his wife's name, doesn't matter much anyhow, and anyhow he was going to take it home and show it to his wife and you can imagine the tale that would have gone with it.
- 22:30 "Oh I was out with Jimmy Oldfield one afternoon and oh boy they let off bloody Claymores, about twelve of them or something." Twelve Claymores mind you, we'd have been dead maggots.
- It might have been a bit of an obvious question but what would you have been doing just in a single Rover, just the two of you going through a C class village, that you knew was VC, wouldn't...?**
- 23:00 We knew it was VC and every other vehicle used to go through there and it was just left, viz a viz a VC village. It was just, "Yeah we know about it, so if anything happens around there we know they've probably got a tunnel underneath there, we know where to look, we know where to go. No good of uprooting it now and blowing everything up because they'll only go somewhere else. Better to leave them where they were, where you knew where they were.
- 23:30 **So you knew where they were but they didn't?**
- Well whether they knew that our side knew that they were there I don't know. They probably did but it suited them to stay there but in a vehicle on our own, we probably would have been out along the Long Hais and we used to do
- 24:00 what they called "show the flag". Christ they made up this big metal sign, as wide as the Land Rover, about that deep, built up on a special frame, behind the driver and the passenger, all written in Gook, in red writing, in Gook, on a white background and it
- 24:30 was a come join us bloody sign. They had a special name for it, I forget it now. See a lot of them came over from
- 25:00 being a VC to well being in the regular ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam] forces. This sign was to do that and it was the greatest load of bullshit that I've ever had the displeasure to be in the Land Rover when it was there. It stuck out like dog's nuts, it depended what sort of dog it was, but anyhow. It just,
- 25:30 Christ you could have seen it bloody thirty mile away, how about three? Two, two mile away. It drew the crabs.
- Yeah, it would, wouldn't it? Make you a bit of a prime target I would think?**
- Now if that's why they left off the bloody Claymore, a Claymore, that particular afternoon or whether it was just a mistake, kids mucking around and everything, I don't know
- 26:00 but gave us a bit of a fright for a while anyhow.
- Now given your scope of duties as an MP, did you at any stage go out into the field on operations or a part of operations?**
- Yeah, we went out on what were called tail patrols, it's your tactical
- 26:30 area of responsibility. Everybody had an area of responsibility and we used to go out in the day time through the hills, sand hills, especially in Vung Tau because you could have got up to the camp within ten metres without anybody seeing you and we used to go out there and do tail patrols out there.
- 27:00 Every unit did its own, whether you were a grunt or a bloody artillery man, whatever.
- And did you engage with enemy on any of those patrols?**
- I never engaged the enemy on any tail patrols but
- 27:30 oh yeah, but we, I told you before didn't I, yeah but we had a few yippy shoots, so be it.
- You told me about that one yippy shoot with the VC girl but was that,**
- 28:00 **I mean the way you mention it then it sounds like something you might sign up for in an afternoon, like something might be happening or was it, I guess what I'm trying to**

understand is how would the yippy shoots come about? Would it just be something that would happen in the moment or would people,

28:30 **would somebody catch wind of some VC out in the scrub somewhere and?**

No, it would be something that happened on the spur of the moment. It would be something (TAPE STOPS)

29:00 **Alright, as an MP out on the lines what was the most common mischief that fellows would get up to and you'd have to fish them out of?**

Oh probably getting drunk and the girls would pinch their money and vice versa. The girls wouldn't get drunk, they

29:30 never get drunk at all but the guys would. I know I've got a note in my note book there now, which was my original note book from Vietnam. We had to hand them in when we came home. I wrote another one out and kept the original, just for a couple of reasons.

30:00 I know there's an incident in there now in that book where this guy stole the money off the girl, we went back to the back beach I think it was and he was as drunk as a skunk and

30:30 he'd come home and just slipped it in his pillowslip, first place you'd look. There it was, gave it back to the girl and I don't even think she made a complaint. I'll find it afterwards, it's written in the book. But those were the things, booze, booze.

I know during World War II there's a number of stories of fellas getting on the turps and end

31:00 **up smashing up a variety of pubs and things, did that sort of thing happen as well?**

Oh well on Christmas Day, first of all lets go back to the direct question you asked, yes, yeah, they used to loose

31:30 their cool and get really drunk and a bar stool might get thrown through a glass background where the bottles are or something.

I guess we're talking about fights and brawls too really?

Yeah, there were a few of them but not on a big scale because they got it pretty easy, they knew they got

32:00 it pretty bloody easy so they didn't muck up too much. If they got cranky they'd wreck a place in two bloody minutes and then it would be arbitrating between how much compensation mamasam wanted and what they had to pay.

Which is where you suddenly become a soldier's friend?

32:30 That's right, exactly, for three weeks and then he hates you because he needed have paid that much and the bloody MPs were there, bloody pigs.

What were I guess some of the other things that they would actually come to you for help for?

Oh they'd go and change their money at the Indian's bloody

33:00 place and he would rob them and wouldn't give them money or a kid in the street would change money for them and he had a note on the outside with a stack of paper on the inside with a rubber band around it and a quick slight of hand they got robbed. I got done, bastards, I changed it once, I changed it once on the street. I

33:30 always used to use the Indian because I used to get stacks more from him than the going rate and this bloody kid on the street, this bloody night, I don't know what I would have had and he counted the money and it's there, it was there, the bastard was like a magician. I'm watching it, you little bastard,

34:00 don't you rob me and round with the rubber band, take that, thank you very much and away he went and I went, "Shit, I've been done." Opened her up, cut up newspaper and one note on the outside, yeah. I, personally, Mr Smartarse Oldfield got robbed and I thought I knew everything.

34:30 **Now with fellows I guess you had to bring back out of trouble, to keep them out of trouble, you had a cell or prison sort of set up on base did you?**

Oh we had a jail, a proper jail.

So how did that, it might sound like an obvious question but how did it actually operate? How large was the thing?

35:00 It operated independently to our company, it was separately run. What I mean independently is that the jail had a commander. His OC [Officer Commanding] was my OC but it was still,

- 35:30 it was under command of the local administration. It was there to hold say if someone from 1RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] gave a bloke seven days jail for whatever he did, they'd bring him up and they'd take over in jail, sign him up and give him his gear, take his other gear away, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. It was run exactly as a jail, it was, it was
- 36:00 1 Corrective Military Establishment and it was the only jail that's been, that we've only had. People from Perth, to North Queensland if they went to jail in the army, they went to 1 MCE, which was in Sydney. When we
- 36:30 went over to Vietnam they raised two 2 MCE, the Second Military Corrective Establishment, and that's exactly what it was, just another jail run on the some lines, PT [Physical Training], running up and down on the spot for bloody hour and everything they do in
- 37:00 jail. And I have a slight recollection that they had to have at least seventy two hours before they could be accepted. See if you give a bloke in the army, he's done wrong, his OC says, "Right, three days,"
- 37:30 that starts from right then, right that bloody moment. So that might be in the morning, so he's fiddling around, getting his gear ready, doing this, doing that, he's in jail but he's not. They take him there that afternoon, it's four o'clock in the afternoon, they accept him, "How long has he got?" "Three days." "Well he already done three parts of a day," so
- 38:00 he only stops in there a couple of days, but if they change it to hours as in forty eight hours, seventy two hours, whatever, a hundred and sixty eight hours, the time doesn't start until the moment he walks through the gate of that corrective establishment. See some of the bloody silly OCs they didn't know, they used to give them so many days and
- 38:30 the Digger would get could get away with doing a day at least, still in camp.

And it all came down to whether the OC said...

Days or hours, yeah, very technical but that's what it was.

That's incredible.

Days or hours, so if he wanted him locked up for a week he gave him a hundred and sixty eight hours and he did a week,

- 39:00 from the moment he was there until the moment a hundred and sixty eight hours was up and he went out the gate and he was in his own time then, or in the unit's time. But if it was hours that meant he was out, if it was days that meant his last day was Tuesday, so on Tuesday morning they'd get rid of him, send him back to the thingo, so he gains a day there too.

So you could actually shorten it to five if you were cluey enough?

- 39:30 Yeah I mean wasting time, you didn't waste time at the MCE but you could waste time at your unit, yeah.

Okay Jim, we're going to have to stop there and change tapes again.

Tape 7

- 00:32 **Did you come across some interesting character types in your platoon in Vietnam?**

Yeah, we had one bloke there who was very conscious of germs. He hated germs. Like if he went into a kitchen and saw a fly, somewhere over there and the food was there, and it was all stainless steel,

- 01:00 he'd chase the fly to try and kill it. His favourite saying was, "Fuck me dead, fuck me dead," and anywhere there was germs and it didn't matter where you were or who you were with or whether there was Princess Diana with you, Bobby Hunter would say, "Fuck me dead, fuck me dead, fuck me dead, look at that, germs, germs, germs, fuck me dead, fuck me dead," and he'd be brushing himself

- 01:30 and of course his nickname was Fuck Me Dead. Yeah that's the guy, what a question to ask, Robert J Hunter, Fuck Me Dead.

Did he survive?

Yeah, he survived. God knows where he is now? I saw him last when they gave us that welcome home. He was still the same then, "Oh Jimmy Oldfield, fuck me

- 02:00 dead, how you going mate? Fuck me dead, haven't seen you for years mate. Oh gee mate, fuck me dead, it's good to see you mate." It was part of his ordinary speech that. Yeah, Bob Hunter, yeah he was one, he was a top old body.

- 02:30 We had a couple of horrible liars, they used to tell terrible tales. One guy called Dave Wills, used to write home to his, no, no, no, yeah, he used to right home to his wife and he'd burn cigarette holes through the paper and say, "That was close, I just had a couple of shots come into the end of the building where I was." Mind you, she was mad enough to
- 03:00 believe him, but the same bloke he used to use those little voice tapes that we had. Used to have little voice tapes, about thirty minutes I think they were and in the hut that we were in, he was in the same one as me, just down the bottom of it was the range. You'd get, the noise was bloody unreal and he used to,
- 03:30 he used to set his tape deck going and talk to his wife when the range was going and say "hang on love, I've got to, oh."

Was he joking though?

Well no, he was fair dinkum.

He was trying to be serious?

He was bullshitting to her, like saying, "Listen to the danger I'm in, see how close they are."

- 04:00 She gets that voice tape at home, she puts it on, (demonstrates noises she hears) and Dave tells her, "They're getting close now, I think we'll drive them back though, no problems." Imagine what she thought? She left him afterwards when he got home.

I bet.

No wonder.

But it's not like he needed to do that, did he? I mean Vietnam, as you rightly said you didn't know where your enemy was anyway.

- 04:30 I mean he was just an idiot who had to make it good for his wife or something, I don't know. We had another bloke called Brian Holden. Brian got "sinus", same bloke, and he was telling a
- 05:00 group of blokes there one day that he went up to Black Hawk, up the top and a jet, no it was in a Phantom, a Phantom jet, he talked the bloke into giving him a lift back to Australia so he could see Barbara, was her name, so he could see Barbara. He'd already written to Barbara and told her that he'd be flying over the house at three o'clock in the afternoon, or whatever, this is fair dinkum.
- 05:30 And I mean it's not fair dinkum but it's fair dinkum, this is what he told us, and him and the navigator and the pilot got in the jet. Now a Phantom only takes two, that's it and they're squeezed in there too, but never the less, he was in there, and they came up here, to Heatley, over the top of the house, the pilot waggled the wings, Barbara stood in the shirt with a shirt or something and waved
- 06:00 to them. She'd seen them, turned around, back and they landed back in Vietnam sometime that afternoon sometime. They go like this (demonstrates), got to be a wanker, I mean, Jesus, but harmless lies he used to tell. And they were, they were harmless, but yeah. Another one of his was
- 06:30 there was big floods, it must have been, was it? Yeah, the floods were on, big floods on. Everybody was short of food, so he volunteered to go up in the plane and parachute in with some food, wherever it was. So he jumps out of this bloody plane, bag of spuds under this arm and something under this arm,
- 07:00 and where do you think I landed? Have a guess?

In Barbara's backyard?

No, in the potato field. He was taking them potatoes and he landed in a potato field. I mean it was all bullshit, it was lies.

Did anyone ever believe him though?

No, he was a harmless poor bugger. They used to really egg him on and sort of see

- 07:30 what the biggest one you could get out of him, but I reckon that one about wagging the bloody wings was the best I'd heard, Jesus Christ.

After the Vietnam War we have heard stories about some men telling their wives, their spouses that they went to Vietnam, and they didn't.

Say that again.

We heard that after Vietnam,

- 08:00 **like in the Eighties, there'd be some men in society that would pretend that they went to Vietnam, and they actually hadn't gone.**

You said they told their spouse? Told their wife?

Yeah, they even told their.

But their wives would know if they'd been away, wouldn't they?

Well no, this is like

They didn't know them at this stage?

Yeah, they went in the late sixties, seventies and it's a bit like the men that you were saying that would dress up in the army gear

08:30 **to say that they in the army. And I mean I suppose they seemed quite harmless to a certain extent, but did you come across people who really had lost the plot?**

Well if they hadn't of been to Vietnam they wouldn't have lost the plot, would they?

09:00 **No, I think.**

Yeah I came across people that lost the plot. I lost the plot. My saviour was staying in the army. I started off when I came home and there was no wife, or kids, well she was there but a few days later.

09:30 Then when I got a posting up here a few weeks later, she found out somehow, one of her spies and they, I think Andy and I got here on the Monday, or the Tuesday, and she'd left on the Sunday, or the Monday, anyhow, on the bus

10:00 for Sydney, or to where her mother lived. I lost the plot there. I had many little sessions with, it was so embarrassing but anyhow,

10:30 I had to go to trick cyclists, like they were running out of fashion and all out of money. It didn't do me any good but yeah, I didn't know my wife, as in Helen, I didn't know her then, thank God.

Jim, when you said you

11:00 **lost the plot, do you mean that you just went crazy? You were just so angry at her that you went like a bull in a china shop?**

Yeah, that as well as, yeah I was very, very, very, very angry. I could have killed her, there's no doubt about that but I

11:30 also went mad. I said to my, one of my psychiatrists, who doesn't practise now, but however he was the medical officer with ADRA [?] when they were over in Vietnam, which was the same time that I was over there

12:00 and I was having a pretty hard time in myself and I said to him, "How come I'm mad and you're not? We both went over there at the same time, both seen the same things, both done the same things, more or less?" And he said, "What makes you think I won't go mad?"

12:30 "I don't know, bugger if I know, don't know." And he said, "Well there you go, it takes different times, different things to set it off, different memories." Memories are the worst bloody things,

13:00 bloody flashbacks, Jesus Christ. Yeah, I and what I think saved me, I stayed in the army and I had my security blanket around me, my family.

13:30 When I got out of the army, that's when I lost the plot and I had no little blanket to put over my shoulder and that took a bit of pulling out of.

How did you get out of it?

14:00 Oh by slowing down and medication and a good wife. Yeah, probably that way I suppose.

14:30 I mean I'll probably go and have a few thoughts about what we've spoken about today and I'll certainly think of other things that happened when you've gone and all this sort of thing. It will, I'll

15:00 probably have a couple of big scotches tonight or something, but there's plenty like me around the ridges.

I was going to say that it seems like probably to me one of the most difficult jobs or the most difficult job to try to keep

15:30 **men in line in a crazy atmosphere. It's like the environment is keen on wearing you down in every which way?**

Well that's why you've got to have the expertise. You've got to have, haven't got to know the person but you've got to know the

16:00 situation. We had a lot of MPs who were bloody useless because all they wanted to do was grab them and throw them in the jail or something. Yeah, you see,

- 16:30 that's why, I mean I gave bloody, I was a taxi driver when I was there. I gave bloody hundreds of them rides home from in Vung Tau, certainly not Nui Dat or Saigon. I'd put them in the back and let them off at the gate and, "This bloke is right mate, just going back to his unit," and turn back into town. After all we,
- 17:00 and I think you said it a while ago, or someone, we are the soldiers' policemen. That's what we are and that's why our corps was raised. Even though that thing by Charles the First was it? Yeah, said, "Those that ride from garrison to garrison, cannot be loved by all," well that's
- 17:30 a fact too, but if you can't hack that, don't take the job.
- It strikes me that you were kind of like this country policeman. You know the country policeman that**
- Yeah, if you like, yeah.
- would give the young blokes a warning and they wouldn't always be put in the lock up or anything.**
- 18:00 No, that's right, they've got a job to do and that and we're talking about over there now in the funny country, as they call it, yeah you've got to be like a country cop, that's what it's like, yeah.
- Maybe Gloucester followed you to Vietnam in some small way?**
- 18:30 I don't know, I hope old Boozer didn't follow me there anyhow.
- Tell us about these two US soldiers, were they? With grenades?**
- Yeah, they were soldiers, yeah. They were at the PMO, I was on joint patrol and they were AWOL.
- 19:00 They were absent without leave. One of them the American patrols picked them up and bought them into the PMO and anybody that came to the PMO they had a, do you know what a Conex is? Well it's a big steel container. You load the container, lock the door, well they had a
- 19:30 Conex there, it was about five foot six tall I suppose, and they just oxy acetylened out some spaces, for some bars and let a bit of air in and that was their lock up at the PMO. It was unbelievable but they didn't leave them there for days at a time because shit, it would have killed them, it was that bloody hot. Anyway these two blokes come there and
- 20:00 I don't know and a bloody row over getting in the Conex and one of them put his hand inside his shirt and said, "I've got a M26 here and I'll blow you mother fuckers to hell if you come around me." I thought, "I think I might move behind the wall a bit here," and
- 20:30 the younger of the blokes of the Americans, none of them was real young, he said, "Stop mucking around, if you've got a grenade, give it to me and it will go easier on you." And the other bloke put his hand inside his shirt too and I can't remember whether he had a grenade or whether he was bullshitting. I think he might have been bullshitting but the other bloke
- 21:00 pulled the grenade out and pulled the pin. The pin just comes out like that and there's the grenade and there's the handle down there and the spring. You let that go, it goes (demonstrates), the grenade is armed, four seconds, it goes off. The pin's
- 21:30 out, there's the grenade and all he's doing is holding this handle and he yelled out something else anyhow, "Bloody MP's," or whatever, and he took off. This was at Vung Tau, he took off and he went out the PMO, which was on a corner, went around to
- 22:00 the right and a couple of blokes followed him around there and one of the other blokes and myself went this way. And he went round the corner and there was a vacant bloke there and we thought he might get in there or something. He jumped the fence, came straight across this bloody bloke, cause we could see the blokes chasing him and
- 22:30 we are there. Get the old nine mill out, only mine was going (demonstrates) and just about, not quite, but close was going like that and holding the bastard and it was, "Take it off him, take it off him," and bloody mayhem, it was bloody unreal. And bloody Gooks started coming from everywhere and I thought, "Oh Jesus Christ, stuff him."
- 23:00 So anyhow I got the grenade. To this day, funny ha-ha, I reckon my fingerprints will still be imprinted in where I got that handle and made sure it was held down on the grenade so it couldn't spring out, spring loaded as I told you. They grabbed this bloke, took him back around the corner the way
- 23:30 that we'd come, to the PMO and they bashed him, and they bashed and bashed and bashed and bashed and bashed and it wasn't my kettle of fish, even with the grenade. I gave the grenade to, the top sergeant I think, old Vince,
- 24:00 yeah and got rid of the grenade. EOD was there by this time. That's Explosive Ordnance Disposal and

they knew what to do with the grenade and everything. They bashed this bloke so much they had to take him out to the hospital at the airfield and

24:30 where the other bloke was, I don't know. It's gone from my memory, don't know what happened there.

How did you get the grenade Jim?

Took it off him.

Well I know, but did some other bloke hold him down or something and you just grabbed it or?

No, I think maybe he might have changed his mind

25:00 or I was lucky, one of the two. I just walked right up to him and, "Come on, don't be a fool," and in the same movement and he didn't attempt to and remember everybody's got weapons trained on him by this time of course. Maybe I'd like to think that he thought he'd overstepped the mark

25:30 in the first place and he was ready to take the punishment. Not the punishment he got but the punishment. Anyhow they had to take him to hospital and it comes time to knock off and I go home, as in back to our base, and there was a bit of

26:00 crap hit the fan when they found out this bloke was bashed around so much. Anyhow they made their excuses, whatever it was and a couple of days later I got a, I got called into the OC, got marched into the OC. And he said, "Corporal Oldfield, I believe on the afternoon of the such and such and such and such you were..."

26:30 "Yes sir, right sir." "Did you make any note of this?" "Yes sir, it's in my notebook, there it is there." He said, "Who else did you tell?" I said, "I told my patrol supervisor, the RSM," and he said, "Well why wasn't I told?" And I said, "It's not my job to tell you sir, I mean it's what you've got a bloody RSM for,"

27:00 only I said it in kinder words than that and the next thing he stood up and he said, "I have a letter here from Colonel Schmidt," and I would imagine S C H M I D T was the way he pronounced it, "commending you for your

27:30 work with the joint patrol the other day out at dah, dah, dah." And he said, "This is what I think of it," and tore it up and threw it in the bloody bin and I thought, "You old prick." And he said, "I want to be informed of everything that goes on in this unit," and I thought, "No answer here." He said, "Right, march him out RSM," and

28:00 I don't know what happened between them, who got into it but my nice little letter from Colonel Schmidt, instead of having a little thing pinned on me got thrown in the bloody rubbish bin. Yeah, was I scared? Bloody oath.

By all accounts it sounds as if there was a bit of madness in everyone over there, if you know what I mean? The place got to you?

Well these things happen yeah, of course.

28:30 I mean it wasn't an easy place to live. I don't want to turn this into a wary but you could have been rocketed during the night, anything. You lived from today until tomorrow. That's probably a bit too much really but

29:00 you counted the days before you came home anyhow because we used to have a very funny calendar. Have you seen them, have you?

No, I've heard of this calendar I think of the girl, the girls?

Yeah, the girl (demonstrates) sort of side on and wherever the numbers start I can't remember but it goes three hundred and sixty five and follows around and goes over the old boob and that and then three hundred and sixty three,

29:30 three hundred and sixty four, three hundred and sixty five is right in the (demonstrates) and everybody had those. I don't know what happened to the poor buggers that didn't spend twelve months over there. They never reached it.

That's alright. They might have only got as far as the shoulders.

Yeah, well some came home in eight months and some in ten months and some in six months. One bloke I know spent about four weeks over there. We had

30:00 two Federal Police seconded to us over there and one of them lasted about two weeks and he came home. The other bloke stopped about two and a half years. He didn't want to come home, Frank.

Jim, what about entertainers? Were you there when

30:30 **any entertainers came over?**

Yeah.

Who came over in the time you were there?

Well believe it or not there was a lady who I took to my room for a drink afterwards, and that's all it turned out to be, her name was Marlene and her last name was Hoare. How terrible. I would have changed my name if I'd have been a woman. And she came over with the group. She was the like,

31:00 what's that old duck that went over a few times? Not Little Pattie but. Hang on, was I there when Little Pattie went over? I didn't see Little Pattie but I think I was there when she went over. Who's the other one that plays on the TV, Wandin Valley, okay? She's a pretty old sheila now. She plays a copper's wife.

31:30 **Oh on A Country Practice?**

Yes.

I can't remember her name but I know who you're talking about.

Lorrae.

Lorrae Desmond.

Lorrae Desmond?

That's it.

That's it yeah. She went over a few times and there was Marlene and about another three or four girls with her and

32:00 there was a bloke, one bloke. They used to have their concert at Nui Dat right on the end of Luscombe Field it was called. Luscombe was the airstrip down in that bit of a valley and they had a bit of a stage there and all the troops would get out, like that. Sort of a little bit like an amphitheatre but

32:30 only a little bit and oh they just absolutely adored them, they loved them. Nothing would have ever have gone wrong because they loved them so much for going over there and cause there was no entertainment except for the Dabto Dogs and the Waylong Hop but they weren't very good.

33:00 **So were you in charge then of managing the behaviour of the troops when the entertainers would perform?**

If we were rostered for that particular duty, yeah, yeah. That was one of our jobs yeah. We did VIP escorts and all that sort of thing, they were VIPs. If the Chief of the Defence Force had come over

33:30 well then we would escort him for wherever to wherever. And the same with the entertainers, they were classified VIP. They would come in at Tan Son Nhut airport, a huge airport. More traffic through there than, is it Los Angeles?

34:00 Which is the biggest airport in the world as far as traffic, Los Angeles?

Rome?

Rome? I thought it was Los Angeles, whatever, anyhow there was more traffic at Tan Son Nhut during that time. There was hundreds of planes, every bloody hour that came in and went out. They came underneath each other and over each other and oh my God.

34:30 It was nice to watch from the ground when you saw what the air traffic controllers had to do.

But the boys were well behaved, you say?

Oh yeah, perfect, perfect. At Nui Dat you've got no grog, two cans per man per day, perhaps. So a bloke that didn't drink he sold his to a

35:00 bloke that did and I don't know why they sold them because they had nothing to do with the money, couldn't spend it anywhere. Oh you could buy stuff from the canteen and send home, yeah, yeah. No, they were perfectly well behaved. There was no, if anybody had of misbehaved they would have, their own people would have got them first before we had any chance of getting anywhere near them because

35:30 if the entertainment had of been stopped by the behaviour of a certain group of people well I don't know what would have happened, who knows, who knows.

Were you ever in a situation where you had to pull up a friend of yours?

36:00 No. Are we talking where now? Are we talking policeman ordinary, or policeman over there?

Over there.

No, no.

36:30 **Although do you have an incident over here where you were still in the army and that happened?**

Oh yeah, I've got, I stopped in the army another bloody twenty years since I went over there. Yeah, I've had people that I've known that I've had to, let's say we did a speed check with our radar. We use the same radar as the police do

37:00 and yeah, I've often said, "You owe me one," but so what, that's nothing.

This might seem like a trivial question but can you tell us what kind of food you ate over there?

Yeah, we ate eggs which had been kept in

37:30 ether. You're right, you couldn't eat them. All eggs were packed somehow and I don't know why ether, but ether and they smelt like ether, it tasted like ether and once you'd had your first one you never had another one the whole time you were there, never. Yes, at Vung Tau

38:00 we ate normal fresh rations, locally bought, purchased. There would be some ration packs substituted in them like maybe tinned beans and that sort of stuff, tinned beans as in baked beans.

38:30 They didn't offer anything at Vung Tau, nothing at all. In Nui Dat there was a little mess right up, about three hundred yards from about where we were and I'm not sure whether any of us ever went up there. We

39:00 used to live off bloody ration packs in my time there anyhow. I think I went there about October and left sometime in January to go to Saigon. In Saigon you had an allowance for your hotel and you had to pay for

39:30 your hotel. They gave you an allowance for food and most of us lived on toasted cheese sandwiches. Well they had muckarm food and they had muckarm stalls all around there with beautiful white bread and beautiful cooked corned beef and beautiful

40:00 big green blowflies and I used to call them, and everybody else, they had a nickname of being known as "hepo", as in hepatitis, hepo rolls, you could have. It makes me feel hungry thinking about them now, not the blowflies. But I never had one hepo roll or anything out of any of those muckarm stalls the whole time I was there, not a thing.

40:30 That's either in, well there's none in Nui Dat because it was closed off but either in Vung Tau or in Saigon, not a one. Some blokes used to eat there, yeah blokes used to bloody chomp them down and nothing ever happened to them, bastards. But I would have got it, I would have got hepatitis for sure.

Right we'll swap tapes Jim.

Tape 8

00:42 **Jim this morning we were talking about women in the services and a little bit about your experiences with that but were there many women over there doing that when you were over there in Vietnam?**

Yeah, we had nursing staff.

01:00 **And how did they sort of?**

Oh they were great and any nurse in my book is worth a million dollars a day, forget about whether they're army or anything else. I've been in hospital quite a lot the last few years and for some periods of time and nurses are angels.

01:30 The crap they've got to put up with, imagine me there, not sick and laying in bed, can you imagine what the poor bastards have to put up with. When I was there we had, what was her name? Kelly, Pam Kelly, that was one there. We had another red headed one.

02:00 I forget her name but we got to know them sort of, we had an officers quiet room it was called, like our unit and MPs being MPs instead of two cans per man per day perhaps, they probably got two cartons per man per day perhaps and that's just the

02:30 way it works out and they used to come up there for some parties. That was our strong point. If you were on duty on the strong point you can look straight into the officers quiet room and gee we saw some funny sights. We really did.

Such as?

Inebriated people

03:00 doing things they probably wouldn't have done if they weren't inebriated. Major Kelly was still in the

army when I was posted to Albury Wodonga. I met her again and

- 03:30 she was still the same Pam Kelly. She was Ma'am outside to me when people were around but she was Pam Kelly and this particular day the area commander rang me up and said, "I want you to go out and pick up Major Kelly, put her in the back of the ute," that's the patrol wagon, which was full of dust and everything else, "in the back of ute and have her here at exactly ten o'clock
- 04:00 for morning tea." I said, "Sounds like a bit of a joke going on sir, am I in on this or what? Do I get told?" He said, "You can handle it Oldfield, have her here at ten o'clock." Okay, now worries so she was at Bonegilla out at the hospitals and I drives out to Bonegilla and went and saw her and said, "Do you know why I'm
- 04:30 here?" And she said, "Mr Oldfield, I've got no idea." And I said, "Because the Area Commander just rang me," and she went, "Oh God..." "rang me and said I've got to put you in the back of our patrol wagon and have you down there at the tea room at ten o'clock for morning tea because he's got some rock cakes for morning
- 05:00 tea." You know the ones with the big, what do you call that fruit? Made of grapes, sultanas and the little ones?

Raisins?

Raisins and all the little bunches of them and I suppose all good cooks. She said, "I think I'll get in the front," and I said "ah, ah,

- 05:30 sorry, area commander bigger than you," and she said, "The bastard," so she gets in the back. I took her down there and got there at ten o'clock, she gets out, "Thanks officer." "Thank you ma'am," and she goes in anyhow. I heard the next day old, the area commander, what's his bloody name? He was an engineer, real bloody joker he was.
- 06:00 Anyhow he gets them in there and he said, "I told you people the other day that I would have rock cakes for morning tea on," lets say it was Monday, "on Monday and here they are," and off with the tea towel and tray of bloody beautiful rock cakes, bloody beauties. He picks one up and (demonstrates)
- 06:30 there's a rock. He got the bloody cook to cook these rock cakes with rocks in them, as in stone rocks. That's what he bought her down for to have these bloody rock cakes so she wouldn't miss out on it. Oh God, he was a, that's the sort of fun that goes on in the army when they're not
- 07:00 fighting a war. You love them, you've got to love them. Anyhow nurses, yes, lot of good group, a good group of nurses. There was a lot of American girls over there also in Saigon when I was there. They worked for Shell, Shell Oil Company and I
- 07:30 don't know what the setup is or how or why it is so big in Saigon but it was. Big tankers going in and out and don't know what the setup but quite a few American girls. A few at the Embassy.

Any fraternising between the Australian fellas and the American girls?

Yeah, yeah, quite a bit as a matter

- 08:00 of fact. A couple of very near marriages out of it, it didn't but only because one of them was married anyhow, one of the blokes but they were good. They used to go to the EOD mess with us, the American EOD mess,
- 08:30 who had a, they built themselves a fantastic club, absolutely beautiful. It was, this is in the middle of a bloody war zone and here's this, you'd go up to the door and it was all press button entrance. You'd put your code
- 09:00 in. They had everything there, everything, and a top mob of blokes. Considering what they did, they had a bit of a bugger of a job, exploding unexploded ordinance.

- 09:30 **Jim over the time that you were in Vietnam what do you think was the toughest thing about being an MP over there within the range of things you had to do?**

Toughest thing about being an MP?

- 10:00 Well I can't give you an answer on that, nothing. Toughest thing?

That's fair enough.

Possibly the most important thing was going to a briefing of an afternoon from a commander of the Task Force at

- 10:30 Nui Dat and making sure you had everything written down and everything was correct for when you went back and debriefed at your unit, but that's not sort of what the question was. No.

Took it on the chin and got on with it?

Yeah, if you don't want to be something, don't be it.

Yeah.

It's like buying petrol or diesel.

11:00 I'm buying diesel for the car, I'm not going to drive over to South Townsville, twenty kilometres because it's two cents a litre bloody cheaper. If you can't afford it buy a different bloody car. That might sound a bit smart arse too, but it's not. You don't hang around for too long, so you might as well make the best of

11:30 it while you can.

Was I right to believe there was one occasion at Nui Dat where a fella kind of went a bit gun crazy and shot a bunch of people Christmas Day?

That's right, Christmas Day, 1970. About

12:00 half past one, two o'clock in the afternoon. We'd been put on the dry, we'd been told just not to drink on Christmas Day by our boss at Nui Dat. Everything was going nice and smoothly, no problems, everybody had their

12:30 Christmas dinner and then this guy decided to put his SLR outside his tent, lean it on a star picket and point it into the building, what was the area sergeants' mess, so it means it was full of sergeants and WOs [Warrant Officer].

13:00 He fired off several rounds. One person he shot,

13:30 Galloway, Galloway, oh gee, anyhow it doesn't matter, this bloke the round hit the concrete and as you can imagine rough concrete over there,

14:00 lay it down, okay. It just dislodged a pebble and the pebble went up and shot through his heart. The actual round didn't kill him or go anywhere near him but the pebble that was dislodged from the floor went through him. And as a result and how we know that of course is as a result of everybody went over and formed a barrier for

14:30 want of a better word, to protect the cream, the scene of the cream. Meanwhile some bloke had jumped out the window, raced up and tackled this character, still with the SLR and took it off him and yeah, they grabbed him anyhow.

15:00 Farraday was the bloke's name, a Tasmanian. Only a young baby fat kid he was, only a boy, young, young boy. I think he had a bit to drink and he just went birko, decided "this will do" and I don't think he particularly aimed at anybody. He just aimed at inside which was the same bloody

15:30 thing. Galvin, Galvin was the bloke killed by the pebble. My working partner, Dennis Horn, and myself then got in the chopper and we had our

16:00 M16, mine in this hand, Dennis' obviously in the other, this bloke handcuffed to me here, other side to Dennis, right there, no doors on any helicopters, they were all, they weren't there. They reckon the, what do you call it?

16:30 The centrocinal force will keep you in, bullshit. We were taking him down to the jail, or to the hospital first and then to the jail where the main jail was at Vung Tau. That bastard and he was a big lump of a bloke, he struggled the whole bloody time and I'm trying to hold onto my bloody rifle and trying

17:00 to hold onto the bar that's on the front there and stopping this mongrel from going out because I wasn't going with him and Dennis is pulling back and it was the most frightening trip.

He's trying to jump out of the helicopter?

Yeah, well I imagine he was, he certainly wasn't trying to push himself backwards and it was

17:30 (demonstrates). It didn't take us long to get down there but by Jesus when we landed on that bloody pad and they came racing out, and they bought a bloody stretcher out to put him on. They took him and we went back up there. I've been frightened a few times

18:00 when I think of it now. I generally say, "Oh no, I've never been frightened of anything really," but that's bullshit. I was a bit scared that day and Dennis was because he was pretty white. Dennis missed his wife and kids when he was over there and we were working in Saigon together, working as a team,

18:30 and he said to me one night, "Mate I can't stand this, I've got to go home and see Marion." Marion was his wife, "and Christie," his little girl. He said, "I've got to see them." I said, "How are you going to do it?" He said, "Don't worry about it, if anybody asks you I had a crook knee last night." I said, "Okay," and thought, "He won't shoot

19:00 himself in the knee surely, he's not that bloody stupid." But he must have got in that room with

whatever, a magazine will do, and bashed and bashed and bashed and bashed and bashed and bashed his knee until it became so big and so bad they actually medivaced him home to bloody Australia, the bastard. After me having to get a new partner,

19:30 he got off early. Anyhow he came home and Marion didn't open him with too open arms and about five years later they'd split. He drove under a flat, townhouse probably, garage under it, walked in

20:00 through the garage, door all there, left the car running and carked it. Stone cold bloody dead, he couldn't stand losing his kids. He had a son, he had a son by then.

How did you deal with it Jim going back to

20:30 **Vietnam for the last six months after everything had happened when you came back on leave, or came to Australia on leave?**

No, nothing happened when I came home on leave. It was when I came back to stay, when I came back to home.

Oh my mistake, sorry.

Leave was no problems, okay? So there was no problems there.

Were many of the fellas getting "Dear

21:00 **John" letters when they were over there?**

Quite a few, quite a few. Used to shake them up a fair bit too, be proud. Many a tear was shed, for which they were wrongly embarrassed about

21:30 I guess.

Why would they be embarrassed?

Come on Chris, a bloke's a bloke isn't he? I mean, shit, are you going to cry over a woman? No, I don't mean.

I know what you mean.

Tell me somebody who hasn't cried over a woman.

22:00 Yeah, but big boys don't cry, do they? Unless they're on their own somewhere.

I guess that was more that I was getting too. We've heard so much and you see it on all these American films about Vietnam and even non American films about Vietnam, just the craziness of the whole thing and the craziness of the whole place and how it

22:30 **affected everybody, but for somebody that was there what about it for you, was what was the reason for that craziness? Or what was it about the place that kind of made it that way do you think, if that was your experience I mean?**

Probably the heat.

23:00 In Darwin they had "mango madness". What is it? Over there you've got a multitude of things, the heat, never knowing when or whatever.

23:30 If you've had a family upset maybe you're worrying all the time about what's going on there or something or other, there'd be a million things, a million things. But if ever you want to see something to tell you that what Vietnam is not like get that movie

24:00 Apocalypse Now, have you seen it?

Yeah.

Well that's what it wasn't like, bloody hell. That was would have to be the biggest load of, don't worry I've got the bloody thing here, I've bought it, wanting to see what it was like, but shit.

24:30 I know people are crazy, but crazy, crazy, crazy?

Are there any films that you have seen that come close to getting it right?

Are there any?

Are there any films that you've seen that come close to getting it right?

Platoon wasn't too bad. I tend to be super critical I guess

25:00 with a lot of things.

With good reason.

So probably not the best person in the world to ask these things as I hate things like Paul Hogan and the way he carries on like an Australian, he's not an Australian. He's a whacker who fell off the bridge and hit his head on the way down or something.

25:30 I mean I've been missing a lot in my years if Australians act like he reckons they do. I mean, boy. Yeah, Platoon wasn't that bad, it was pretty good. And another one was that bloody thing that Graham Kennedy was in.

26:00 **Odd Angry Shot?**

Yeah, now there was, it was meant to be funny and I thought it was very funny and that's exactly where they were, up on that little hill just above us. A lot of that film was exactly as is, or as was, a lot of it. So probably even leave

26:30 some of the comedy in it because they were a pretty jovial mob of blokes, those SAS. They know, we might as well joke now because who knows about tomorrow, and they go to some funny places, bloody hell.

Well sense of humour seems to be a very important part of what gets you through?

I'm quite sure you've got to have it otherwise you'd end up a

27:00 (demonstrates) or close to it. Yeah, Odd Angry Shot, that's close. I could sit down and watch that three or four times and end up cutting and pasting. The movie is what happened, that's

27:30 the closest.

Yeah, no good.

I mean sure Graham Kennedy bungs on a bit of an act with his voice and everything but yeah, well, but yeah, pretty close. I thought that was funny that, gee I laughed when I first saw that.

It's a bit hard not too with some of those fellas.

28:00 Oh Jesus. And the way they pulled the piss out of each other and all that, yeah that's exactly what goes on. Like the sinus, as soon as everybody found about that they laughed like shit about it and no sympathy, "No sinus in your arse, got the jack you bastard."

Actually this is a question I wanted to ask you earlier Jim, you mentioned that Downie Street was a street of brothels and

28:30 **they had some that were in bounds and some that were out of bounds, why would people actually go for the out of bounds brothels when they had so many in bound ones on offer? What would draw them in?**

Might have been a better looking sheila or something, could have been the, "Oh I don't give a shit if it is out of bounds, I'm going there anyway." I caught one of our blokes in there one night. He was a staff sergeant,

29:00 Tony Rich was his name, that's the way it goes, and anyway I was on patrol with Sergeant Mason, and what we'd do with these out of bounds areas we'd just go in and push the door of the cubicle open and it was mostly be a gook, push the next one and if you saw a digger in there you'd pull him out and write him up because you knew he wasn't meant to be there

29:30 so no second chance. Anyway this bloke, his name was Tony Rich, and we used to call him "Pussy Cat" because he had one of these moustaches like that and he spoke very proper and I was with Bob Mason. Bob was a sergeant and Jesus, I'm going to have to make a few actions here but he goes in

30:00 and Bob being Bob boots the bloody little thin ply door open and looks in and nobody in there, walks to the next one, boots the door open and here's Pussy Cat laying back on the bed and he looks and sees Pussy Cat, that's not really my arm, it's something to do with when Pussy Cat was laying on the bed, and (demonstrates).

30:30 I'm saying, "Come on Houmpy," because Houmpy Doomp was his nickname, "come on Houmpy, let's get out of here quick." He said, "Good afternoon sir, having a good evening?" Jesus Christ, not that bloody old Pussy Cat could have done much because he shouldn't have been there. And old Bob stood there for about two minutes and old Pussy Cat's getting smaller and smaller and smaller,

31:00 till he had bugger all there. And I'm sure he would have got up and gone out the back way and disappeared because I don't think he would have been right to go after we finished. Oh dear oh dear, you know it really was a bit of fun being an MP over there because you saw things that other people didn't see.

31:30 You got, well, you were the law so that was it.

This is a question I generally try to ask of everybody else because it's a war archive but what was probably one of the grizzliest things that you got to see over there,

32:00 **as part of your duty over there?**

Yeah, I've got no problem with that. I can give you two. There was about seven bodies laid up along the road, all been shot up about eighteen hours before and they were VC and they were just starting to bloat and bubble out there backside and all the rest of it. And one better than that, we got called to a,

32:30 we got a call one night in Saigon, "There appears to be a body in the back of a vacant allotment in Trim En Wang," wherever it might have been, "Check it out." So we went over and here's this bloated, bloated body, quite

33:00 obviously dead, in like a shell hole if you like, might have been a mortar hole or something, I don't know. Could have been a bloody hole that kids dug, but it was a hole and full of green slime and muddy water because it had been raining. Anyway me being me I put out my hand and grabbed this bastard by the wrist,

33:30 and went (demonstrates) and his bloody arm came off and everything just went (demonstrates) and I just spewed straight away, it was (demonstrates) and this was just so sick, so sick, I'd never do it again. I was so sick that I hurt in the stomach from having nothing to bring up after I'd bought it all up.

34:00 In answer to your question that was it. Oh yeah.

That pretty much does it.

Oh Jesus, we used to have to go down past the fish markets to the fuel town to refuel and they dry their fish and it bloody stinks, they just dry it in the sun

34:30 and every night I used to have to get my handkerchief out and hit it with the aftershave lotion and put it in my pocket and when it was time to refuel before we came back to knock off, there was only one way you could go to get there, had to get her out until you got inside the motor pool. It was alright in there and (demonstrates), put it on again when you come out again, up to the face. Lots of blokes go past it and not even worry about

35:00 it. Dennis was one, he never worried about it but did it smell. The fish weren't gutted. I don't know how they could eat them.

Jim was it part of your regular duties to, sorry, did I cut you off, sorry?

That's alright, I was going to say fish about that big, that was all.

35:30 Part of my what?

Just with the recovery of those bodies or collecting those bodies or going to investigate, was that part of your regular duty as an MP?

Well we were called, it could have been an American, an Australian, a Filipino, or whatever, whatever, it wasn't. I had absolutely no reason to do what I did, to touch it but me being me,

36:00 I expected something to happen, I thought it might have (demonstrates), something to go back and tell the boys and make some of them heave up at breakfast time or something like that, but I got caught myself there.

It backfired.

Oh Jesus.

Now we've got a few minutes left on this tape but you had told us a wonderful story off tape,

36:30 **off camera about your Well On Hop and Dat Do Dogs?**

Dapto Dogs.

Dapto Dogs, can you tell us on tape what they were?

Okay. At Nui Dat when any new people came into Nui Dat, posted to Nui Dat, we had a joke going, through all the units that

37:00 the MPs would get people up there of a night, or when they came in they would tell them that that night there was a Wail On Hop, which was a dance, at Wail On, which was a place and the Dapto dogs where they had greyhounds, Dapto was the place and they had greyhounds. It was the most stupidest thing you could ever think of but however

37:30 not one single person didn't believe you. They had to come back to the MP unit, dressed in polyesters, shoes highly polished and I think they had them wearing a tie too, yeah, polyester tie, come back there, full inspection and if they didn't get it, if the inspection didn't come up to number one then they got back to either their unit to do it again or they didn't go.

38:00 A bus would take them there and a bus would bring them home. We generally picked on, second lieutenants are generally called "shave tails", I don't know where that comes from actually but that's a

rather derogatory name but shave tail is the name. We concentrated on those but also

- 38:30 the other troops too. We've had sergeants, warrant officers, ORs, [Other Ranks] every type of soldier that was there. When they came up, whoever was there, used to grab a cap, an officers cap, put it on, go outside, make out he was inspecting them, find something wrong with most of them
- 39:00 and bore it up them and tell them to get back to their unit and get bloody cleaned up otherwise you'll miss the bus and so and so and so forth. So they'd go like bloody hell because they all had to stop in one group, they couldn't split up and some wait there and some go back. So they'd go and they'd come back and if we had time we'd send them back again, it was pure bastardry, but out of it was a great joke.
- 39:30 It was a great joke. We would have people in our hut, two huts, in the huts peeping round the windows listening to this, people from a unit over there and a mile and a half back there, they'd come to our unit to watch it, to actually see it go on. And then normally what would happen they'd come back and we'd take a lieutenant, he came back and
- 40:00 lets just say this time he's alright. We'd say, "Alright lieutenant, that's very good. I see you've got your other group alright, but you'll have to go next time because the last bus has just gone. Return to your unit." So they'd return to their unit and obviously they would cop hell from their bloody unit because everybody got caught
- 40:30 so everybody knew about it and nobody ever told anybody to stop the so they didn't go there and get caught. It was a Wail On hop and the Dapto dogs. Jesus.

Okay Jim we're going to have to pause there.

Tape 9

- 00:32 **Now Jim you were telling us about that calendar with the appropriately placed three hundred and sixty five days.**
- I was telling who?
- Yeah, about the calendar.**
- Who was I telling?
- Me, about the calendar.**
- Oh, alright.
- The woman going round the boobs and then right, so did you get to three hundred and sixty five days?**
- My word I did.
- So how did you hear your orders that you were going back to Australia? Did someone just come say, "Okay, tomorrow's the three hundred and sixty fifth day, you're out of here"?**
- 01:00 No, about a month before you went home you had a posting order. It was raised in Canberra and got it's way over there eventually. Everybody in our mob had to go back to Vung Tau to our headquarters before they came home.
- 01:30 Well I was in Saigon where the plane leaves from to come home. I had to go from Saigon, fly down to Vung Tau, twiddle my thumbs for two days there, catch the plane, go back to Saigon and catch the Freedom Bird home. Come home on an American plane and would you believe it, they're dry. There's no booze on any planes whatsoever.
- 02:00 **That's unusual because I heard the Aussie blokes say they came back on a plane and they drank the plane dry.**
- Well it could have been the Qantas plane.
- Yeah, that's right, that was Qantas. So you didn't get any scotch and water on the way home?**
- There was a female and she said, "Would you like a drink?" And I just said, "Oh
- 02:30 yeah, I'll have a," and she's gone. To everybody and we're all going, "What's going on with this stupid bitch?" And she comes along with these not a half carton, about a third carton or a quarter carton of bloody milk, that's what you got.
- Like you were two year olds?**
- It wasn't funny I can tell you. I could taste it before I even got on the plane, bloody milk. So

03:00 they were dry. Australian planes had, they were normal, they had whatever booze on them.

I wonder if it was, because I know on international flights American Airlines has alcohol.

They do?

Yes, so I wonder if it was a conscious choice coming out of Vietnam they weren't going to let the men all get bombed so they didn't have it? Oh well, who knows?

I don't know.

03:30 Yeah, well I just understood them that they didn't have alcohol on planes but there you go, unless it was that long ago and they didn't.

That could be it.

Certainly Qantas didn't change, they had whatever you wanted until there was none left, so mmh.

04:00 **Now you mentioned before that the army became, after the war, like a family to you because you sort of leaned on them for a place to be after your wife did her little trick and took off?**

With everything.

With everything including the children. Did they have people especially assigned to look after you because of what happened or did you just feel comfortable there?

04:30 No, there was provision for me to go to, what do they call themselves?

Psychologists?

No, this was a unit within the army. A bleeding heart mob, what do they call themselves?

Social workers?

Yeah, yeah.

Counsellors?

05:00 Well they're counsellors, they're social workers, it's a unit and they go out and look after wives who can't take it when their husbands are away or anything, so that's civil affairs is that one. Anyhow that's what it's for.

05:30 I had provision to go there, the same as everybody else. I chose not to go there. I chose to tough it out for a while.

What made you make that decision that you were going to stay in there because had you thought, "Okay after the war, I'm going to get out?"

06:00 Out of the army? That was the original idea, yeah.

So what made you stay in there? Because of what happened with your wife?

It probably had something to do with it. But then the

06:30 army really stopped me from doing everything that I wanted to do because I had to be where I had to be, so I don't know whether it, no I don't think it did, as with what happened to my wife had anything

07:00 to do with me stopping in the army. I mean I wasn't a twenty year old kid. I knew what she was like. I knew how bitter and twisted she could get and she would move the kids around so that I wouldn't be able to see them. I was aware of all that.

07:30 No, I don't know, I think I just got to like the army and that was it. As I said it was a family that looked after me I guess. I can't answer anymore than that.

Were you able to meet up later, out of curiosity here, were you able to meet up later with your children?

Yes, I was posted to Sydney and

08:00 I was at Ingleburn and my children came down to see me in Ingleburn. I think Kim was about eighteen or nineteen then but prior to that, that's one thing I did forget about

08:30 was she made her debut when she was fifteen or sixteen or something or other and I made arrangements to be up there for her debut and I didn't tell anybody I was going, not even Kim, and I got that one in anyhow.

Are you in contact with her now?

09:00 My daughter? Yeah, all the time, yeah. We generally go down to Gloucester once every year and as I

said my son got killed, so my daughter Kim by my first marriage, she lives in Gloucester. My daughter Peta, our daughter Peta, lives in Gloucester, well Stratford,

09:30 not far from Gloucester, so they're all there together.

That's handy for Christmas, isn't it?

Yeah.

How did your son die Jim?

He had a motor vehicle accident. He always had dogs, what do you call those things? Beagles, beagle hounds, beagle hounds, are

10:00 they the ones that hunt?

Yeah.

He had a stack of those and he used to have to feed them everyday and that and they were just out in an enclosure somewhere out on might have been his uncle's farm or something and he was going out this afternoon to feed them and he got into loose gravel on the bend of a road

10:30 and there was a huge gate post. It must have been the biggest tree they'd ever cut down, about that round it is, and he was in a little Subaru ute and it looks like he hit the gravel, swung into it and he probably tried to turn it out and it rolled and hit the fence post and just bang like that.

11:00 The post didn't move, it was a bloody, why you would put such a size gate post in, yeah. No other vehicle involved, no-one else in the vehicle, which was good and he died instantly, so that was it.

So he felt no pain?

No, no, no.

11:30 **So how old was he? How old was your son?**

He had his twenty first birthday. He was nearly twenty two. He died in November and he would have been twenty two in January.

Now how did you pick your life up after these family crises that you had after you came back from the War?

12:00 Pretty tough. How did I do it? Determination I guess, I'm a very proud person, I am. Very proud of my name, except bloody Edward.

12:30 I'd kill my mother for that, Jesus.

I'll make sure they call you Jim on this tape.

Yeah, I don't know. I suppose it was just head down, arse up and go and.

13:00 **You threw yourself into work?**

Oh yeah, sure did.

So how did you meet Helen, your present wife?

Well she was at a spinster's do one night, I met her at a mess function and we sort of clicked and

13:30 we gave it a trial go because I wasn't too keen to get married again, so I think we lived together for about two years, more than that, no, about two years

14:00 and then we got married, by a woman with two wooden legs.

Has she got two wooden legs?

By a woman with two wooden legs. I'm going to tell her.

Had better wipe that from the record.

Yeah, a civil marriage celebrant, she had two wooden legs.

14:30 I have going to have a barbeque.

That has nothing to do with anything though and you had one daughter with Helen, is that right?

Yep.

Now I have to ask you, are you involved with any of the Vietnam Associations since you've come out of the army?

15:00 No.

Do you walk on Anzac Day?

I used to before I couldn't walk. I can only walk about twenty metres and that's it.

You mentioned the 1987?

Oh I'm involved with the TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated] Association, of course. I don't know about "of course" but I'm involved with them, yeah.

You mentioned before about the Government giving the Vietnam vets

15:30 **a 1987 homecoming, obviously a bit late in the picture?**

Twenty five years.

How did that have an effect on you and the TPI Association for instance? Were they able, for want of a better word, to forgive and forget what happened or do you think there's still a lot of anger there?

No, I think most of the anger's gone. People still talk about it

16:00 and over a few beers they might get a bit het up about it and say, "Yeah, look at the bastards, twenty five years before they could even give us a homecoming." But that's all talk I think these days. There was bitterness in it before but I don't think there's any bitterness in it now. It's just waffling on for the sake of having a go at somebody. Yeah, it was too long.

16:30 They were wrong.

Did alcohol play a big part post Vietnam for you and any friends? Did many Vietnam veterans that you know become alcoholics or turn to drugs as a way?

Yeah, most of

17:00 us.

And what about you though? Did you seek therapy for that or?

Yes, I went to a shrink but I'm not sure what a, what do you call them?

17:30 **Psychologists?**

No. A drunk, what's a drunk? We were just talking about it? What's the?

Alcoholic?

Alcoholic, right. I'm not sure what a bloody alcoholic is. I mean I didn't drink much when I lost the plot.

18:00 I didn't think I did. I'd never go to pubs, never went to pubs in those days. I used to drink a bit at home but he said I was an alcoholic so that's the way it goes. I'm not sure what a bloody alcoholic really is or whether they really know. Is it a bloke that gets drunk everyday or is it a bloke that has a few beers because it makes

18:30 him relax or is it a bloke that has a few beers because he wants to forget or conversely he wants to remember? I don't know. I've heard a lot of people called alcoholics and they don't look whacked like alcoholics are supposed to look or act.

19:00 Is an alcoholic supposed to be unshaven every day if he's a man? I shave everyday of the week even though I've got this configuration here. I still shave every day of the week. I've got a mate that's going for a TPI and when he had the date for his appointment

19:30 for his trick cyclist, he used to let himself go for about a week or ten days and he used to look bloody terrible but it was just bullshit. It was, it was bullshit. All put on.

20:00 **It was put on for them to think that he was worse than he was, or was he really in need of help but he was just being idiotic about getting it?**

Being idiotic about getting it. When he made his application for an increase in pension, I've been a TPI for ten years, when he

20:30 filled in an application for an increase in pension, that's what it is. You can't put in for a TPI, there's no such thing as being able to put in for a TPI. You put in for an increase in pension and then you hope you get the special rate etcetera. I had a copy of my documents here and I said, "Have a read of those and it might give you a clue." He said, "What have you got?" Tick, tick, tick, change a few

21:00 words here and there, he just copied mine. Didn't worry me but that's how weak our system is. He did

it, he just changed places and names and when it was just tick and flick he just tick, tick, tick. Mine wasn't easy.

21:30 I had to go to the Administrative Appeal Tribunal with a barrister but anyhow I won.

I mean it's a hard call isn't it? It's a system that's supposed to be there to help people that need it and

22:00 **yet like the dole or anything else can probably be abused?**

That's right. Okay it's six or seven hundred dollars a week and if a person like that didn't have it, and didn't need it,

22:30 maybe he might have needed it later on or something, I don't think so. Maybe that money could go to helping someone else or even giving more to the ones that do need more. It's a, I mean I get my superannuation, I get my

23:00 TPI pension, I'm on the pig's back.

Do you have any ideas on how to make the system work better?

No, and I've thought. They'd have to make it harder and then they'd have people like I was originally, who

23:30 put in an increase in pension and they more or less laugh at you and you go, "Stick it up your backside," which was wrong. I should have just sat down and said, "I'll go about it this way," which eventually I did and I went. First of all I went to see if

24:00 I could get Legal Aid, which, being a veteran, having served in a combat unit, I could. So that bought me a solicitor and that report bought me a barrister, as they let a little bit of money out each time and the barrister report, well they rolled over the afternoon before I was

24:30 to attend court, so in other words they wasted all that money and they knew themselves or why did they roll over at the very end. I didn't do anything more. If they could have done it in the first place, so that's where something's wrong in the system. They said no but

25:00 they don't do another thing until it hits Administrative Appeals Tribunal and I was there when my solicitor rang up this bloke in Vet Affairs. He went to school with him and he called him Bob and they were talking on the phone and he said, "Listen Bob, you've read the bloody barrister's report," and he quoted two cases, and

25:30 "Are you bloody going to roll over or what?" And he must have said no and he said, "Come on mate, don't be such a stick in the mud, it's all here, you can't win." Anyhow hung the phone up and phoned me later to say, "We've got a phone hook up tomorrow with Brisbane at ten o'clock. Can you be in here?" I said "yeah, no worries". And

26:00 he rang up the next morning about half past eight and said, "Don't bother coming in this morning," and I went, "What and the so and so has happened now?" And he went, "Hang on, I haven't finished yet, don't bother coming in this morning, we don't need the phone hook up, they've rolled over."

26:30 **I wonder if they would have had to have paid the court costs if they'd won? The same result, they were going to give you the pension, if they'd still have to pay the court costs for you having to fight them?**

Well the judgement, it still went to court as in their was no hearing but it still went to review and I have a copy of the judgement

27:00 and their roll over means nothing. They lost the case because, what's the word they used on it? We agreed that things were okay, we agreed, and then whatever the guy is on the review board, I don't know if he's a magistrate or what.

27:30 But it's written there and let there be no mistake, the judgement still came out on the judgement paper, not, "Yeah, we're rolling over, just wipe it off eh?" It's still there. They still actually loose.

28:00 **Now all those years in the army after Vietnam you worked up the ranks there, you came out was it a warrant officer, that you came out of the army?**

I was a Corps RSM.

Corps RSM, that's it, CORPS, we were talking about it before.

The highest I could go apart from an RSM.

Right but I mean you'd come quite a long way and you'd obviously

28:30 **proven yourself in the army but you told us off camera why you retired early, part of it was that you'd had that operation and you came back and there and they were just being shallow**

and stupid and you thought you'd had enough of the politics of the place, was the main reason?

Exactly, that was the reason, that was the only reason. I still had another two years which would have bumped up my superannuation

29:00 by quite a few dollars anyhow. I don't know how much it was now but then I chose, I thought, "What the hell, it's only a couple of years."

What do you think now about I suppose the embarrassment of the Australian Government

29:30 **how the Vietnam veterans were treated, do you think this needs to be looked at in schools and exactly taught what happened? Do you think it's part of Australian history? Do you think what happened needs for the younger generation to know?**

I see

30:00 no reason for it personally for it to raise its ugly head now. It's over and done with, most people are satisfied I think. I think we should teach our kids the good things and not the bad. It depends if you're

30:30 going into do politics in university and it could be mentioned along those lines then but just not ordinary history in schools, no.

Do you have regrets about joining up for Vietnam?

No. None whatsoever. No regrets from the day I joined until the day I got out.

31:00 Apart from the idiot that discharged me. I enjoyed ever single day even when I got busted. I did the wrong thing so I paid the price.

Have you told us that, about getting busted?

Probably not.

What was that which you did?

I punched a bloke.

At work?

No, no, after work, at work but after work.

31:30 In the mess.

Why did you punch him?

Because he hit me first.

Okay so you're not allowed to behave like that obviously.

No, I was a senior NCO [Non-Commissioned Officer] and conduct unbecoming. I even went up to the legal officer and said, "I'd

32:00 like to speak about the severity of my punishment," and he said, "Oh yeah." I said, "Sir, in all my time in the army I have never done anything wrong," and he said, "What you mean Sergeant Oldfield is you've never been caught."

32:30 Took a step back and said, "Thank you sir, won't be seeing you again," so I bore it, from sergeant to corporal, lack of money.

Was that the punishment? Just that, lack of pay?

No, I was demoted.

Just a demotion but you didn't have to go and sit in a cell for a day or anything like that?

No, no.

33:00 **Alright, one last question for you, if a young person came to you today and said "I want to join the army", what would be your advice?**

My advice? You know where to go to join up, if you don't, I'll tell you. You've made a very, very, wise decision. The advice, keep your nose clean. If you muck up and

33:30 do something wrong, take it on the chin. Don't throw it in, don't give it away because it will be alright. Once you're in there it's one of the best jobs that's offering in Australia. It's fantastic, especially with the bloody money that they get. My mate's son is in the army,

34:00 and how old is he now? About twenty one or twenty two and he's a corporal and he earns forty five thousand dollars a year and he's single and he lives in. I was getting fifty when I got out ten

34:30 years ago which was pretty good but I'd hate to ask what would I be getting now.

I know Chris and I thought about joining up. Thank you Jim, you've been an absolute treasure.

That's alright Sylvia.

INTERVIEW ENDS