Australians at War Film Archive

Kevin Brady (Butch) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:44 **We'll start with where you were born and where you grew up in those early years?**

I was born here in Geelong, in Newtown, which is a suburb [down] that way. My father was a police sergeant and later on he ended up police inspector here in

01:00 Geelong, but in those early years we moved around quite a bit because of his job – Hamilton, Meredith, Ballarat – all those sort of places. We moved around a fair bit. We were a Catholic family, a very strict catholic family, and I went to Catholic schools eventually with the Brothers and so on. I had four sisters and a brother. I don't remember much

01:30 about my children [brothers and sisters]. I remember being in Ballarat when my sisters used to bring the Yanks home because they were young girls and the Yanks were nice blokes and that, and one of them gave me a wooden machine gun he made himself. I always remember that, that sort of stuck with me.

What period of time was that?

It would have been about '43 or so because there were a lot of Yanks out here then.

02:00 But I've not got many memories of my childhood. We ended up back here in Geelong where Dad ended up police inspector. I went to the Brothers here until I was 13 because that's as far as you could go then, they didn't go much beyond that. Because I was only 13 and couldn't be an apprentice I got a job in a menswear store selling

02:30 clothes. And then when I was 14 I became an apprentice to a carpenter and joiner, but I was pretty hopeless but they kept me there mainly because of Dad, I think. And when I turned 17, Dad wanted me to join the police force and I thought it would be all right, too. So I went down…no, I was only 16, because it was the police academy in Melbourne. I went down and did all the tests and everything, but I hadn't looked after my teeth and they sent me away

03:00 to get my teeth fixed and come back later on. Well, I was out of work then so I thought I'm going into something so I went down to the recruiting offices in Melbourne to join the air force, and the army and the air force and the navy were all in the one building. And the air force sergeant was out for lunch and the army sergeant told me [to] come and have a cup of tea with him. So I went and had a cup of tea with him and walked out joined up in the army for six years. So

03:30 I went home and Mum and Dad signed the papers because I'd been a pretty wild sort of a kid and they weren't sad to see me go. I'd caused a bit of trouble for Dad. He was the [alcohol] licensing inspector and I was in to under-age drinking and all that so they were glad to sign the papers and see me go. So at 17, I went into the army and was posted to Kapooka [army recruit training base located just outside Wagga Wagga, New South Wales] where they did all their recruit training there.

04:00 Having led a pretty sheltered life, apart from the fact I used to drink a bit, it was the biggest shock in the world for me because I'd been fairly spoiled at home and then to go down to this cold place, and it was winter, and then to be shouted at by everyone it was a real shock to the system. It was probably the best thing that ever happened to me, though. Anyway, I eventually adjusted and continued drinking. About the only worthwhile event there, the Asian flu hit and there were only a few people left standing on their

04:30 feet. And they had a big boxing competition with the air force coming and because I was on my feet I was the only rep [representative] and I got the shit punched out of me. That was about all I remember there plus the discipline and basically learning how to march. It was nothing like I thought it would be, but I was probably the perfect recruit someone who went in there pretty gullible and they could just grab you and they could just form you into what they wanted

05:00 and so on, which is what they did in those days. It wasn't like it is now. Anybody could sort of get in

without education and so on. They were desperate to get people into the army and the level of recruits wasn't high and once they got them there they could mould them into what they wanted which is what they did. At the time they had quite a few corps in the army – armoured, engineers, artillery –

05:30 but they were filling the infantry battalions, so most of us went to infantry battalions. Not matter what you wanted to do you were sent to an infantry battalion. So after that I went down to what they called corps training at Ingleburn [an army base; outer southern Sydney suburb].

We might just back track.

Am I jumping too far ahead?

It's a good overview, but I'd like to get more detail about Geelong and sort of

06:00 **growing up in Geelong. I mean Geelong must have been a very different place to what it is now when you were a kid?**

Yes it was. It was a good place. The wharves weren't like they are now, full of restaurants and all that, you could go down there and fish under the wharves and catch all sorts of fish and everything. We had a fair sort of a social life with the Young Christian Workers [YCW] dances and all that. You'd go there and stand at the back and drink about three bottles of beer until you got the

06:30 courage to go and ask a girl to dance. I played tennis at the time and football and cricket, I love cricket. But it was a pretty normal life. To me it was uneventful – you want to find out about Geelong and that.

What about your Dad, he was the police sergeant?

No, at this time in Geelong he was the police inspector and he was more or less in charge of the police then

07:00 when the Queen came out [Queen Elizabeth, wife of King George VI (and mother of Queen Elizabeth II), visited Australia without her husband in 1958]. And I can remember the Queen went past our place and we were sitting on the roof. And Dad loved the limelight and he was in his big Humber up the front leading the parade with the Queen and all that. He loved that and I suppose it's rubbed off on me too.

Where were you during the parade?

Sitting up on the garage roof looking down because the parade went right past our place there.

07:30 I said I was drinking a lot and Dad was the licensing inspector and we were out at the Grovedale pub this night and the police did a raid for under-age drinking and Dad led the raid and here was me there. Anyway, he kicked my bum and took me outside and he said, "From now on you'll know where I'm going to be raiding and you won't be there". So I got a lot of mates when they found that out.

08:00 **Did he do that? Did he tell you when there was going to be a raid?**

He'd say, "Don't be at such and such a place tonight". Well, it was an embarrassment for him, too.

He would have had to penalise you would he?

No, you didn't in those days. Not only me, the others, you'd give them a clip over the ear and tell them to get out and that, that was the way they did things then. It wasn't like it is now. It was rare they'd have these raids. There was a lot of

08:30 under-age drinking but we always got people to get bottles for us and drink outside dances and that. We wouldn't drink in the pubs because they were strict on it, they wouldn't serve young kids. But it wasn't like it is now, they weren't sweating on the pubs like they do now because the kids knew they'd be in trouble if they got caught in there, and they'd send someone in to get the bottles and drink elsewhere with them.

So what would happen to the publican if they had under-age drinkers there?

09:00 You'd probably have to give them an extra carton of grog. I don't know. I was pretty cynical about that. But anyway, another time there I was picked to be a debutante partner for a girl called Cath Baker. And they had one of the biggest businesses in Geelong here, Baker's Tyre Works and refrigerators and everything else. Anyway, the

09:30 archbishop of Melbourne came down to present the debs [debutantes] and I was very nervous and this bloke gave me two bottles of beer and a bottle of wine to drink before the thing. And I drank it and passed out and the girl never made her debut and that was one of the big scandals at Geelong at the time. So Mum and Dad weren't unhappy when I joined the army. Mum used to say she'd be walking down the street and Mrs Baker would see her coming and cross to the other side of the road. My people were

10:00 real old fashioned, you know good Catholics and all that, so they weren't real impressed with me.

You had no brothers?

I had a brother.

Younger or older?

Younger. When I went into the army he followed me, actually. I played tennis of a weekend and went to church because Dad made us but not much else.

10:30 I left Geelong when I was 17 and I came back when I was 60.

But you were born in Geelong?

I was born in Geelong.

And when did you move to Ballarat?

When I was about four or five. Well, that must have been about ’43 because that’s where the Yanks were at Ballarat. So Ballarat and then Hamilton, Hamilton after Ballarat, I think. When we were in Geelong, we must have gone from Ballarat back to

11:00 Geelong because I went to The Brothers there in Geelong. And I was a real sissy. I used to walk around the parade ground holding hands with this other boy, dodging all the footballers and everything and they’d all come and give us a whack over the ear because we were sooks and milksops and everything. Anyway, I went to Hamilton and I got in with a rough mob up there and I learned to fight and I used to sell newspapers and sneak away so Dad wouldn’t know. That was bad news to

11:30 sell newspapers while Dad was the police sergeant, and he was the sergeant there. Anyway, we eventually came back to Geelong for my last couple of years in school. And this bloke came up to hold hands with me so I thumped him and sort of got in with all the rough ones then. I was a different person when I came back here and that’s probably what led on to all this drinking and everything else.

So your family moved to Hamilton and your Dad got a posting at Hamilton?

As the police sergeant at Hamilton.

12:00 And then he must have gone from Hamilton back here to Geelong where he was promoted to inspector. I’d like to be able to give you more information but there’s not a lot to say about Geelong.

What about Hamilton? Can you remember much about Hamilton?

No, not really, just getting in with the bad mob. Selling papers and helping some old fellow train his greyhounds, that sort of thing.

12:30 **What were your favourite drinking places in Geelong?**

Well, we used to go down to Seegars or the Barwon Bridge Hotel. You never went into the hotels you went out the back and they’d slip you the grog out the back. And we went out to the Leopold, Leopold dance hall and all get out the back there, and then on Sundays we’d go to St Mary’s, the YCW, and all get out the back there and drink our drink before you

13:00 went in. And at that time I was getting on to 15 and we were starting to look like we were old enough to go to the pubs, but you couldn’t go into pubs on a Sunday unless you were bona fide. Did you know about the bona fide business? Well, a local couldn’t drink in a pub if he came from that town. The only way he could drink in a pub was if he travelled 50 miles and you were after a meal and a drink. So we used to go to Ballarat on a Sunday just to get a drink in the pubs, to say we were bona fide.

13:30 Everyone did it. You’d say you were travelling through and then they’d give you a drink and then you’d drive home drunk and all.

Were there many accidents that you remember?

No, there weren’t a lot of accidents in those days because you didn’t have the big fast cars. There were [Ford] Prefects and Holdens and that, but you didn’t have the speed in cars you’ve got nowadays. There wasn’t a lot of accidents and there weren’t as many cars around either. Not, it’s surprising, there’d

14:00 probably be a lot more drink driving but there wasn’t the accidents that there are nowadays.

Did you know much about what your Dad did as a police inspector?

Sometimes he used to take me around to various country stations to visit the pubs and that. He’d go to the pubs and just check to see everything was all right. I don’t really know what he checked. I was only a kid who, I went with him. We’d take a

14:30 cut-lunch sandwich and we’d go and sit by a lake or something for lunchtime. He used to love all the country places and he knew everyone there and he just enjoyed it, you know, if they were doing the right thing, well, that was it.

Where did he grow up?

Meredith, halfway between here [Geelong] and Ballarat.

Was it a farm? Did he grow up on a farm?

He grew up on a farm, I think.

15:00 He was born in 1899. He was a good sportsman and played a lot of football and golf. An all-round sportsman he was, a good runner, very good runner.

He hadn't gone to the First World War?

Sorry?

Did he serve in the First World War?

No, he was only 14 when the war

15:30 started and he'd be only, what, 18 when it finished, and then during the Second World War he was too old, he'd be 40. So he missed both wars. His brothers went to war, but he missed them.

What about your Mum where did she grow up?

I don't really know, maybe Geelong. She's a fairly quiet lady, she sort of kept in the background and

16:00 that. When we were at Hamilton we lived at the police station and we had the big cells in the paddock out the back and Mum used to do the cooking for the prisoners. A lot of the old fellows used to get locked up just to get her cooking because she was a pretty good cook. She was very quiet, Mum, didn't have a lot to say and just sort of kept in the background.

So would your

16:30 **Dad do that sometimes, lock up someone who just needed a place to sleep for the night?**

Oh yes. That went on a lot, especially in Hamilton.

Why especially in Hamilton?

Well, there were a lot of Aborigines that didn't [have] places to sleep and probably got on the grog and if he didn't lock them up they'd sleep on the footpath for the night. So you were sort of looking after them as well as clearing the streets. It was a two-way

17:00 thing. It was sort of hard but they had a heart the policemen in those days.

Did he have other assistants at Hamilton?

Did he have what?

Assistants?

Yes, there were about four policemen there. We used to play cricket with them in the ground where the cell was, with the old prisoners clapping us and carrying on.

17:30 That was a fair-size station then. I think he had about four or five.

So there was a lock-up?

A great big old lock-up away from the police station in the middle of the paddock, because we played cricket in the paddock and this old lock-up was right in the middle of the paddock. They were fairly harmless, the prisoners, Mum used to take the meals over to them.

So what would they be

18:00 **in there for?**

Drunkenness, I don't know, maybe burglary or something, but not serious stuff. If it was serious they'd send them down to Melbourne.

But they would be there for a period of time?

Oh yes, three or four days or the weekend or something like that, long enough to get to know them. We used to talk to them, they'd talk. There was an old bloke there called Mulga Fred and his

18:30 photo was in the Melbourne Herald and The Sun and that, Pelaco shirts at the time. They used to dress this poor old black fellow in this big white Pelaco shirt and he'd be in the ad, his black skin with this white shirt and "Mine tinkit They Fit", that is what he'd be saying and that was one of the best known ads in Victoria at the time. I think he ran away with a young kid

19:00 about a year later and was trying to escape when the police were chasing him. He got run over by a train. But he was a well known figure at the time and he often got locked up there, Mulga Fred.

Was there a big Aboriginal community there around the town?

There were a few. I don't think there was a big Aboriginal community there at the time, just a few of them, but

19:30 he stands out more than anyone because he was a bit of a celebrity. If you go back through the archives and look you'll see. It used to be one of the biggest ads in the paper, old Mulga Fred with this big white shirt on right down to his thing and a big shirt tail and all "Mine tinkit They Fit".

So what else did you do in Hamilton?

There used to be an old fellow with greyhounds. I used to go with him and

20:00 slip the greyhounds with him of a night time. We'd go down along the river and just lead these greyhounds. They used to have a sort of a slip. You'd have this lead and you pushed this slip and the collars would come undone and there were rabbits everywhere so whenever you saw a rabbit you'd let the greyhound go after it. I sold newspapers, as I said, until Dad caught me. That's about it.

20:30 **How do you get the greyhounds back once you've slipped the collar?**

When they catch the rabbit they stay there with the kill eating it. You just go up and grab them.

And these greyhounds were raced in Hamilton?

I suppose so. I can't remember but they would have been, yes. They had a lot of coursing [hunting with dogs] in those days, which is why that was good training for it. In coursing, they don't come out of boxes they just slip them like that and they just chase up

21:00 after a rabbit.

As a way of training them you mean or on the track?

No. They didn't have boxes and that when they had coursing. That was the most popular form of greyhound racing at the time. They didn't have boxes. You'd just all stand there with your greyhound on a lead and that rabbit would go and they'd let them go and they'd just run everywhere after the rabbit. You've just interrupted $500 worth of

21:30 filming. Sorry about that.

This is all good. It gives us a picture of that time and your life so all this detail is really interesting.

It's not something that I can remember. You talk about my army service and my

22:00 memory is as vivid as anything because it was stuff that I wanted to do and I enjoyed doing and everything else. But my childhood, I was an alter boy at St Mary's over here, the convent, and we lived across the road from the convent. And you had the nuptials and the Requiem. If you did the nuptials you used to get five

22:30 quid [pounds] because everyone was happy with this. If you did the Requiem you got nothing. So we used to fight to do the nuptials. We had to learn Latin and all that sort of thing. It was sort of a prestige thing at the time, but it was good because five quid was a lot of money in those days. And the best man was all big time at the wedding and that and would hand out the money with everyone seeing him do it.

23:00 But that's about it, I think.

When did you start drinking?

When I was about 14 or 15.

Do you remember why?

Everybody else did. It was the thing to do. Peer pressure, it was exciting, I liked getting drunk. The Palais down here [in south Geelong] was the biggest dance hall in the area at the time and they used to show

23:30 movies while you danced, silent movies. It was brilliant. If you go past it you'll see it. I'd get drunk and go there and one of Dad's detectives would be on the door. And Dad would have teed him up and I was that silly I never woke up to it and he'd say, "Just have a walk around the block and I'll let you in". So I'd walk around the block and he'd come back and he'd say, "One more walk", so I'd go again and I'd be coming back as they were coming out. I never got in, I don't think I ever got in. I

24:00 went there with my sister and husband once and they wouldn't let me in to the Palais, and it was a great place, too. Drinking got me into a hell of a lot of trouble in the army and everything.

Fights?

Yes, yes. Everyone fought in the army when you were drunk. It was just something to do. Early in the piece there was no TV

24:30 and we were out in camps miles away from anywhere and you couldn't go to town so you just drank among yourselves. And that was the thing to do, have a fight for something to do. More of a brawl than a fight.

What primary school did you go to?

St Mary's [Catholic Primary School] over here and St Alipius [Parish School] in Ballarat and I can't remember in Hamilton, and I ended up at the Christian Brothers here in Geelong.

25:00 **What kind of a student were you?**

I loved English because I've always been very good at composition and report writing and things like that. I loved writing. I loved writing stories and all that sort of thing. I couldn't handle maths, yet all my kids and grand-kids are brilliant at it. Hopeless on science, hopeless on woodwork or anything practical.

25:30 I suppose that was about it, English. Geography, I didn't mind geography, but that was about it.

How did you find changing schools, was that hard for you?

I didn't think about it. No, I don't think so, it was just something we went along with. It didn't come into it at the time. But now as a parent, it used to worry me taking my kids out of the school and that, but at that time I suppose the curriculum was much the same wherever you went. You just sort of carried on.

26:00 **What about having to make new friends each time you moved? Is that hard?**

No, I don't think so. I don't remember feeling sad about leaving any friends or anything. A pretty uneventful childhood, wasn't it?

No, not at all, I'm amazed how varied it was.

26:30 I don't know. Is that coming out on the sound?

It will be on the sound track.

As soon as they're gone I'll take it off. They'll just have a cup of tea and go and I'll take it off.

So you played cricket? Did you play with a team?

Yes, I played with St Bernard's [Catholic Church Cricket Club], a mob out at Belmont [Geelong suburb] there. I like cricket, I like batting, and later on I played cricket in the army. Basketball, I played a lot of basketball

27:00 there at Geelong. I had an incident with a paedophile, but you'd better not put that on tape.

No, not if you don't want to.

Well, I didn't know, to me it was normal. It never upset me.

It sounds to me like you had an awful lot of energy, you were doing a lot of

27:30 **things?**

Yes, I suppose, just a normal kid who liked sport. I didn't like school and that's probably why I wasn't much good. I wasn't any good at work at that carpenter's job because I wasn't practically minded or practical with my hands. My wife, I buy her a tool kit for Christmas now and she does all the repairs. She's very practical,

28:00 a Queensland country girl. She's the one in our house that does all the gardens and repairs and that. A terrible thing to say but that's the way it is.

I got an idea of that this morning when she was going to fix the hole in the wall?

I'm pushing to give you more information on my childhood.

That's okay it's just a conversation that's all and

28:30 **just thinking of things as they come to mind.**

When we went to the dances, I was always the one that got the girl left-over or the ugly girl, because I wasn't that good looking myself. But I never minded because it suited me.

How did you get on with girls?

I liked girls, I always have and women, I get on well with women. I enjoy their conversation.

29:00 I'm the opposite to a paedophile, I love elderly women and always have. I love talking to them. Don't ask me why.

What about your sisters, did you get along with them?

One died last year and I never spoke to her for years and she called me up to see her on her death bed and we sort of

29:30 made up. Now the youngest one, I'm blueing with her now. But the oldest one, I get on very well with

her. I've got another one in Bendigo and I get on fairly-well with her. I don't think it's them, I think it's me. I get on alright with my brother and talk to him, but we're not a close family. I'm more concerned with my own immediate family than that.

Are your parents still

30:00 **alive?**

No. They died about 15, 20 years ago.

I was just going to say, how would you say your relationship with your Dad was even though he was obviously constantly having to discipline you and worried about you?

Well, it wasn't close. I'm like him. He was the sort of person you couldn't get close to, like you'd never get a cuddle or anything like that off him.

30:30 You'd never get a lecture on sex or anything. Mum didn't even give me that, it wasn't done at the time. For his position he was a shy sort of a man. I don't know, I wasn't close to him. The girls were, you couldn't say a thing against him, and my brother probably was too, but I wasn't close to him.

31:00 He was very supportive of me for anything I wanted to do and that. He never knocked me back for anything. I think the closest I came was when he used to take me out when he visited the stations. But, no, we weren't close.

Did your sisters get on your back about your drinking?

Yes. But you couldn't blame

31:30 them, you know. I was making a fool of them and making a fool of myself and all of them so, of course, they would.

So you had a reputation in town?

And the gang that I was with, but more so at home because they knew what I was doing, they'd see the end result when I'd come home. Not so much a reputation in town because a lot of the young blokes were doing it at the

32:00 time, so no one sort of stood out. But after that incident with the debutante ball, then I did, so I joined the army just after that I can tell you. I didn't come home on leave much.

With your gang of mates, if you'd been out drinking what would you do? What would you get up to?

You'd go to the tennis club that was deserted and you'd sit in the old tennis

32:30 shed and you'd drink and drink until you got drunk. And then you'd want to go to the dance and you'd go to the dance, and you'd try and get a dance and the girls wouldn't dance with you because you were drunk. Or you'd go to the dance and get drunk outside and then come in and want [to] dance but the girls, unless they were desperate, wouldn't dance with you. So I don't know, you'd just get drunk.

Did you steal cars or do anything like that?

No, no, none of that.

33:00 No, that was unheard of. We'd just get drunk. No, I'd never steal a car.

It was unheard of was it?

It wasn't unheard of, but not like it is today. No one I knew stole cars. A couple of blokes I knew were up for rape but none stole cars.

33:30 I suppose people did, but I didn't hear about it.

Burglaries? Were they common?

Yes, I suppose. It's not something I took much of an interest in. I suppose they were, but I couldn't say. You're just trying to fill in time here?

No, I'm not. I'm just trying to find something, say

34:00 **something, say something that might trigger a memory and try and get a picture of, this is one of the things we do with the archive. In going back you get a snapshot of that time through the person's experience, their point of view, so it's very valuable.**

I was sort of a young kid

34:30 who had a pretty uneventful life, who got into the grog when I was 14, which turned me around a bit, and who eventually got into the army, which I didn't know what I was doing there but after a few years I found it was exactly what I wanted and I did well in the army, that was it. I still drank. I still made a mongrel of myself, but I was lucky and I kept getting promoted mainly because there was a war on at

the time and they needed you.

35:00 **So how old were you when you joined up?**

Seventeen.

And your brother followed you, your younger brother?

He was three years younger. He joined up three years later. He went to Malaya ahead of me, but when we went over he was posted back to my battalion

35:30 so he actually ended up in my section and platoon. He was the worst soldier in history. We learned how to charge soldiers with him, we learned how to write charge sheets with him, he was that hopeless.

What sort of things would he do?

Sorry?

What did he get charged for?

Drunkenness, absent without leave, disobeying a lawful command.

36:00 This was all in Malay, but I'll get on to Malaya later.

So I can't remember where you said you joined up, was it in Geelong?

No, I joined up in Melbourne and then I think you went to Albert Park Barracks for a couple of days until they sent you off to Kapooka, which was near Wagga. You'd know that coming from New South Wales.

I'm not from New South Wales.

36:30 **No, we're both from Melbourne.**

Right. Well, Kapooka was just outside of Wagga and it's been there for many, many years. It's always been a recruit training battalion and until Vietnam when they started up Singleton and other places most soldiers went through there for their basic training. It's different now, but in those days it was designed to be hard.

37:00 You had about 20 blokes to a hut. The huts were cold and windy, which was part of the thing. You had no privacy. Everyone showered in the same thing. Nowadays, they have two-man rooms with their own showers and toilets and all that sort of thing. It was always, not always, but we went there in winter and it was freezing. There would be

37:30 ice on the ground and everything and the instructors were hard because of that.

So can you give me an idea of what kind of training you got there at Kapooka?

Well, you went there and you were a civilian more or less and you were taught how to stand to attention, how to march.

38:00 You did all this in the first couple of weeks. You learned how to address your superiors and that. All your civilian thing was sort of stripped off you so you became what they wanted so they could carry on with further training. You spent most of your time on the parade ground where you were marching and doing all sorts of drill, and after a couple of weeks they would give you a rifle and then you'd go on with rifle drill. So

38:30 then you'd combine your drills and that so then you learned how to slope shoulder arms and present arms and all that sort of thing. So, probably, your first four weeks was all drill and that sort of thing and then after that you'd go on with field craft [skills such as map reading, navigation, surviving in the bush, etc]. You were doing PT [physical training] all the time, all the time doing PT. The first thing in the morning you'd get up and go for a two mile run or something. Then they introduced you to the rifle range and you'd learn how to fire your

39:00 weapon and that sort of thing. And this probably took up until about six weeks and by that time you are nearly ready, maybe eight weeks, you are nearly ready to go on for further training at whatever corps you went to. You were terrified of the instructors. You stood to attention and weren't game to move. Your boots were always highly polished and your shoes were always highly polished, your

39:30 locker was immaculate and nothing out of place. You had to make the bed the way they showed you to make it. If there was a crease in the bed they'd pull it to pieces and you'd have to make it again. All that sort of stuff…really, really strict sort of discipline. So you'd come out of there, no leave, you never got any leave. But at the end, either eight weeks or three months, at the end of that period you knew how to dress yourself like a soldier should be

40:00 dressed, turned out really well. You had to learn to iron your clothes if you'd never ironed before, all these things.

Did you rebel?

No, I wasn't game to rebel. No, I said, I was the perfect sort of thing. I was terrified of them. Whatever they did and whatever they told you to do, I did. No, I never rebelled. Although, I'd been there three weeks or something and Dad sent me, I don't know, £10

40:30 or something and the corporal found out I had it and he said to me, "Come on, I'll take you out for a drink". And he took me and some other bloke and we went to some pub called Uranquinty and we went in an army jeep. Anyway, we all got drunk and we were driving home and some bloke who'd just bought a brand new car in Sydney or something was coming around all the back roads so he'd get home safely without having an accident. And,

41:00 apparently, the corporal drove into him in the jeep and I blacked out and they all took off. So when the MPs [military police] came I was the only one there. So they took me back to camp and they wanted to know who was with me and, out of a sense of loyalty, I wouldn't say and all that so I got 14 days confined to barracks and, I don't know, fined a week's pay or something. And that was my first taste of army discipline. Because when you're confined to barracks you do all your

41:30 normal thing plus when you knock off and you're exhausted you go and spend an hour on the parade ground under the duty sergeant. And before everyone gets up in the morning you do the same thing. And you weren't allowed to go to the Salvation Army hut or anything. You had to sit in your barracks when you weren't doing something for the army. You also had to go and clean all the offices and things when they called you.

Tape 2

00:33 **Do you want to tell us about going to Melbourne and seeing these shows? This is in the '50s?**

Not really. I'm starting to get you on to the army business now.

We can always go back. We can go forward and back as much as we like, it doesn't matter really.

01:00 **You mentioned Frankie Lane so that period, the '50s, there were many international acts coming out?**

Yes, there were but I remember him, he was so good. 'A white sports coat', I think, was his big song at the time, and I had a white sports coat. No, it was good. To go to Melbourne was good. To drive up to Melbourne in a

01:30 car, that was fantastic.

How long did it take back then?

Oh about an hour. It's not the highway it is now because you used to go through Werribee and then we'd stop at Werribee, it was always halfway, and then we'd get fish and chips or a pie or something. It was a big adventure. It was only a one-lane highway.

So did you have international performers coming to Geelong?

02:00 I don't know, I can't remember.

Okay, well, let's stick with Kapooka. You were there maybe, you think for three months thereabouts?

I think it was three months.

It would be good to get a more detailed picture of that time?

I mentioned to you before that the flu hit the camp

02:30 and, I think, because most of our blokes got the flu our training was cut off and we sort of had to start again after that, because you went through in courses. There'd be say, I don't know, 50 or 60 blokes would go through as a course, and over half those got the flu so there wasn't a course to go through. So when they'd recovered we had to go back to where we'd left off. We used to play a lot of football there.

03:00 Where Kapooka was there were RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] bases there – Uranquinty, Forest Hill, I can't think of the others. And Australian Rules was very popular in the Riverina at the time and I played with Kapooka and we used to go around to these bases on a Saturday and play in the competition. I never played cricket there so I must have only been there in winter.

03:30 The canteen, we had access to the canteen, although you had that much work to do of a night: you'd go up and you'd have your meals and you'd come back and you'd have to be spit polishing your boots and doing everything so you'd be ready for the morning. And being terrified of the instructors, I wouldn't get on the grog there and not be able to do my room or my boots or my uniforms.

04:00 And I was having a hell of a hard time learning to iron, and you had to do all your own washing. And they used to have these big drying rooms there. As big as this and they had these heaters going all the time and wires running backwards and forwards. And you went in there and left your washing in there. You washed it and hung it up in there and if you were lucky it was still there when you went back. So we got that way where we'd take a magazine in there and sit there and watch

04:30 it. And you'd be sweating, the sweat would be pouring off you but you knew your clothes would be safe.

So people would just come and knock off other people's clothes?

Yes. Someone who'd lost theirs or somebody had knocked theirs off so they'd come in there and get yours. You soon learned to get in there and look after it. It was something that was just part of the system. I can't remember anyone knocking off money or things like that. I can't remember that

05:00 but I can remember this. Wojinsky or something his name was, he was on our course, he used to get drunk and he'd come back and he'd stand outside the hut screaming of a night for someone to come and fight him. And we were terrified of him. I met him many years later and I wasn't terrified of him then. He used to go, "Come out here and fight". He was a Polish bloke or something, "You weak Australian bastards, get out here". And no one would go

05:30 out.

Did you say he was an instructor?

No, he was a recruit, but he ended up in the same battalion as me in Vietnam years later. See you've got to remember, I'm talking 1957 so the Korean War had just finished and a lot of your instructors are Korean veterans.

06:00 Well, in 1957 it's only 12 years after World War II finished so a lot of them were World War II blokes with ribbons. They were all right the old fellows. It was the younger ones who were pretty hard; corporals trying to make sergeant. The old sergeants, if you did the right thing they weren't bad. Your officers were young officers out of Duntroon or Portsea and that. You never saw a lot of them, they left it mostly to

06:30 the sergeants and the corporals to break you down and discipline you and turn you out as soldiers.

So these sergeants and corporals probably would have been in Korea?

More than likely, yes. The ones I can remember had Korean ribbons up.

Did they talk about the Korea experience?

Not to us we weren't worth talking to. We weren't worth talking to. If they had a break they'd

07:00 keep to themselves and when you blokes would have a smoke…you'd do a 40 minute period and then you'd have a five minute break before you did your next 40 minute period, and blokes could have a smoke and that. The instructors would go away on [their] own, they wouldn't come and mix with you. That may have changed later on but at that time it didn't happen.

Did you know much about the Korean War and what had happened?

No, nothing at all. Not like I do now.

07:30 It didn't mean anything to me.

Because it was pretty tough?

It was very, very tough. I know that. I know that now and I met a lot of Korean veterans after. We used to get on the grog and talk about it and that, and we had Korean veterans in our battalion who'd talk about it over a beer. Yes, it was real tough, but all wars are aren't they.

08:00 **They sure are. So it sounds like most of your time was spent at barracks working pretty hard, training and working? Did you get out very much? You've told us about one incident?**

No, and that's when I shouldn't have gone out because I was charged with being AWOL [absent without leave] and everything else. I wasn't allowed out but this corporal knew I had money so he took me out. I think it was a Sunday or something, he probably thought he'd get away with it and if we hadn't have hit that car

08:30 he would have got away with it, but I never, ever dobbed him in. I would have copped it later on, wouldn't I? You never dob people in even today, I can't dob people in. You see something going wrong and you think, "No, let someone else". That's just what you're brought up with in the army.

Did you have much recreational sports there?

We had a lot of sport, a real lot of

09:00 sport, because that was part of your training. We had a lot of running, a lot of physical training. They encouraged you to play football if cricket wasn't on at the time. If you got your work done the Salvation

Army and Red Shield used to have huts and that available where you could go and get a book. You could play table tennis there and you could get a cup of coffee there but, as I said, because everything was

09:30 so new to me I was battling to keep up. As I said, I'd never ironed, I'd never ironed a thing in my life, so here you are you've no one to iron for you. If you had a few quid you could bribe someone to iron for you, a few blokes did that, made money doing that. And spit polish, I'd never heard about spit polish until I got in there. They had a lesson teaching you how to spit polish. That was an art, spit polishing.

I didn't realise.

Oh yes.

10:00 You had a special rag and you'd spit polish and they'd come up like that mirror there, you know. And they had to be like that, too. And you'd wear them once and they'd crack and that and you'd take them straight home. You had two pairs of boots, you had your parade boots which were spit polished and you had your normal work boots. The spit polished boots were always spit polished because they were under your bed of a morning and you had a room inspection every morning and that's

10:30 when you'd see the officer, he used to do the room inspection. And you were terrified that something would be out of place. Uniforms at the time weren't real good, I can remember having an old khaki jacket with steel buttons on. They hadn't caught up with the modern army at the time and the recruits weren't getting real good stuff. You had old World War II

11:00 stuff, clothing and that. And that went on for quite a while, I can remember that. You weren't real impressed with it. You got a good battle dress and you probably got one good shirt but a lot of your training gear was very, very rough, you know, your shirts and your trousers, old khaki stuff, throw offs, probably left overs from the war, but that's what it was like in those days. In

11:30 1957 or '58 there was something like 2500 infantrymen defending Australia. It's not a lot, is it? That's all there was defending Australia at the time. There were only three battalions, the SAS [Special Air Service] were just starting up. So the army was just getting into the stage at that time, there was

12:00 no thought about Vietnam or anything. There was a battalion in Malaya that was on rotation, and that's all they had to do, prepare a battalion for Malaya. And they could take troops from the other battalions and send them off because the other battalions weren't on stand-by for anywhere, there was no threat or anything. So the army was really in a bad way in the late '50s. I still had my old .303.

You said you had a

12:30 **bit to do with the air bases around Kapooka, is that right?**

The what?

The air bases, the airports?

No, we used to play football against them on a Saturday. We were in some sort of a competition that included them. I think there were a few civilian teams in it, but it was a competition that included all the services and there was probably a couple of towns. I used to play with Kapooka. I wasn't much good but I made up the numbers.

13:00 That was good because you'd go there and usually they'd put something on afterwards. You'd go on a bus and they'd put a barbecue or something on after and you'd have a couple of drinks. And that was a real day out because you never got any leave at all. No leave during your basic training. That might have changed nowadays, I don't know.

Did you

13:30 **regret that you didn't stick with your idea, your plan of getting into the air force?**

I didn't have time to think about it. I wondered what struck me. I probably thought what was I doing in anything. It was such a shock to the system, it really was. I never thought it would be like that. I had high ideas about going in and getting a uniform and getting a gun, but I never thought about what you had to do before you got to that stage and it was really terrible.

Had you joined up with any mates, did you know anyone else?

No. I just went

14:00 in on my own. You made a few mates when you got in there, blokes in a similar situation. A lot of them had knocked around a bit, you know, they'd been out in the bush and things like that, but I'd done nothing, I'd never left home.

There were others that were finding it as tough as you?

Quite a few never made it. Quite a few never made the door, never got through the basic training.

14:30 They changed their minds or they weren't suitable or something like that. I was pretty fit, I was only about 9 stone then. I was fit and active and that sort of helped me through. And I nodded my head at

everything they said, so I was probably exactly what they wanted.

Did you have weapons training during that time?

Yes. You had one go at the range, I think. You learned how to

15:00 load and fill magazines and how to aim, they taught you how to aim. And I think at the end of it they took us to the rifle range once to shoot. But all that came when you went on to your corps training, that's when you got on to the other weapons, but you did fire the rifle once.

And you were issued with a rifle?

Yes, well, you see you had to be for part of your drill.

15:30 And that rifle had to be locked away and stored safely and the bolt had to be taken out of the rifle and put somewhere else away from the rifle. The rifle had to be kept immaculate. You learned how to clean a rifle I can tell you that. The rifle was immaculate and that's one thing they used to get you on if your rifle wasn't real clean. So they were sort of preparing you there before they

16:00 send you on to do your corps training, before you're ready to be made a soldier. They just give you all the basics so whoever gets you next has got something to work on. And that's what happened when you went to your corps training.

What kind of rifle was it?

A .303, the same that they used in the Second World War, an old .303, very heavy.

So they were old? They were

16:30 **ex-Second World War?**

Yes. How long did they go back? Thirty-odd years before we got them. They were very old. And they were chipped and you had to polish the wood up a bit, they couldn't get you to polish it too much but you had to have a little bit of shine on the wood and the stock. You used to do that with

17:00 that part of your hand, the Nugget [shoe polish]. 'Buff it' they called it, buff the nugget in and just keep working it until it shined up. They had special rifles there for parades and that, special parades, you got issued with a special rifle and they were in real good condition. So if you got picked for a guard, say, in rifle [company] then you'd get issued with a special rifle to go on that guard.

So what would

17:30 **being a guard in Wagga entail?**

Maybe Anzac Day on the cenotaph or something like that, Armistice Day, something like that, where they had to provide a guard of honour for the local town. So they'd pick the blokes who were drilling [marching] the best and send them and give them the training they needed and send them off.

Did you do that?

No, I did it later on at the cenotaph in Sydney, at Martin Place, but that's when I went to 2 Battalion. I was picked

18:00 there but I didn't do it in recruit training.

Did you have to do guard duties at Kapooka?

Yes, 'picket' [duty] they called it. You'd go out to the guard house and I don't think you carried a rifle, I think you carried a bayonet and you'd just wander around the camp. I think you did two hours on and four hours off or something, and you just wandered around the camp. I don't know what you were looking for,

18:30 but you were on picket, you know. Maybe you had to light fires at the kitchen early in the morning before the cooks got there and things like that, but every night there'd be pickets on. And you might get one every two weeks or something.

With a partner?

No, no. You'd be given a certain area and that's the area you'd wander around.

19:00 I'd forgotten all about that until you mentioned it, there you go.

So you'd light the fires in the kitchen? That was part of the duty?

If you were employed in the kitchen. Say the cooks came on at 5 o'clock, well, the fires would have to be going for them to prepare breakfast and that, so it would be all set up and all you had to do was make sure they were lit, so they would have been burning for an hour or so when the cooks got there. You turned the gas on or whatever it was and have everything ready so the cooks just walked in and

19:30 started preparing the meal. Maybe it took a while to warm up, I don't remember.

Were there ever any incidents that you can remember when you were on guard, on picket?

No. I patrolled the room where the clothes were to make sure nobody had knocked them off. No, I can't remember any incidents there. I say the only thing I can remember is

20:00 when everyone got the flu and I went in for the boxing and that's about it, and when I got the 14 days [confined to barracks]. That was a shock to the system because that wasn't long after I'd been in.

You said that the duty officer, you'd have to go on parade at the end of the day, during that 14 days…

Duty sergeant.

Duty sergeant, sorry.

20:30 Yes, he'd tell you what he wanted you to turn out in and it might be pack and side arms and slouch hat or whatever and then he'd have you on the big parade ground, right in the middle of the camp, and he'd drill you for an hour. He'd tell you what dress you had to wear the next day and then he'd make you open your pack and then he'd inspect everything that was in there and everything and then he'd

21:00 drill you for an hour. It was just pure bastardry, that's what it was, but that's was CB [confined to barracks] was. The next day he'd ask you to turn out maybe in some other uniform. It was something different every night, just to punish you.

Were you on your own when you were doing this or was there anyone else?

I think I was on my own. I can't remember. I can't remember anyone else on at the time.

21:30 **What was the accommodation like?**

Terrible. They were old, I think they were Nissen huts [semicircular cross section hut made of corrugated steel sheet; named after its inventor, Lieutenant Colonel Peter Nissen, a British mining engineer] they called them. I think there would be up to 20 in a hut, I might be wrong, it might have been 10. But there were a lot of us in the hut, anyway, and they were real cold, the wind used to whistle through them and everything. And you only had two

22:00 blankets and you used to put your great coat on the bed of a night also to try and keep warm. And the shower and the toilets were outside so it would be freezing at night if you had to go to the toilet. You had to get up and go out there. Your underwear was long johns and everything because it was so cold. It was freezing. But it wasn't good accommodation. And then for

22:30 meals you had to march up a big hill to get your meals. It was all designed to break you in.

What were the meals like?

I'm pretty easy to please. I think they were all right. Yes, I think they were all right. I don't know. They were pretty substantial. They did feed you well because you worked so hard.

23:00 **So, three meals a day?**

Yes. Maybe porridge for breakfast, I didn't like porridge but I got to like it. Corned beef or something for lunch and three veggies and stew or something for dinner, plus you always got a tin of peaches or something and maybe you got ice-cream every now and then. No, the meals were all right. They were always the

23:30 same so you didn't put on weight and you were pretty fit and they were substantial and they carried you through. I think that was the idea of them. That was the one thing that they did, feed you well there.

So did you have to do kitchen duty?

Yes, I forgot about that too. Yes, you did. You had to peel spuds. They didn't have spud machines like they've got nowadays. You'd have to wash the dixies. 'Bash the

24:00 dixies' they called it, which was washing the big pans and all that. And then do all the tables and then mop out the floors and that was it. Yes, you had to do that. Toilets, sometimes you did the toilets and the showers because there was no civilian labour or anything, it was all done by the soldiers. Yes, you did all those things it was all part of your

24:30 training. It was all freezing cold with everyone getting around in big great coats when they weren't working.

With the weapons training, so it was just the .303, that was the only weapon you were introduced to?

At that time, I'm sure. I don't think we had the Owen [sub-machine gun] or the Bren gun then. We might have seen it but I don't think we had that until we went on to our next area. We might have seen it

25:00 fired and that. You see, we didn't do section training or anything like that. It was called 'basic training' and that's what it was, they'd teach you to march and teach you to drill and teach you how to dress properly, teach you how to live in the barracks and get you fit and just teach you how to look after your rifle, how to drill with your rifle and we ended up firing it.

How did you go when you first fired it?

I was a shocking

25:30 shot. I was never any good. When I became a sergeant, later on, and you had to qualify, I just used to put my blokes in the butts and fire into the gravel and tell them to mark a hit for me. I was a terrible shot. No good at all.

What did you fire at on the range?

It was a big sort of a mound and the blokes would be down the other side and they'd have these machines that were put up, these big

26:00 targets, and you'd go back maybe 200 or 300 yards and you'd fire at those. And then, say you were on 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and they'd bring them down and they'd get the score for 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. But I was hopeless, a terrible shot.

Were you standing up and firing of lying down?

No, lying down, always lying down, lying on a ground sheet. Yes, I never fired

26:30 standing up until later on, until we were getting ready for Vietnam and that, but not there. And they were very strict on the range with safety precautions and that, you had to clear your weapons and that, and it had to be checked that you'd cleared them so no one would be shot or any accident would happen.

So checked by somebody else?

The sergeant or the corporal, whoever was in charge of the firing party. He would

27:00 walk along and check everyone's weapons before you could get up, and make sure there was no round and it was empty. You had drills for that. You'd make sure the bolt was open and the magazine off and he'd just come around and check there wasn't a round up the breach. Safety was something they started very early in the piece, pushing into you, safety with weapons. It was very

27:30 important for an infantryman because a lot of blokes got shot by their own [hand].

So the way you held the weapon was part of that?

Yes, not so much then but later on when you were doing training patrols and all that. And the state that you'd have your weapon at, whether you'd have one up the spout or whether you wouldn't, you know, if you were on 'safe' or it wasn't on 'safe'. The forward scout never had his weapon on safe

28:00 because he just couldn't afford to do anything. He had to be ready to blast. It depends what job you're doing and where you're at and what state we wanted the weapons to be at, what the enemy situation was. There it was just weapon handling, so you got to know the weapon really well and it became part of you.

So were there certain rules or regimes about different position that you held the weapon in?

28:30 **So, for example, with drill it was always up? Can you describe that, the way that it was held?**

Well, when you marched it was like that [right hand under the butt down the side of the body; rifle barrel leaning on the right shoulder; trigger out]. You marched and the weapon was at the shoulder-arms position. When you were standing at attention it would be down by your side and at ease it would be out the front and, yes, there were positions for the weapons. But we're not talking about patrols or anything, we're just talking about drill, all these positions for drill.

29:00 Later on as you got into training for war and that, there wasn't a lot of time or drill but the drill was what was designed to teach you how to handle weapons and how to do things and how to react to orders and everything. You know, throwing that rifle around in all the drill movements got you to know that weapon because if you dropped that weapon you were gone. And there was no way in the world you were going to drop that weapon, so it more or less became a

29:30 third arm.

What do you mean you were gone?

Well, imagine if you threw the weapon from whatsaname [order arms] up to the shoulder and you dropped it and you were the only one that dropped it and the clatter it makes, the sergeant would just come and eat you. And a lot of that happened when we were first learning, but it very rarely happened later on. And we did parades for Princess

30:00 Alice and everything on the New South Wales showgrounds, I think. We did a lot of big parades later on for celebrities that came out. And we'd be weapon perfect, you know, everyone working together. When you marched together you had perfect lines and that because you trained and trained and trained for that. That's what it was designed for at Kapooka, just to

30:30 get to know your weapon so it became part of you and that was with the drill. And the drill movements were designed not only for show but to make you learn how to use that weapon properly. And they were hard. They're not like they are now, they hardly do any movements now. When you had that big old .303 and throwing that around it was very heavy and everyone had to work together.

What did it weigh, do you know?

31:00 No, I'd only be guessing, 27 pounds or something, I don't know, I'd only be guessing, but it was heavy. And then the bayonet was on it was heavier again.

So you did training with a bayonet at Kapooka?

Yes, you learned how to do bayonet attacks and that, that was part of your training, but most of it was done with what they called – I can't think of them –

31:30 they had big sticks with big boxing gloves on the end of them and you did bayonet training with that.

Tell me about that? I haven't heard of that before, how did that work?

Well, you'd face each other and you'd have these big sticks with these big padded ends on them and you'd go through the movements of bayonet charge.

To make contact?

Yes. It's not hard,

32:00 but that's how you'd learn them. And then later on they'd have stuffed bags and you'd go through bayoneting the bags full of straw and that. It was pretty sharp moving. You had "In. Out." and "On guard." and all this sort of stuff, and move on to the next one. They'd have perhaps three or four and you'd have to bayonet three of them on your way through.

32:30 **At a particular pace when you went through?**

No, just keep moving. No, just keep moving. They'd have a little range set up with these bags on and you'd do one and then move on to the next and move on to the next. And they'd show you how to hold your arms properly when you did a bayonet charge so the bayonet went in properly and all that.

33:00 **Did they have a person drawn on the bag?**

No, just an old bag full of straw, no person drawn on them.

Where you told to aim for a particular part of the body?

Yes, the main mass of the body, right in the middle, that was, the bag was shaped like a

33:30 body. It didn't have a head or anything on it, you just went right in the middle. It didn't have a head or arms or anything, it was just tied in the middle of a wooden frame by ropes. And if you were about the tenth bloke to have a go at it, it was pretty messy by the time you got there. But that was a big old .303 bayonet. When we went to Malaya, we hadn't been there long and we got

34:00 issued with the 7.62 FN [Fabrique Nationale L1A1 7.62mm Self-loading Rifle (SLR)], which replaced the .303. That bayonet was smaller.

So how long was the .303 bayonet?

Probably nearly two foot, it was a fairly long bayonet. When we used to do pickets in the camp that's all you'd walk around with, the bayonet. Your web belt on and the bayonet and a scabbard [bayonet holder].

34:30 **So, not attached to the rifle?**

No, just in your scabbard, no rifle, just the bayonet. It was a fearsome looking knife when you pulled it out, about that long steel and that long handle.

So just getting back to picket [duty], what were your instructions? You must have had some training in how to do picket, did you?

Well, you just walked around an area. You were

35:00 given an area and they'd say, "This is your area to patrol", and I can't even remember what you'd do if you found someone who wasn't supposed to be there. You just walked around and waited for your two hours to finish and try and meet up with your mate on the edge of his [area] and have a talk for a minute. You'd make sure the sergeant wasn't sneaking around to see you weren't having a sleep?

The sergeant would do that?

Yes, that was his job, the sergeant or the corporal.

35:30 **So you don't remember what you were instructed to do? You had this bayonet, but if there was some incident, if they've said, you know, use your bayonet?**

I think that was just more for you to feel like you

36:00 had something. I don't know if you'd pull a bayonet out and stab someone. You'd just ask them what they were doing and take their name and that sort of thing or you might hold on to them and take them back to the guard room. I don't think you'd ever pull your bayonet out. That's just…it gives you a little bit of confidence if you've got something like that stuck on your hip. I don't think anyone ever used them. And it just might have been traditional, too, that the picket walked around with a bayonet. I don't know. But you were never given orders to

36:30 stick anyone with it.

I just imagine that maybe some of the local fellows in town might come down into the camp and that kind of thing?

No, that never happened. I suppose it happened they'd be invited down for various things, but we were a fair way out of town and I think there was a fence around the camp, a big wire fence, I'm sure there was, all the way around the camp. And then

37:00 outside the camp you had all the married quarters for the blokes who lived in the married quarters, all the instructors and staff and that. So there was a village just outside. No, I don't know what it was, you just wandered around there and, I suppose, stopped people breaking into the kitchen. If people knew there was a picket on they wouldn't try and break into the kitchen and that.

Did you have to sharpen your bayonet?

37:30 No, you never sharpened your bayonet.

So you didn't do any grenade practice?

I'm trying to think. I don't think we did any grenade training until we went to Ingleburn, until we went to advanced infantry training. I think that was the first time that we did. I don't think we did grenade training at Kapooka,

38:00 I think Ingleburn was the first place. I could be wrong but I'm sure we didn't throw a grenade there.

So did you make friends with anyone there that you stayed in touch with that you continued through your service life with?

When I was going through there, at the end of the training,

38:30 all our mob were taken to SAS, but I was terrified of heights so I never went, so most of our blokes were picked to go for training for SAS. I ran into them later on in Vietnam and that and when we did exercises sometimes SAS would join in with us, would become a platoon with us, SAS or the airborne platoon,

39:00 because they didn't have a big unit at the time so they'd sometimes join our battalion and be part of the battalion and you'd run into them again then. But no one that I sort of wrote to or anything like that.

So did you know that they were looking at making selections for the SAS in the Kapooka group?

No, it was when we left Kapooka, just as we were leaving.

39:30 That was 1957 and SAS was just getting started and they had to have recruits and they came and took everyone who wanted to go, and most of them wanted to go but I was terrified of heights so I told them I didn't want to go. So I was left there and went on on my own. It was a funny way they did it then because their selection and that is so hard now, but they did take all the blokes who wanted to go and, I suppose, they

40:00 weeded them out later on.

So how high could you go and feel comfortable for before you started to feel nervous?

I don't know. I wouldn't fly. I never flew. I wouldn't go up on a tall building and look out or anything like that. I was always terrified of heights and then in Vietnam the only way you could travel was by

40:30 helicopter. In Malaya we were on a big exercise and we had to fly back with these twin and single [engine Scottish Aviation] Pioneers, which were British aircraft, and I refused, and I got into all sorts of strife. I wasn't going to get on those, so they sent me back in a jeep, but I got in a lot of trouble over that.

What affect would it have on you?

I don’t know, I just

41:00 felt like I was going to fall or something. I’d dream of it and everything but when you had to fly in Vietnam and that I sort of overcame it a bit. And then when I did the air traffic control course and understood what kept an aircraft flying I overcame it a bit and it’s not bad now. But don’t offer me an aircraft ticket. It’s silly, I know, but I just…

41:30 **You’re lucky you didn’t join the air force?**

Well, as I said, we lived in helicopters in Vietnam but you had no choice there. When we did our training at Canungra, they used to say the last thing was jumping off this great big water tower into water with all your gear, your rifle and all of it…

Tape 3

00:31 **If you could just talk us through the end of that period at Kapooka and then moving on up to Sydney or to Ingleburn?**

Well, when you finished your training at Kapooka you had what you called your march-out parade. And in the last week or so you got ready for that parade, where you could invite relatives or friends and you got dressed up and you sort of participated in a big parade where the army showed off what they’d

01:00 turned you into and you sort of marched to show them how well you were on the way to being a soldier. You put your best battle dress on and spit polished boots and everything, and they called a big parade and everyone from the camp came down to watch you march out and so on. If you had relatives handy or if they wanted to come from interstate they could. None of mine did. It was probably too far away and they weren’t interested

01:30 anyway. And then you got about a week’s leave. You could go home in your army uniform and have a week’s leave before you reported back to Ingleburn, to the School of Infantry. I came home and didn’t do much. I walked around town in my uniform trying to show off and had a few drinks with people and that. I can’t remember it very well, coming home, nothing interesting happened or anything.

02:00 After that you reported back to the School of Infantry. It wasn’t the School of Infantry it was 4 Battalion. The army at that stage had three battalions: 1 , 2 and 3. Which were infantry battalions, with one battalion operating in Malaya for a two year period and then rotating with one of the other two battalions; 4 Battalion was the training battalion at Ingleburn, which eventually became the School of Infantry, but at that time it was called 4 Battalion. And that was

02:30 where you went to learn all about being an infantryman. And there you’d learn all about machine guns. At that time they had the Vickers machine gun. You’d learn about that. You’d learn about the mortars, they had a little 2-inch mortar. I don’t think they had the 81 mil [81mm mortar], they had another mortar there that I can’t remember. You’d learn tactics. You’d learn patrolling in the bush.

03:00 You’d learn how to work in a platoon, what a platoon was, the organisation of a platoon and everything to do with the infantry. And I think you’d spend about six weeks there before you were posted to your battalion. It was an interesting period. There wasn’t a lot of drill because you had so much to learn. They treated you with a bit more respect. You weren’t the garbage you were at Kapooka. You weren’t quite an

03:30 infantryman but you were well on the way. So the instructors there were good and you sort of got on well with them and they taught you everything they could about weapons, field craft, the organisation of a battalion and everything like that. So it was a good six week period where you were sort of in the transition stage from being a recruit to becoming a member of a battalion. And then at the end of that six week period you were

04:00 posted to your battalion. Now, that was about it as far as that went. You were allowed a bit of leave there, too, so you would go into Sydney or Liverpool. No one had cars so you had to rely on public transport. But Liverpool was a real army town at the time. It probably still is but at that time there were army pubs, the Railway [Hotel] was an army pub and everybody gathered in there of a weekend from both Ingleburn,

04:30 Casula and Holsworthy. They’d all sort of meet in those pubs.

How big a part did grog play in army life and army culture at that stage?

A hell of a big part because that’s where you went when you knocked off of a night. They didn’t care that you were 17 and that. You were a soldier and you had access to the mess and you could participate as much as anybody else in drinking. I wasn’t drinking really heavily

05:00 then because I was learning a fair bit and I can’t remember any big sessions at Ingleburn, but at the end of that six week period we were posted to our battalions.

And you were saying when you came home for that week you were strutting around with your uniform?

Well, that's what you did. I think that was part of the thing that they sent you home in your uniform and you could have got into civvies if you wanted, but being a young bloke of 17, I'm in the army and I'm not the dickhead I was when I was here

05:30 before, I'm now a soldier. And you went probably to dances where people would see you and visited your mates. They'd have a pair of shorts and you'd wear your uniform, they probably thought, "Look at this dickhead", but you didn't think that way. You know, you were well on to being a soldier now and you wanted to show it off. And soldiers didn't have a bad name at that time either, like if you hitchhiked home you wouldn't have any trouble getting a ride home, which I used to do a hell of a lot, hitchhike.

06:00 **And how were you adapting to, I mean, that six weeks sounds pretty intense, you say you were learning a lot?**

Well, it was interesting too, because it wasn't all drill after drill you were learning about weapons and about things you'd had nothing to do with before. You were learning about what was the organisation of a battalion, what was in a battalion, it was all stuff you wanted to learn. You'd go out in the bush and learn a bit of field craft, you'd learn how to operate in a section, how to patrol. Just

06:30 getting an idea of it mind you, not really getting into it.

So was it more lectures?

There were quite a few lectures but more practical than lectures. You were going on the range a lot more and shooting the weapons. You were firing the Bren gun, which you'd never come across. You were learning how to strip and assemble it so it was automatic. You were going on the range and throwing a grenade. They had what they called the EY rifle [Lee Enfield .303 SMLE Mk III Extra Yoke] which was a grenade launcher,

07:00 you were firing that. All these things were good. Good for an infantryman, bread and butter, you know, things you wanted to learn once you'd found you were going to be an infantryman, so it was a good period, I didn't mind that.

So at what stage did you find out you were going to be infantry?

Probably halfway through your training at Kapooka. Most blokes went to infantry unless you were an engineer and you might have gone to RAEME [Royal Australian Electrical & Mechanical Engineers] or something like that and if you were a mechanic you'd go to transport.

07:30 **And from the word go that's what you wanted to do? You wanted to be infantry? Was there the possibility of going into other units?**

Well, see, remember I wanted to go into the air force, this was all just a "what's happening" sort of period for me. I just went along like a sheep with the herd, you know, the flock. Whatever happened I went into it and if I was going into the infantry then that's all right, that'll do me.

So what happened at the end of Ingleburn,

08:00 **the six weeks there?**

Then you got posted to your battalion, and there was 1, 2 and 3 Battalion: 2 Battalion [also known as 2 RAR (Royal Australian Regiment)] had just come back from Malaya and had been posted to Holsworthy [south-western Sydney]. 3 Battalion [3 RAR] had just gone over and 1 Battalion [1 RAR], I don't know where 1 Battalion was, probably at Enoggera

08:30 or somewhere, I can't really say where they were but, anyway, I was posted to 2 Battalion, which was just over at Holsworthy. So you marched into your battalion and everyone yelled, "New recruit, you'll be sorry", and all this sort of thing while you're coming in there. Most of them had just come back from Malaya so they were all trained soldiers. A lot of Korean veterans and some World War II veterans and here's these young kids coming in there, you know, open slather,

09:00 "Let's give them a hard time" and all that, although they didn't, they were bloody good to us.

So the Malayan conflict [Malayan Emergency] was happening at that time, was there any thought that you would be heading in that direction?

Yes. You looked forward to it. The period I'm talking about is '58 or '59. '59 I was posted to 2 Battalion and we knew we were going back to Malaya in '61. So you had two years training before you went back to Malaya.

09:30 We did a lot of exercises in the bush and that was the best thing that could have happened, because you had all these blokes who'd come back from Malaya and these Korean veterans, these old soldiers, and the knowledge they passed on to us was invaluable. How to move in the bush, how to live in the bush, how to survive in the bush if you had no food. The things they taught you, you just couldn't get out of a book. This was pure

10:00 experience. How to spend a night in the bush comfortably without worrying about this, that and everything else. The big thing, though, was how to move and how to use your eyes and what to look for. You don't look into the jungle you look through it and that sort of stuff and how to track, how to look for signs. They were brilliant and they passed all that on to us. We went on exercises, we had to go to Canungra [50km west of the Gold Coast, southern Queensland] which

10:30 was terrible. We went there twice. Canungra was shocking. It was a real hard trip through Canungra in those days. You spent about six weeks going through this Jungle Training Centre, where they have live firing ranges. They take you through, you've got an instructor behind you, and you've got an automatic weapon, and you've got to patrol and then all of a sudden a target would jump up and you've got to fill it full of holes and all this sort of thing, so you react automatically. And then you go on an exercise where you have an

11:00 enemy and you've got to try and get him before he gets you and it was up in the Wiangaree State Forest, which is the roughest country in Australia, full of jungle and the biggest hills you've ever seen. They made it as hard as possible for you. They had assault courses. You did everything at Canungra.

Can I just ask you a bit more about Holsworthy? What was the basic set up here and how did you fit into the scheme of things?

I was posted to B Company. There were four rifle companies,

11:30 A, B, C, D, and support and administration, plus headquarters company. I was posted to a rifle company. The huts were pretty old but they were a lot more comfortable than what they'd been at Kapooka. There was a section to a hut. In a rifle company you had three platoons and in each platoon you had three sections. So your section lived in the hut

12:00 together and trained together and lived together and everything and got to know each other so you were the best of mates and that. Occasionally, we'd be able to get into Liverpool for leave. You'd go in with your mates. Some of your married mates would sometimes take you home for a meal. Occasionally, you'd get into Sydney to the old, what was the name of the hotel, The Civic [in Pitt Street], I think, was an army hotel in there. If you got in there for a weekend you'd

12:30 spend all your money on the one day but you'd live on memories for a fortnight, you know, you only got paid fortnightly. I played a lot of sport there but we were doing a lot of exercise there. We were going up to Tin Can Bay up in Queensland and we were exercising with everyone. We were getting ready for our service in Malaya. That was about 1958, '59, '60. So we were doing a hell of a lot of exercise.

13:00 We weren't spending a lot of time in Holsworthy. Even if we went out in the bush, like we'd go south somewhere, I can't remember where we went, but you'd go out for a few days in the bush or you'd go north, two trips to Canungra and a big exercise Grand Slam at Sarina [40km south of Mackay, Queensland]. That was a big exercise, it involved, I think, the poms coming out and the

13:30 New Zealanders came out for it. We spent a fair time on that and there you lived in the bush, you know. You'd take your rations to the bush and you'd be re-supplied in the bush and you wouldn't have cooks or anything like that. You lived in the bush under operational conditions.

That was called Grand Slam did you say?

Yes, Operation Grand Slam.

Can you tell us a bit more about that? What were you specifically trying to do?

Okay, it was a big exercise where troops came from all

14:00 over Australia. At that stage, 1960 it must have been, SAS even sent some troops, and some of my old mates were there. They were at the stage where they were now into doing a bit of training and so on. It exercised everyone, artillery, armoured corps, everyone came together at this place outside Serina and it was, I

14:30 think there were two battalions involved, it was that big. And they had an enemy that invaded, because it was a coastal area, they invaded the coast and our job was to track down and find this enemy and wipe them out. And we spent about six weeks doing that. Different narratives, like the enemy is on the run or the enemy is dug in and you have to move in and take them out and so on. And it exercised you in all stages of war: retreat, advance, defence,

15:00 everything. You had what there was of the Army Aviation Corps assisting you. You could use them as spotter aircraft to spot for the artillery. I think we might have, at one stage we might have got on the light ships and done an assault on the beach further up. It just exercised you in every phase of warfare and it was the biggest exercise in Australia for a number of years or something.

15:30 Probably the first big exercise since the Second World War, Grand Slam it was called.

Was that up the Queensland coast, New South Wales coast somewhere?

Yes. And it took us about five or six days to get there. We went by convoy and each town we went through we'd stop in the afternoon and march through the town and they'd put us up at the

showgrounds and they'd open the town for us during the night. They made us welcome at every town, Forbes [300km north-west of Sydney],

16:00 Parkes and all those places. It was great.

How long was the manoeuvre there?

Six weeks. They do a lot of them now, but that was one of the first big ones since the war. It took a lot of planning and everything and it probably cost a lot of money bringing troops from all over Australia plus overseas and that, because there were overseas troops involved.

And who played the enemy in that exercise?

16:30 I think it was the SAS. I think the SAS played the enemy, I'm not sure, but they had an actual enemy dressed as enemy and that.

And who was considered the enemy then? How were they dressed? Were they made to look like the communist terrorists or something?

They were dressed in khaki and that and they had head-bands and that. They captured me and some other bloke and they belted the hell out of us and there was a hell of a bloody stink over it, because they got too serious and really gave us a

17:00 hiding and hurt us. And that caused a big blue. They were sort of acting like they were the enemy. They wouldn't talk to us and they were asking us questions and they were hitting us with rifles and everything, they were bloody terrible blokes. They got really carried away. I think there was a big after-action report after that about how you act as enemy and so on. They got a bit carried away.

Were you able to get yours back later on?

17:30 No. I probably never saw them again. I didn't know them.

So in that respect it sounds like it was a good exercise, a very realistic one?

Yes, it did a lot for the army that, they got a lot out of it. That was in 1960 I'm sure, but blokes that served back then will remember Grand Slam because just about the whole army was involved, support troops and everything.

18:00 **And you said how you weren't the best of shots, was that still the case?**

When we went to Canungra it didn't matter because you had an automatic weapon and if you just sprayed you were likely to get one shot in. But everyone knew I was a hopeless shot. I

18:30 had to get help from the bloke in the butts to qualify because to be an infanteer and not qualifying was not good. No, I got through and at that time, 1960, a bloke, I was in this Donny Lord's section and he gave me the Bren gun and that's when they first called me 'Butch'. I was known as 'Butch' Brady right through my army career. I was only a young bloke and he

19:00 gave me the Bren gun. He was a section commander and he called me 'Butch' the Bren Gunner and that stuck with me right through then. So I carried the Bren gun and that was probably the reason why I did, because I couldn't shoot. With the Bren gun it just set up a pattern, as long as you fired in the general direction, the 'beaten zone' as they called it, you'd get some rounds in there so that's probably why I got that.

Can you tell us about the Bren gun and your experiences with that and what was involved in making that do

19:30 **its job?**

Well, it was a heavy weapon, a lot heavier than the others, and usually the thickest bloke in the section got it. Well, that's what the old soldiers did, they gave it to the young blokes. And I had that for about a year or so until I got made up to a lance corporal. But it was the main fire power of the section. It sort of slowed you down a

20:00 bit, it was pretty heavy and you had to carry magazines and that. On marches, if you got tired someone else would take it off you. They looked after you. They looked after you pretty well. We did an exercise, I remember, and we were climbing up this hill and it was like that [near vertical] and I had the Bren gun then and I was just dragging it. We were really in trouble getting up this hill and someone kicked a

20:30 rock up above us and all this rock fall came down and it hit this bloke just behind me in the head. He was a Scotsman and it killed him. And we were stuck on this mountain this night going up like that and we had to get him down. It was a hell of a bloody thing getting him down in the night.

How did you manage? How did you do that?

The sergeants and that got him down but that sort of brought home to us how fair dinkum [serious] this training was. The rock went right through his head and killed him and a lot of us saw him.

21:00 They had to just get down the hill the best way they could. It took them all night dragging his body down.

Was that the first sort of bad accident?

The first one I'd seen, yes. The first one I'd seen killed by training like that.

Were there other accidents, for example like in Grand Slam where you said you got knocked around a bit?

There probably was. There were a lot of vehicle accidents. Blokes got killed and injured in vehicle accidents.

21:30 The army at the time used to say that they'd make allowances for four or something on exercises. That was what they expected. They used to publish those figures that they expected, I think it was four or something on a big exercise. That was unfortunate and that sort of changed the way we used to climb hills and all after that, too. You know, we'd stagger, instead of one behind the others we'd go sideways and things like that so the blokes

22:00 behind you would miss because you couldn't stop rock fall when you were going up steep hills.

It sounds like it just missed you as well this rock?

I can't remember. It just missed me but he was just behind me and it hit him. We used to slam our head against the wall and they'd yell up the top, "Rock's coming", and you'd push your head right up against the wall so it would miss you. That's one of the steepest hills, no, I went up a steeper hill in Vietnam, but that's one of the steepest hills I ever went up,

22:30 clawing your way up.

So at this point you said you became a lance corporal around that stage?

Yes, in the late '60s we were down doing tank cooperation at Puckapunyal, we were doing a bit of work with the tanks, and I got promoted down there. And we went to the mess that time and all the old soldiers who wouldn't take promotion used to give you a hell of a hard time when you got promoted.

23:00 Anyway, I went into the mess this night and they had a table set up with a single candle, 'For Lance Corporal Brady Only'. They gave you hell for years after that. And I had a couple of diggers there in my section who were brilliant map readers and I was pretty average at map reading and when I'd get them lost, God, they'd give me a hard time, "Where are you? Come on, what are you going to do? How are you going to get us out of this?" and all that sort of thing. They really bloody bugged you the

23:30 old soldiers.

These were old…

Korean veterans, yes.

What did you learn from those fellows? Obviously they knew their stuff?

Yes, you'd learn everything off them, map reading and signs to look for in the bush. They made up a lot of their own…we never spoke in the bush, we'd never talk in the bush, we'd only use hand signals. We'd go out in the bush for 10 days and no one would talk. If you had to talk you'd

24:00 whisper. And we'd come back in to the canteen and we're, "Pass the beer will you", you'd whisper. "What the bloody hell are we whispering for?" You know, you couldn't help it. In Vietnam, when you'd go out for 20 days it was worse, you'd just never talk, never talk.

There must have been quite a repertoire of hand signals then?

Yes.

Can you remember some of those?

That was all clear (thumbs up). That was the enemy (thumbs down). That was the Bren gun (thumb behind).

24:30 Ambush, if you wanted to go and do an ambush (right arm pointed to the side); scout (index finger up, right hand); if you wanted the section commander to come forward (two left-hand fingers on right shoulder); if you wanted any member (four left-hand fingers on right shoulder).I can't remember riflemen. But we had a hell of a lot of them and that's the only way we talked.

So as a lance corporal what did that mean for you? How did it feel?

It meant I was the second in command [2IC] of a

25:00 section. Remember, I said there's three platoons in a company and three sections in a…a section is 10 men, a platoon is 30 men, so I'd be second in command of a section of 10 men. Now, generals and all will tell you that the leader who leads the most men is the section commander who leads 10 men,

because a platoon commander talks to the sergeant, the sergeant talks to the

25:30 corporals and all the way down there's someone that passes it on, but the corporal has 10 men and that's the highest number of men that you command in the army. And that's the highest number of men that you command in the army, which makes sense when you think about it. There's always someone who you pass it on to but the corporal has 10 men.

So you described your relationship with the older diggers, but what about the blokes that came in with your batch, the younger guys?

They were all right. They were all right.

26:00 We were all competing for rank. And I was an altar boy at the time and the company commander and the CSM [company sergeant major] were very strict Catholics and the padre would come out in the bush and I'd jump up and I'd do the altar boy because no one else would. So everyone reckons that that's how I got my rank because the CSM and the company commander were Catholics. So they said that's the only way you got to be a lance corporal because you're a Catholic and you're an altar boy. So I had to wear that for bloody

26:30 years too. They were probably right though.

Were you a practising Catholic at that stage?

Yes, I still went to mass because my parents were so hard on it, Dad was so hard on it. I suppose you just carried on because it was something to do, too. They had church parades right through your army training and that. You always had to go to church. If you didn't got to church you

27:00 had to work and dig gardens and that so that helped, your religion.

You mentioned an exercise at Pucka [Puckapunyal] with the tanks?

Yes, tank cooperation.

Can you describe that for us?

Well, we went down there to learn how to work with the tanks. If you're working with the tanks and you're not telling them where you are and all that sort of thing they'll just run over you and kill you. And not only that you learned to be able to use the tanks in case you were in contact

27:30 with a bigger enemy than you could handle. They used to have a little phone at the back of the tank. And you'd have your section behind the tank and you'd be talking to the tank commander about what you're going to do and what you want him to do and all this sort of thing. The infantry learned how to work with the tanks in a safe way. And you'd learn what the tanks could do and what fire support they could give you, and what they were able to do in cooperation with infantry

28:00 and how they wanted you to help protect them and all these sort of things. It was pretty good. It was worthwhile but, unfortunately, when we went to Malaya and Vietnam we never had tanks. Although after us the tanks did turn up in Vietnam, but that's when we had left.

How did you get along with the tank crews? We've heard some stories about them.

They were all right. We'd get a ride on them. Anything that gave the infantry a ride was good. If there was no enemy and you

28:30 had to go a fair way you'd just pile on the tanks. If there was any fire you jumped off. You learned how to get off the tanks quick and into a fighting position. In Vietnam it wasn't the tanks it was the APCs, the armoured personnel carriers, we used them a hell of a lot, a hell of a lot. As I said, there were no tanks in Vietnam that we had to support us. It was just another phase of training. We learned to work with

29:00 artillery and that, too. Eventually we had to learn to work with helicopters too. All these things, the infantry had to learn. There weren't a lot of helicopters in Korea. They started to come in Malaya, but it was mainly a helicopter war in Vietnam so you had to learn to work with helicopters when you got there and before you got there if you

29:30 could get them. Although quite often we'd just have logs to represent helicopters seats and we'd disembark and jump on and all that because Australia only had a few helicopters when we first went over.

What other changes were you seeing with the army – you did a couple of years before you went to Malaya – in terms of technology and structure and stuff?

Not only that we started to get uniforms. Decent uniforms, you know, greens boots, nice boots, good

30:00 boots, all that sort of stuff was happening. We'd heard a rumour we were going to get new weapons but we didn't have them then. The old Owen gun, no, that was still there, no, I think they had the air-cooled one then. They were changing the…instead of the great big magazine at the top and the long barrel they had an air-cooled barrel and a magazine at the side, so the weapons were getting better. A couple of years later we got very modern weapons, but before Malaya we

30:30 still had the .303s, but when we got over there they had jungle carbines which were .303s where the barrel was cut down and they had a flash eliminator on the end and that sort of thing. They were a lighter weapon. I think we got rocket launchers, too, instead of the old EY rifle, which if you put it up to your shoulder you'd break your shoulder, you had to put it against a tree when you fired it, put the butt against the

31:00 tree because it had that much kick, we got rid of them and we got rocket launchers, that sort of thing, you know. But the whole time we were training for Malaya and learning the tactics that were to be used in jungle warfare and that, and training as a section and as a platoon and a company and a battalion. So the whole battalion could fight, the company could fight, the platoon could fight if it went on its own, and the section could fight if it was on its own,

31:30 tying in to be a good battalion. In fact, we were the only battalion that ever went overseas and never lost a soldier through action or anything when we went to Malaya. Our CO [Commanding Officer] was [Alan] 'Boots' Stretton who was the hero of Darwin when the cyclone hit Darwin [Cyclone Tracy decimated Darwin on 25 December 1974]. He went up there and rebuilt Darwin. He was the big boss up there then. He was our colonel in Malaya [and later was promoted to major general]; A.B. Stretton they called him and he was an ex-St Kilda footballer.

32:00 **What other memories do you have of some of the other officers there?**

A lot of dickheads. They were just out of Duntroon and Portsea and every officer was a dickhead. One bloke there wasn't bad. Our company commanders…I don't know, you considered every officer as a dickhead even if he wasn't, you know, because the

32:30 old soldiers told you that, "The officer will be a dickhead. The officer will be a dickhead". We had a brilliant platoon sergeant, a bloke called Alan Bulow. On exercise, when we were moving through the jungle if B Company wasn't the lead company or 6 Platoon wasn't the lead company, they always called for Bulow to go up because he was a brilliant map reader. He taught us a hell of a lot about map reading. He also taught us tactics and everything.

33:00 I'll tell you a little story about Bulow. We used to, in those days we'd go on marches, day-long marches, we'd march out, have lunch and march back. And we always took bully beef and biscuits. That was our lunch. That was all we ever got. Anyway, this day we marched out to the Lucas Heights [nuclear] reactor, as it was called then, and we were going to get our first hot meal. The cooks were going to meet us there. So we get out there and we're

33:30 buggered and this is a big thing, we're going to get a hot meal. So we got our mess tins out and they gave us all our meat, which was corned beef and we're sitting down and we're just about to eat it and we had a German bloke with us, Norbert Gruschner was his name, and he said, "This bloody meat is full of maggots", and we all looked down and it was, it was full of maggots. And without a word, Alan Bulow walked up grabbed him by the neck and

34:00 thumped him. And we all looked with our mouths open and he said, "That's for telling us before we ate it". That was Bulow, you know, and I thought that was very good, that makes sense. He went to Malaya with us, but I think they took him into intelligence because he was so good so we never sort of had him in Malaya.

Describe the map reading skills that were required. You said you weren't too crash hot with the map but what did you

34:30 **need to be good at to handle the map?**

Well, you learned a lot of map reading in the classrooms, how to get grid references and all this, you learned the basics there, and then you'd go out into areas around Holsworthy that you had good maps for and they'd show you every river and every road and everything and you had to visualise that on the map, which I wasn't real good at at that time.

35:00 And we'd go out and I wouldn't know where we were. And these privates, these Korean blokes, would know exactly where we were probably because they'd been out there hundreds of times. And I'd take them the wrong way and they'd get up me and say, "You're useless. You shouldn't be the corporal", and all this. I'd be getting flustered and everything and not be knowing what's going on and wanting to thump them. Anyway, we'd get back and they'd dob me in and they'd give me extra lessons on map reading and Bulow would

35:30 help me a lot. And we went to Malaya and I picked up map reading pretty well there. Although, when we went to Vietnam it was a waste of bloody time because the maps were pretty out-dated and all we had were air photos [aerial photography]and things like that so it didn't really matter. We used to use a lot of pacers then. Because you were in the jungle and you'd have two blokes pacing and then you'd just know what direction you'd be heading and you'd get the two blokes to

36:00 tell you how many paces they'd gone and then you'd know exactly where you were on the map, or you'd have a fair idea. If you wanted to make sure you could get the artillery to fire a shell in and see where that landed and, hopefully, it wasn't on you. You only used smoke and you'd get your idea there. We had

to use a lot of things in Vietnam to work out where you were because the maps were absolutely shocking. They weren't bad in Malaya, they were pretty good in Malaya.

36:30 To me, map reading was a lot of guess work. I wasn't a brilliant map leader.

And being lance corporal what additional skills and responsibilities were there?

You looked after the blokes problems. If they had any foot problems or rashes or anything you'd report it to the sergeant. You'd make sure all their gear was right.

37:00 If you got into a battle, you were supposed to look after the rifle section, the assault section, or maybe the section commander wanted you to go to the gun section. You were just the second in command. If he got knocked off you took over the section. You were the second senior man in the section.

You were saying how all officers were dickhead and even if they weren't they were. Can you give us some examples of the ones that really were,

37:30 **some of the dickheaded-type things that were done, decisions that were made and so on?**

One bloke used to do anything to try and endear himself to the platoon. He'd shout us grog and he'd do anything to try and be one of the boys, which was the worst thing in the world because everyone would take advantage of him. They were

38:00 stand-offish and that. Some of the National Service officers [the National Service Scheme] in Vietnam they had it, they mixed with their blokes and they were the best officers I'd ever seen. These were bloody civilians, you know, and they were good officers and these blokes [regular army officers] were so stand-offish that they wouldn't get the best out of their men. The blokes would work against them rather than work with them. And they couldn't understand that because they were taught the old way, I suppose, at officer school that you're an officer and

38:30 he's an OR [other rank; non-commissioned soldier] and you're different altogether and that's the way you've got to act. They used to do things that you'd say, "What a dickhead this bloke". They'd get you off-side all the time. Before we went to Vietnam, and I'm jumping down the thing here a bit, the RSM, who was a real old soldier, the regimental sergeant major, got all the sergeants and all their platoon commanders in the theatre and said,

39:00 "Gentlemen, if you listen to your platoon sergeant and do as he tells you, you've got a chance of coming home alive", and that was just the way that the NCOs [non-commissioned officers] thought about the officers. But a lot of them turned out good in Vietnam, but I can't think of many that were in Malaya, I can't.

So I guess it sounds like a situation where you think, well, I can do

39:30 **better than that but then if you become one of them you sort of…**

You'd never become an officer, no, no, shit no. I was selected for officers' school in Vietnam, but I stuffed that up. No, at the time if they had have realised that by working with the men instead of being the officer and they were the men they would have got a lot more out of them. I really believe that. But they were an officer and you were the OR and you'd do as you were told whether it was right or

40:00 wrong. And, see, a lot of that changed with the National Servicemen because, as I said, soldiers at that time were moulded to do as they were told and not argue even though you might think about it. But when the Natios [National Service soldiers] came in they wanted to know why they had to do it. You know, they were very cluey men, you had businessmen and everything. Young businessmen of 20 years of age and that and a lot of them were white-collar workers who had good positions and they'd been taken away from their job for two years. But they'd look at you and query your

40:30 decisions and say, "Why are we doing this?". And you'd say, "Who are you to ask me?". But you'd get the idea that these blokes are thinkers and you made use of that.

Can you tell us about some of the blokes that you'd knock about with in those early days from Holsworthy, you know, who your group was?

Yes, one of my mates was George Logan, I don't know if you're going to interview him, we sort of stayed off and on mates for years.

41:00 He was a good bloke until he became an officer too, but I think he was secretary to about four lord mayors of Melbourne, a real intelligent bloke. We were both lance corporals who shared a room in Malaya and we did everything together. We got on the grog together. My brother, at the time we sort of shared him between us and learned how to write charge sheets because he was such a terrible soldier. We did everything together

41:30 and then when we came home from Malaya I went to Vietnam with the first platoon and then he sort of followed me over a year later with another platoon. So I took him out in the bush with us for a few weeks to sort of give him an idea what it was like in real life. And then when we both came home years later, we heard all these advisers who'd been advisers with the Vietnamese saying that those blokes who'd been with the task force had got it easy, they didn't know what it was like.

Tape 4

00:32 **You're giving us a pretty good overview of the training that you were doing and just the day-to-day stuff. How much leave were you getting at that time at Holsworthy?**

Unless you were on guard duty or kitchen duty or something like that and if you weren't in the bush, well, then you had most weekends off. But it meant nothing because Holsworthy at the time wasn't very well serviced by

01:00 bus companies. Very few people had cars so if you could you got to Liverpool, but most of the time you stayed in camp and drank at the boozer.

And when you did get leave and you could get away?

Well, you'd try and get past Liverpool and get to Sydney, but it was pretty hard because it was a good pub that Railway. One time I went down the line there one night and I saw that

01:30 Jimmy Little singing. He was only starting off then, but I was very rapt in him so I used to try and get in and see him as much as I could. He was, I don't know, at Fairfield or something, somewhere down the line there. He was singing at a pub there and we'd go down and watch him. I had a few good girlfriends at the time there, too. Yes, it was probably a good period of my life. If you got into Sydney on the weekend

02:00 you'd go to The Civic. Everyone went to The Civic, all the army blokes, and get on the grog there. They used to close for an hour in those days and we'd always go down for a Chinese meal. It was pretty good. It was a good weekend.

So who are these girlfriends you had one in every (UNCLEAR)

No, I think I met them going to see this Jimmy Little. I met a couple of them there. They were nice girls, they were real

02:30 nice girls. I don't know, young blokes and that you just got talking to them. I had a lot of hair then. I was probably looking at my best at that time. You'd still go into town and pay for a woman if you had to, you know. Everyone did that, that was no big secret.

How serious were the relationships you

03:00 **had with the girlfriends?**

I thought they were pretty serious but my mates used to come first. It was nice to talk to a girl and all that but I wasn't in to nice to girls then. No, it was more my mates and that and getting on the grog.

So was that just as much a

03:30 **part of army life the grog and the women, the sex?**

Yes. No, you wouldn't be racing off the nice girls. When you were paying for it, that's when you were racing them off. Yes, that was about it. Sometimes the blokes would bring women back to the camp and, sorry, Cathy [Kevin's wife] but they'd share them round and all that.

It's nothing I haven't heard before?

04:00 I know, but do you want to hear the truth or do you want to hear a sanitised version.

I want the truth. So that was acceptable was it to bring them back to camp?

There'd be nothing to go out, like you still shared the showers, it would be nothing to go in there and find a bloke and a sheila having a shower beside you who'd stayed the night. The first time you sort of looked, but after that you got used to it.

04:30 They had to get them through guards and picket. They'd do well. There was a lot of bush down the back and you could get bush right up to the lines, you know, it wasn't hard to bring them in.

And getting them out?

Well, the same way I suppose, but they were welcome at the canteen. Guests were welcome at the canteen of a weekend. They still had to sign in and everything but unless someone twigged that they hadn't signed in there wasn't that big a check.

05:00 They'd get them out again at night, yes. And it was probably your mates on guard, too, and you'd take them out the front gate.

When you were going into Sydney, for example, would you be in uniform or in civvies?

I think mainly civvies. It was mainly civvies then because the thrill of it all [had gone] and there wasn't anyone that you wanted to show off to in Sydney and everybody else was in the army and a lot of blokes

05:30 knew you and so on.

And did you ever come back to Geelong on leave?

Now and then, yes.

And do you think your folks were happy with your decision to move up and basically keeping out of strife?

I don't think they missed me. The others have all stayed at home. They haven't left Geelong. Even my brother when he got out, came back here. But I never

06:00 came back until I was 60 and was mostly forgotten. No, they were good parents, they really were and Mum, as I said, was a lot closer than Dad but I just pushed them to the limit. You couldn't blame them for the way they were about what I did and that.

When did your brother join up and what were his reasons?

I think he joined up because I

06:30 joined and he would have joined up in 1959 or 1960 and he went into the infantry, too, but he was straight away posted to Malaya. He was posted to the battalion that was over there, and then he'd only spent 12 months of a two year posting so when we went over there and the battalion came home he came to our battalion.

What rank was he at that point?

He never got above the rank of private that fellow.

07:00 He got very sick over there too. He got meningitis and everything. He got very, very sick and they made him be museum keeper. But we had him for a while and he was a hopeless soldier. Before I woke up, he'd pick all these fights with these other blokes that came from the other battalion and I'd end up fighting for him every bloody night, and then I woke up that he was the one starting them.

07:30 He was a terrible bloke, although he's more settled than me now.

What had your relationship been like when you were younger was it the typical big brother little brother?

Yes, I suppose, yes. He didn't go to Vietnam. He got out of the army when Vietnam came up. His time was up.

So how long had you signed on for?

I signed on for six and then I

08:00 did another six and three and another six or something. I just kept signing on.

So during that time based at Holsworthy, other than being out in the field and learning how to be a soldier what sort of book learning was there? Was there sort of indoctrination and briefings about the sort of conflicts that you were going to be encountering like in Malaya, for example?

08:30 No, not really. What you learned for Malaya you learned from blokes that had been there before. There was a lot of…at the time there was a push for education and promotion so you did a fair bit of study to get promoted or to get education. When I went into the army, I didn't have a lot of education because I left school when I was 13, but I eventually ended up with my intermediate [Year 10 equivalent] or the equivalent, Army First Class Certificate of

09:00 Education. I didn't get that until after I was married, but the whole time I was sort of studying and trying to get better educated and also trying to qualify for promotion. So you were doing that all the time. Sometimes you had lectures on various things but very rarely on Malaya, though. You'd get lectures on VD [venereal disease]. They were always pushing that. That was a big thing.

09:30 You always had the doctor over there lecturing on that. No, it was fairly average at Holsworthy.

So can you tell us when the news came through that you were going to be posted to Malaya?

Well, as soon as I went there I knew because after two years they were to go there again. What did they come home in…they came home in

10:00 '57 and I went there in '58 and they knew they were going in '61 again. So we knew all along because there were only three battalions. So we knew that four years after '57 they'd be going back again. So we got ready for that. But they were the best two years of my life in Malaya.

Well, tell us about getting over there basically, the

10:30 **process, pre-embarkation and all of that?**

You got a bit of pre-embarkation leave and you'd finished all your exercises. You had to have all your vaccinations against cholera, tetanus, typhoid and all those things they were still vaccinating you against in those days. You had your pre-embarkation leave. The married blokes were allowed to take their wives and kids to

11:00 Malaya because they had married quarters. We were going to a new base outside Malacca called Terendak Camp that had just been built. It was a band new base and we knew we were going there. We knew we were sailing over and we were going on a luxury Italian liner called the [SS] Flaminia. I think the blokes who came home,

11:30 the one they were on broke down and they were all put off at Christmas Island or something, the bloke they came down on. But we were to go on this Italian luxury liner, the Flaminia. It wasn't a luxury liner but that was an experience going over on that. We had to do PT and all on the boat. We had concerts and games of cards and all that. About 14 days on the boat to get over

12:00 there.

Was it direct to Malacca?

We went to Singapore. We off-loaded at Singapore and had a day or so in Singapore and then moved up to Malacca by road the next day. We went into this army base, which you wouldn't believe it was absolutely beautiful. Big new rooms and it was all designed for the tropics, great big windows, fans in every room and it was one of the

12:30 best barracks I've ever seen. Three units went in there. There were the Australians, the Kiwis and the poms. And it was called the 28th Commonwealth Brigade [28th Commonwealth Infantry Brigade Group was formed in 1955] and it was controlled by the poms. Everyone had their own bars and had their own canteens and had your own football grounds, everything. It was brilliant, brilliant, the whole camp was.

And had that just been built pretty

13:00 **much?**

It had just been built, been built for the Commonwealth Brigade and we were the first ones in there.

So what sort of struck you about that part of the world? You just got off at Singapore and it's your first time overseas, what struck you most?

The heat, and when we docked all the kids begging for money and all. The bloody old soldiers they were mongrels they'd get their lighters out and heat up a

13:30 penny real hot and flick it over and the kids would scramble and you'd see the screaming and coming down. They were terrible blokes some of these fellows. It was a completely different life to anything we were used to. The way they were dressed, the people and, as I said, the heat. It was just all exciting and everything, a big boat pulled into the pier and that. And

14:00 then all the stalls and everything about it, a different sort of city to what we were used to and all.

So they trucked you up to Malacca?

Yes, by convoy. And we went through some of the areas that the Australians had fought the big battles in during World War II. Muar [150km north-west of Singapore], they'd fought a big battle there [on 15 January 1942 the Japanese attacked the 45th Indian Brigade in position along the Muar River, the Australian 2/19th and 2/29th Battalions rushed to reinforce the line but were forced into a fighting retreat towards the village of Parit Sulong]. There was a ferry at Muar. We had to go across on the ferry, they still hadn't built a

14:30 bridge across there. I suppose Singapore was a lot cleaner that Malaya. You went over the big causeway [border between Singapore and Malaya] and then you were in Johor [Bahru, Malaya]. You did notice how clean Singapore was. There was a smell right across the country, on both countries. There wasn't big towns or that there. The road we went up there

15:00 wasn't, there were 'kampongs' [Bahasa Malaysia for 'village'] as they called them, little villages and that, but no big towns. I can't remember any towns until we came to Malacca. That was an old Portuguese settlement [the spice trading port of Malacca was taken over by the Portuguese in 1511, followed by the Dutch (1641) and the British (1786)]. That was a big town. We went through Malacca and out to Terendak Camp and that was a completely different thing, you know, this beautiful big camp.

Was that along the coast?

Malacca is, yes, the camp wasn't, it was inland a bit.

15:30 Malacca is a port and it's on the west coast.

So when you got there what were you told about the activity that was going on and what you'd

need to be doing?

Well, the units were to be rotated on the [Malay-Thai] border because there was still some CT [communist terrorist] activity up there. We weren't to go up there for sometime so we were to take part in training, but there were still riots going on in

16:00 certain parts of Malaya and Singapore so we had to learn to do this riot training, which was something we hadn't done in Australia. So we went out to the Bataloran Caves [?] and spent a month or so out there learning to do this riot training. And what that involved is a platoon would form a square and then they got all the locals to act

16:30 as rioters and that. And you'd unfold this big banner warning them that if [they] didn't disperse [they] would [be] shot. And for some reason, say there were 10 blokes, a square with10 in each square or whatever, nine blokes would have blanks and one bloke would have live rounds. If they didn't disperse then you shot into the crowd and supposedly no one would know who shot and so on. But we did a hell of a

17:00 lot of that. We never, ever got called on to use it but it was all new to us this riot training.

So that thing with the blanks and the live ammo [ammunition] that was so no one had the guilts going away thinking they'd shot someone?

No, the bloke who had the live rounds would have to know he had live rounds, you know the difference between live rounds and blanks, I think it was so no one on the other side could identify the person who shot. I think that's what it was…

17:30 no, nothing to do with the guilts. The bloke who had the live rounds would know. No, that was the idea, they knew that they had blanks but they couldn't identify the bloke who'd shot them.

So that sort of riot control had to be utilised before with the riots going on there?

It was a pommy thing, it was their tactics that we used, they'd sort of

18:00 devised it and they just taught it to us. It was something completely different to us. We never had anything to do with it. We had a very hard company commander over there called Arthur Rolfe. He was one of the strictest blokes I'd ever worked under. He used to control us with a whistle. We'd be marching along the road and if we got two whistle blasts, I'm not sure, but if we got two whistle blasts we'd have to duck down and duck walk for 100 yards and all this sort of

18:30 stuff. And we were overtrained. We were that fit because of the way he treated us and we all hated him. But later on we reckoned it was the best thing ever, he just got us so fit for Vietnam.

Sorry, what was his name again?

Arthur Rolfe. I think he's got a son that's a colonel in the army or something now. He's dead now. He ended up a brigadier, but we all met him many years later and reckoned he was great

19:00 for what he'd done, how he'd trained us and that. We hated it at the time in the heat and that over there but it was the best sort of training we could have had. I got into trouble over there once. I went into Malacca and they had a curfew in Malacca you had to be out of town by 10 o'clock or whatever it was, the pommy 'red-caps' were the [military] police and they were real mongrels, they were. I was

19:30 drinking with this Chinese fellow in a bar and the red-cap came in and he said to me, "Come on, you've got to go it's 10 o'clock and it's time to go". I said, "Righto, I'll finish up and go". Anyway, he came back 10 minutes later and I'm still there. So he said, "Righto, that's it, I'm arresting you". And the Chinese bloke I drank with jumped up and started arguing, so he hit him with the baton. Anyway, he took me outside and he put me in his jeep and they took me to the Malacca gaol. And they put me in the Malacca gaol and they

20:00 put me in this cell with these Chinese and Indians and all and they got stuck into me, probably because I was a European. I got a hell of a hiding off them. So I yelled out and yelled out and they eventually got me out and put me in this other cell. And then the blokes from the camp came in, the Australian blokes, mates of mine, and put me in the jeep and took me back to camp. I said, "Just drop me in my room". They locked me in a cell all night and kept opening the cell every 10

20:30 minutes and so on. I was charged with disobeying a lawful command in as much that I'd been told to leave and I didn't leave. I was coming up for a promotion to corporal and I thought, "I've got to beat this charge". And I thought about it and went and saw my brother who looks a lot like me and I said, "I need a favour". And he said, "What?" I said, "I want you to say that you were the one that they originally warned and I came along later not knowing you'd been warned". Anyway, he did it and

21:00 everyone knew we were lying, including the OC [Officer Commanding], but everyone hated provos [provosts; military police]. So we went in and we told our story and the OC said, "I've got no choice but to believe this. You warned that one but the other one came along later". So he dismissed the charge, mainly because they hated provos, and ordered my brother to grow a moustache after that. That was one time my brother really helped me because I would have been in big trouble there.

They laid into you in the

21:30 **cell there, the locals?**

Yes.

Was there some tension there between the locals and the soldiers?

Yes, I suppose you had the money to get their women and all that. I mean, the blokes that were in there weren't nice people so I came in and I'm different and I'm a target. While I was in Malaya they called for nominations for an eight month

22:00 physical training instructors course, and they decided to send the fittest bloke in the battalion, a bloke called Lawrie Horder, and the unfittest, me. So we got sent to Singapore to do this eight month physical training instructors [PTI] course under the British [Army]. And we went down there and the shake-down part of it was three weeks out at a place called Nee Soon [Singapore suburb]. And we went out there and that nearly killed me and I should have been put off the course because I wasn't fit enough or anything to

22:30 do it. But while we were there these planters who ran the Nee Soon Gentleman's Club were looking for people to play rugby, and I played front row at that time and myself and Horder did pretty well so they wanted to keep us. So when we went home to Tandakan Barracks, which is the centre of Singapore, they had good contacts with the commander and that so they kept me on and I did this six month course. I lost about six

23:00 stone [38kg] and I couldn't qualify. I couldn't do the things they did but we learned soccer, boxing, unarmed combat, everything, it was a brilliant course, it really was. While I was there I went out three times and got onto the grog and got picked up by the service police, three times in the same brothel by the same policeman. And the charges followed me back to the unit and old Rolfe's looking at me and he said,

23:30 "Look at this. It's got to be a mistake. The same service police, the same brothel". I said, "No, it's not a mistake". And he couldn't talk he got that exasperated. And he threw me out of there. I didn't get busted though. He couldn't talk. And they used to have a big cross-country run and I used to finished 600th out of 600 and I finished 16th, so I sort of got in his

24:00 good books. That's how fit I was after this course. But the bloke I went with, Lawrie Horder, he ended up a big time PTI in the Australian Army. But we had it made there, you see, the poms got no money and we got heaps of pay compared to them and this Tandakan Barracks had all these female British whatsanames there, gee we had some girlfriends there. A pocketful of personality and nothing else. We had money and they liked drink. You only worked until

24:30 midday.

These were English women who were there with the forces?

Yes, and a couple of kiwis.

And they were there in what sort of capacity?

Clerks, cooks and female MPs, all that sort of thing. But Tandakan Barracks was a big administration barracks right in the middle of Singapore. That was the best two years of my life that.

25:00 We did a big SEATO exercise. Do you know about SEATO? It was the South East Asian Treaty Organization, which combined all these Asian countries and the UK and that. We did a bit, SEATO exercise up to Thailand, up to Khorat Plateau [550km north-east of Bangkok]. And the idea at the time was they had a bit of a whisper that things were just starting in Vietnam and they reckoned that the Laotians might come over the Thai border. So they sent us up to

25:30 Ubon [Ratchathani, Thailand; 450km north-east of Bangkok], it was called. It was a big base up there. The Australian RAAF were there with the Thais. They gave us all cameras and our job was to move right around the area and we had all these SEATO books for the schools and that but we had to take photos and everything in case they crossed the border. We went up and we did an exercise along the border. Everything we did and all the villages

26:00 we went to we took photos and that and they took all these photos for future intelligence. That was a brilliant one. That was about six weeks or something. The last two weeks we spent in Bangkok in the Bangkok stadium. That was a good exercise.

Bangkok or the border?

No, Bangkok, yes. We actually lived in the Bangkok stadium.

Right. So

26:30 **how much of your time were you actually spending in Malaya doing patrols?**

Apart from that eight months in Singapore, the rest of it, although I got detached to the garrison

military police once. On Anzac Day the Australians and the New Zealanders and the poms they had a big parade and then they went to this big central bar afterwards and the brigadier was there and they rioted and they

27:00 threw stuff at him and everything. So they said, “Righto, we’re going to form a garrison military police”. They had the military police but they were going to form a garrison military police out of the units, so they took a couple of soldiers out of each unit and I was unlucky enough to be the one they took out of the Australian unit and they made us go and live with the MPs and work with their jeeps and dress up like them and all this. And myself and Jimmy McKillop,

27:30 the first night we were there we got drunk and we were fighting we were rolling around the floor fighting. And these mongrel MPs came out with bamboo sticks and belted the hell out of us while we were on the ground. They were terrible those MPs. About a week or so after that our battalion went away on exercise and our job was to patrol the married quarters and see everything was all right. Anyway, I was patrolling this night with Jimmy McKillop

28:00 and this woman yells out to us, it was one of my old girlfriends who had married my mate when we were at Holsworthy, Pam Bennett, and she said, “What are you doing?” And I said, “We’ve got to patrol and make sure there’s no trouble”. And she said, “Come in, come in we’ve got a big party on”. I said, “We can’t come in”. “Come and have a couple of drinks”, she said. So we went in and we got blind and, anyway, I can’t remember going home but the next day I got called up before the MP major and he said,

28:30 “What’s this?” And he shows me this report we’re supposed to write out and you couldn’t read it, it was pure and utter garbage. Anyway, he knew where we’d been and he said to me, “Give us the names of all those that were at the party and nothing more will be said”. I said, “I can’t remember”. And he said, “You won’t tell us will you?” I said, “I can’t”. And he said, “You’ve got no esprit de corps”. I said, “I’ve got no esprit bloody de corps for this mongrel mob”. And I was back in my unit within an hour. I got out of the MPs.

29:00 While I was there I went to a big riot. I was with this big Maori bloke and there were three civilian bars outside the base and we got called down there to a riot. And these big Maoris were rioting and they were massive. Anyway, he refused to get out of the jeep and he was bigger than all of us. And I said, “Come on”. And he said, “I’m not getting out”. He said, “I’m not stupid”. So I went in there and they just laughed at me, you know, they were

29:30 pushing me from one to the other and all. There was an Australian cook there, Clarrie Finlay, and he got up and he got into them and gee he cleaned them up. He saved me from a bloody big hiding. Clarrie Finlay, I’ll never forget him.

What was the riot about?

I don’t know. They just used to get drunk and riot. They weren’t very good soldiers the Maoris, not the Maoris, the Kiwis themselves. In Malaya, they used to recruit their

30:00 troops off the street [in New Zealand], no training, and they’d send them over there and train them in Malaya. And when we’d go on exercises, if they were the enemy you’d be running over them all the time and they’d never clean up. They didn’t know how to carry out hygiene in the bush, we’d have to bury all their rubbish and everything. But this was because they’d taken them off the streets and trained them in Malaya. They weren’t real good the [New Zealand] soldiers in Malaya. They were different all together later on but not in Malaya.

30:30 **What about the poms?**

Yes, they were good. They were good soldiers. They had the King’s Own Yorkshire Light Infantry there. And we’d all march around the camp at some various stage, like maybe it was a 10 mile march or something, there were all these cobbled roads, and we’d be marching along and you’d hear this clump, clump, clump, The King’s Own Yorkshire Light Infantry at a half-trot, they’d go trotting past you, and they didn’t carry a lot of gear. No, I liked the

31:00 poms, I reckon they were good soldiers. I didn’t mind them but they were a lot stricter than us, like a lance corporal was God and all that whereas ours, they’d thump you in the head in the mess of a night time and that sort of thing.

Were there ever occasions when things got a bit out of hand and you just had to really just pull rank, you had no choice?

No, like in the

31:30 mess of a night time you might get in a blue or that. And we played a lot of football, they might thump you in the football ground but, no, they usually did what they were told because, I mean, no one wanted to front old Arthur. If you charged a bloke and you fronted Arthur, he was a pretty hard man. No, your blokes looked after you. If you were a corporal during the day you were doing your job and you were in the bush and all that, they did as they were told.

So you were in Singapore for eight months.

32:00 **How long was that six weeks or something the SEATO border [exercise], that sort of border photographic patrol type thing? What were you having to shoot up there, just the environment?**

The villages, the roads, the rivers, everything, just so they had all this intelligence, everything. We'd go into the villages and we'd go to the schools and the kids would mob us because we had all these books and pens and everything advertising

32:30 SEATO. And it was great for the kids, they'd get all this stationery and pencils and everything. But the rest of the time we'd go to KL [Kuala Lumpur] every weekend for our leave. It was brilliant up there.

What was KL like that in those days?

Oh great, wide open, bars and bars full of women and everything. And

33:00 towards the end of our tour they were bringing in this…I forget what they called it, but the women weren't allowed to mix with Europeans and that. And quite often if you were shacked up of a night it would be nothing for the police to come in and drag the poor girl away if someone dobbed her in. What was it called? It was called something. But that only happened late in our tour.

Was that a policy from the Malayan government?

33:30 The Malayan government, yes.

So the Malayan government wouldn't allow the women to mix?

You see, to me the poms always sat on the Malays. The Chinese and the Indians had the good jobs in Malaya and the British would just allow the poor old Malays to be boot boys and 'dobie wallers'. Dobie wallers was washing your washing shirts and your ironing and that and that was the main job they gave them, and when Merdeka [Bahasa Malaysia for 'Independence'] came up, "Malaya for the Malays",

34:00 this all changed. Like all the top public servant jobs and prison wardens and police jobs were Indians and Chinese. Well, they changed all this around and they started pushing the Malays into these jobs. That was one of the reasons the Chinese rioted and everything.

You were there around that time, early '60s, when that independence thing was brewing, wasn't it?

34:30 Yes, and then just after that they had that confrontation because Indonesia felt that they weren't getting a fair share of everything.

So, in general, what were relations like with the locals. Obviously the women were one thing, but just in terms of how you were accepted by the general public, how did that feel?

Pretty good, because Malacca became an army

35:00 town and relied on the army money for supplies and food and all that sort of thing. It sort of made a lot of people wealthy. Bars sprang up everywhere. We were accepted pretty well, really well, because we were giving all that money and all that support to the town and that's what they wanted.

What did the army say about

35:30 **fraternising with the locals?**

They were against it. If anybody wanted to get married, if somebody wanted to marry a local they got threatened with everything. They got threatened to be sent home, they were going to bring their mother and father over to talk to them. It was terrible the way they treated them. If you fell in love with a local and you wanted to marry, you were ostracised. You were called a dickhead, "Wake up to yourself! What's going to happen? What about kids?" all this sort of thing. "We're going to bring your parents over to talk some

36:00 sense in to you". I know an officer who fell in love and actually married this girl and he was told he'd never get above the rank of captain. All these sort of things happened. If you got VD over there, what they did was they'd publish your name and they'd threaten to tell your parents and all your relatives back home. They tried to scare you. We had a good doctor, 'Doc' Rogers, he

36:30 ended up General Rogers, he was chief of the army medical thing and ended up a big wheel in DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs]. He was only a captain then, but he could see what was happening. And what was happening is, with all these threats going on to these blokes about VD and that they were going to the local 'witch' doctors to get treated. And the treatment was worse than the cure, you know, and blokes were getting into all sorts of trouble. But they were doing that because they were terrified of what they'd do in the battalion if they got caught. So he

37:00 introduced a policy that if you got VD it was kept completely quiet from anybody else except your records and that changed everything around.

The guys would actually go up to the 'witch' doctors?

Yes.

What sort of treatment would they get from them?

Probably much the same, penicillin, they only called them the ‘witch’ doctors and that they were probably good doctors and that, but some of them were pretty rough and not using penicillin, using another treatment and blokes were getting

37:30 crook and whatever they were using was suppressing the symptoms and not curing it, so they were building up an immunity to it and ended up with terrible problems. [Generally, local doctors would not administer the correct dosage of penicillin to kill off the disease and so the disease would become more resilient. Alternatively, soldiers were building up an immunity to penicillin because they were constantly going to the local doctors to be cured and their bodies were building up a resilience.]

Can we talk a bit about the stuff you were doing. Were you going up and patrolling the border with Thailand, the northern border?

I never went to the border. I think they only went once and I was either

38:00 down in Singapore or with the MPs. I was with the MPs. I was with the MPs so I missed the border. They had one contact [engagement with the enemy] up there. They killed one CT. ‘Skeeter’ Bryant was the bloke. He got an MID [Mention in Dispatches] out of it, that was the only decoration they got for the whole time they were there. That was the only incident they had,

38:30 but I didn’t go to the border.

Were there patrols down the peninsula at all while you were there?

Exercises, not patrols. The only CT activity was on the border at that stage. In other words, very, very light, I think. We only went up there once and they cut it out after that. Then confrontations started coming in, so it was all on the east coast then.

It was happening all during the ’50s, wasn’t it,

39:00 **pretty much?**

Yes, actually they pulled the medal after 1960, I think, for service up there, but because this bloke had been involved with one contact they had to put it back on again. The General Service Medal.

So what were the exercises? This was generally more training, was it?

Yes, this is what I was telling you about where the kiwis or the

39:30 poms or us would take it in turns of being the enemy and the other ones would patrol against them. But once again the jungle in Malaya is different to what you can find here in Australia and patrolling in the jungle over there was brilliant training for us for Vietnam, brilliant.

So what were you learning in the jungles in Malaya?

Well, you were just expanding on what you learned. One thing, we used to move of a

40:00 night time in the jungle and you’d lose the bloke in front of you. It was pitch black in the jungle so we’d try to come up with ideas of how you could see the bloke and we’d come up with all sorts of ideas. And one idea that we got, they had fireflies over there that really glowed when they shook so we got all these little bulbs and put them on the back of your pack and put a couple of fireflies in them. So the blokes could just follow the fireflies. But, unfortunately, fireflies would

40:30 also go drifting past so they’d go over, so they’d go off on a different angle following those. But we eventually found this phosphorous bark which you could make a cross out of which glowed in the dark and we used that. We also found that in Vietnam.

Tape 5

00:30 **So were you on just a two year posting?**

To Malaya?

Yes. Okay, so at the end of two years you returned?

I returned to Enoggera and took leave. That’s in 1963. And then I

01:00 came back to Enoggera and stayed with 2 Battalion. That sort of saw ’63 through. In 1964, the government had already committed 30 advisers to Vietnam but then decided it was going to get involved in a big way and it was going to send an infantry battalion to work with the Americans, and after that it was going to take over its own province and

01:30 make up a task force which consisted of two battalions plus supporting arms. All this is going on in ’64

and ’65 and we’re in 2 Battalion. Remember I told you we only had three battalions, 1, 2 and 3? So all of a sudden they decide they’re going to get nine battalions. Where are they going to get all the troops? They introduced the National Service Bill, which is they’re going to conscript everyone who’s 20 years of

02:00 age using a ballot system. And 2 [Battalion], we were going to be split up and become 2 [Battalion] and 6 [Battalion]. I think 3 [Battalion] was going to become 3 [Battalion] and 5 [Battalion], and 1 [Battalion] was at this stage in Vietnam and then they were going to make another three battalions: 7, 8 and 9. So we get this news

02:30 and we actually became 6 Battalion, which was just a nucleus of sergeants and corporals and we were sharing the Enoggera area with 2 [Battalion] RAR. We are now 6 [Battalion] RAR. We’ve got two RSMs and we’re all in the same sergeants mess. We’ve got the same barracks but we’ve got no soldiers and it was causing all sorts of problems. We didn’t have a unit of our own,

03:00 barracks of our own and so on and we were sharing them with 2 RAR. We were waiting to get all our soldiers who were these national servicemen. And it’s 1965 and they’ve been called up through the ballot system. I think the first lot were called up about July or something 1965. So they had to go through their training, we were going to Vietnam in May.

03:30 We got them in about November so we’d got about five months to train these blokes to be soldiers to go to war. Now, by this time I’m a sergeant, I was the first one made to sergeant in 6 RAR. I’d never seen a wild pussy cat and I’d never been in battle, but I’d spent nine years preparing for it so I’m looking forward to it. But nobody knew what these national servicemen were going to be like because they were just civilians, pulled out of civilian jobs and half of them didn’t want to

04:00 go and we’re thinking what are these fellows going to be like because they were going to make up the majority of our soldiers in the battalions. So we get all these blokes in November ’65 and we’ve got to get to know them. We haven’t got long in camp, we’ve got to get out to the bush, we’ve got to go through Canungra, so it’s all a rush period. At the same time we’re getting all new weapons, new American weapons and

04:30 new grenade launchers, rocket launchers. And while we were in the barracks, I think it must have been about January ’66, they bought these things called Claymore mines. Have you heard of them? They are these plastic mines full of ball bearings that explode and send hundreds of ball bearings out in a deadly fashion and virtually obliterate everything that’s in front of them [the Claymore contains 700 steel balls and has an approximate blast area 30 metres wide, two metres high and 50 metres forward]. Well these two instructors brought them into

05:00 2 Battalion’s area, they were both there, and they dropped them on the veranda. They got there at lunch time and they both went down to the sergeants mess to have lunch. This sergeant, Lenny Usher was his name, he was everything that a sergeant looked like – six-foot two [inches], blonde hair and perfectly built and everything. He went up and he saw these things and he’s having a look at them and he started messing about with them. We knew nothing about them, we’d never seen them. The next thing there’s this explosion which shook the whole of the Enoggera

05:30 area. What he’d done, he’d put a detonator in one and set it off and blasted his legs off from here down. That sort of brought home to a lot of the Natios what war was about.

Were these the first mines that you had had anything to do with, the Claymores?

Not really. We’d seen other mines, but nothing like this. Most of the mines that we’d seen were the type that vehicles drove over or people walked

06:00 on. These were mines that if you went into a defensive position for the night you could set these mines up out in front of your position, they were sort of shaped like that [curved], and then you had a detonator back in the thing. So if you were attacked you could fire these mines which would send thousands of ball bearings into the enemy. A lot of times, not for us, but a lot of times, the enemy used to sneak up, turn them around, and then stage mock attacks. Imagine what happened then. But this poor

06:30 bloke, his legs and it was terrible. A couple of others were hurt and that. Windows were blown out everywhere. So that was a real good start for us.

What other new equipment was coming in?

We had M76s, which were a rocket launcher. They were a small tube about [60cm] long. Up to that stage we had these big ponderous rocket launchers but these

07:00 small ones they were light weight and you could throw them over your shoulder and they could stop a tank or knock out a building and all that sort of thing. We had the M79, which was a [40mm] grenade launcher. It was like a small mortar. You could sort of aim it and drop grenades at 100 or 150 yards away. It had all sorts of grenades. It had a high explosive, it had fleshettes [round with up to 45 small darts in a plastic housing], it had smoke, so it was multi-purpose. You could use it for

07:30 anything. It was a great weapon. Then we got the new grenades, the M26s, which replaced the old

British grenades we had. What else? That was about it weapon-wise.

What machine guns were you using?

At that stage we had the M60s, the M60 machine gun which used the same rounds as the 7.62 [SLR], which we'd been issued with in Malaya.

08:00 So we had a few Owen guns. The scouts had the Owen guns because they had to put out a high rate of fire if they were attacked. All the riflemen had 7.62 SLRs and we had the M60, one M60 to a section. Remember, 10 men in a section. You had the machine gun part of the section, which was the machine gunner and his off-sider. You had two scouts,

08:30 the section commander, the section 2IC [second in command] and the section 2IC became part of the rifle section. But with your tactics, if you walked into a contact, the scout would initiate the fire in the contact. The machine gun would move around to the right and pour fire into that area and the rifle section would move round to the left and charge through the area. That was basically your

09:00 tactics for the platoon. In the case of a big attack the section would go to ground and the other two sections would set up and charge through, or a company. That was virtually it. We had to teach them all these drills so it would become automatic for them as soon as they were fired on. We had to teach them what to do if they were ambushed. We had to teach them to look through the jungle to watch for enemy.

09:30 We had to teach them to watch for mines and booby traps, everything. We weren't getting a lot of information back from Vietnam. The only intelligence we had, we knew nothing about the country, the sort of things that we got, we got a tape from the commander of Dien Ben Phu [battle between French and Vietminh (Nationalist) forces in northern Vietnam in the Indochina War (1947–54) in which French forces were defeated], the French commander, he made a tape talking about how strong they were and they had no chance of defeating the Vietminh, they were then, and he committed

10:00 suicide straight after making the tape. So we were told that when we got there all the enemy would be in black pyjamas. That's how we'd know them. All the enemy wore black pyjamas, so we thought, "Right, we'll know them, they all wear black pyjamas". Before we left, the companies were called on parade and the company commander stood out the front and said, "Any National Serviceman who doesn't want to go to

10:30 Vietnam doesn't have to. Step forward now". Well, can you imagine anyone who is going to step forward in front of his mates and say, "I don't want to go". The army says they were given the option but the way they were given it you would have had to have a skin like a rhino to do it. No one's going to step forward in front of their mates and say, "I'm a coward, I'm not going", so none of them stepped forward.

That's interesting because I've heard that said but I didn't realise that's how…

Well, that's how it was done in the infantry.

11:00 Everyone says they were given the option and I was on parade that day and that's what happened. So there wasn't many in the battalion that didn't go.

So it was five months of training at Enoggera for these…

No, not in Enoggera. We went everywhere, we went to Canungra, I think we went down to Wiangaree [State Forest] again, we went up to Tin Can Bay. During this time we knew that helicopters were being introduced, we might have got one helicopter to show us what they looked like, those [Bell 205] Iroquois,

11:30 we'd never seen them, we might have got one ride in them, but then we made wooden seats and we practised mounting and dismounting the helicopters. That's the only way we could do it because they didn't have the helicopters. I think they only had about 10 helicopters then the [Royal] Australian Air Force.

So seats had to be of a certain height?

No, we just

12:00 used the seats to make it look like a helicopter or something. When we jumped on the helicopters we never sat on a seat. We sat on the floor, no seat belts or anything, because you had to get about eight men on a helicopter and if they had the seats down you couldn't do it. So the only people that had seats were the pilot, the co-pilot and the two door gunners and we were all on the floor in between just sitting there. Now gravity will hold you in if the helicopter banks. That's what they told us, anyway, and we believed them. No one ever fell out, anyway. But that's all we did, we just sat on the

12:30 floor. Many times they wouldn't land and you had to pile out from about just below the height of the roof with your big pack on your back, which would knock you over and everything and then get clear of the landing zone as clear as soon as you could. They wouldn't come in, and you couldn't blame them, sometimes, especially if there was fire on the LZ [landing zone] because they wouldn't get out.

So you had to fall from a height?

Well, you'd grab the [helicopter] skid as you'd go and sort of lower yourself, but you had to get out

quick. Not too

13:00 often it would be that height, but always half that height and quite often they wouldn't touch down.

Generally, how did the recruits handle this very intensive training?

Good. They were fitter than me they were. I used to use the excuse that I'd hang behind to help the stragglers, but I couldn't keep up with them, they were very, very fit. And they sort of

13:30 thrived on it. They weren't like the average soldier. They'd sort of question you when you told them to do things and that, they were thinkers and we weren't used to thinkers, we were used to people doing as they were told, but these blokes were thinkers.

Did you have to make allowances for them?

Yes. After a while you started thinking I could charge these blokes every five minutes but what's it going to prove. So you made allowances for the fact that they were

14:00 and you went along with it because they'd do it but they'd sort of query it before they'd do it. There were very intelligent men amongst them. But you can imagine what it was like for them. Six months ago they were sitting at a desk pushing a pen in a nice secure environment with a nice home environment and the next thing they're dragged out, they're rushed through training and they're going to war. Imagine that affect on them. They're not

14:30 volunteers. It must have had a terrible affect on them leaving their loved ones and all that. I'd trained for it. I'd married Val [by] this time and we'd had a little kid. But I was very gung-ho and I wanted to go to war because I'd been training for nine years doing all that stuff, I told you about before and I wanted to put it into practice. I wanted to see if it all worked. I didn't know how these blokes were going to go but they looked

15:00 all right.

So, just a bit more on the training that they got?

We had to put them under live firing, they had to know what it was like to be under live firing. We used to make them crawl on their backs under wire and we'd have a machine gun on fixed lines firing tracers and that over their head. So they're crawling along on their backs under, looking up at the fire and hearing the sound. It's got a distinct sound when a bullet

15:30 goes over your head it's like a whip crack. It's like a real snap when a bullet goes over your head. They're crawling along but we had to put them under wire because for some reason blokes will stand up under fire, they will, not all of them but the odd one so you had to make sure they didn't do that and that way they learned what it was like to be under fire. They all had to learn first aid because when you took heavy casualties you only had one medic amongst

16:00 30 men. And when you were taking heavy casualties or if he was hit everybody had to know how to stop bleeding and do what they could for wounded people and so on, so we did a lot of first-aid courses and that sort of thing. We didn't get much, lectures on the country [Vietnam] because, as I said, no one knew anything about it or the people. It wasn't like Malaya where we'd had units after units after units going there and

16:30 it was virtually on our doorstep. We knew nothing about this place except that the Vietminh, who were a part of the Vietcong [communists], had defeated the French. They had a pretty high reputation when we went over there the enemy.

So the training was all to do with jungle warfare?

All jungle warfare. Yes, every situation,

17:00 immediate actions, what to do, how to set an ambush straight away if you saw them coming, what to do if you're in an ambush, everything. It had to be automatic, the reaction had to be automatic, and we got them to that stage, too, in the short time we had them.

We interviewed someone who was in 1 RAR the first...

17:30 They were the battalion that went

17:33 over with the Americans.

Apparently their reputation preceded them. They were considered to be like really skilled expert jungle fighters?

Australians have always been considered to be skilled jungle fighters amongst the Americans, ever since New Guinea [World War II] when the Yanks joined them in New Guinea. And they have. You know, it's been handed down for years and years. We had the best jungle training centre in the world, Canungra. The Yanks used to send some of their

18:00 blokes on patrol with them, with 1 RAR, in Vietnam to learn the tactics. They did the same with us but we fought a different war. We patrolled in secrecy to make contact with stealth without them being aware of us. The Yanks blundered through wanting to make contact by letting them know they were there and putting down massive fire power. We used tactics that we'd used for years, we had to change them a bit in Vietnam, but

18:30 they [Yanks] would use tracks, we'd never use tracks, we'd go through the bush. We'd never walk on a track. We'd make our own tracks. They used to hit a lot of mines. 5 Battalion was over there with us at the same time, we were the first two battalions there, and 5 Battalion had a hell of a lot of casualties from mines. We were getting all the big battles and they were getting all the mine casualties and booby traps. They were having terrible casualties and

19:00 mines and booby traps.

So these raw recruits were being trained to use very high-powered weapons straight up and mostly, probably never having used a weapon before, is that right?

They loved weapons. Most young blokes do love weapons. You don't have any trouble with that, they love weapons so we didn't have problems teaching them to use

19:30 weapons or that.

Was it as thorough as the training you'd got in as much as being able to clean the weapons and make sure…

The training was good. We'd get a rifle and an M60 machine gun and we'd strip it down so that all the pieces were together and we'd wrap it up in a poncho or a tent and then we'd just pull it out and there were pieces everywhere and they'd have

20:00 two minutes to assemble it. And eventually they'd do it. We'd put a blindfold on them and strip a weapon because you've got to do it at night time, haven't you, and they could do it. They learned very quickly, but they could do it, they could strip and assemble a weapon in the dark with a blindfold on. They knew their weapons backwards. They knew what caused a stoppage and how to clear a stoppage and what was wrong if the gun didn't fire. They knew exactly what to do. They had a series of

20:30 actions to carry out to get that gun firing again, especially the M60 which was your main fire power.

So did you have any of them that dropped out before the completion of the training?

No, we had a couple of regs [regular army] that weren't fit enough, not National Servicemen.

21:00 No, they were very fit, very fit and fit looking, real fit looking blokes. Most of mine were from the Riverina district. They all came in from the Riverina district and we kept most of them and few Western Australians, but mostly country boys.

21:30 I think we were due to depart in May or June [1966] or something and we were to fly over by Qantas, which we did, we flew out of Amberley [RAAF base west of Brisbane]. Can I go on to Vietnam now?

Yes.

We flew out of Amberley into Saigon [capital of South Vietnam; renamed Ho Chi Minh City] and that was similar to when we went to Singapore, you know, all the smells and you get off the aircraft and the heat off the tarmac. And there were buses everywhere with [mesh-]wired windows so they couldn't have

22:00 grenades lobbed in them. There were jets all along the airstrip all sand bagged in and everything so you knew you were really in a war zone. There were fighter jets taking off every minute. It was all go then, that was '65 when they hadn't completed their build up…'66 sorry, they were just starting to build up. I don't think we even stayed in Saigon for a night. They put us on buses and,

22:30 no, it must have been trucks, anyway, they took us to Vung Tau [80km south-east of Saigon], which was a coastal resort town. Vung Tau was probably the safest town in South Vietnam because that's where all the VC [Vietcong] got their tax and all their money from all the bar owners and everything, so they never touched Vung Tau. They never mortared it. They never attacked it because all their money was coming out of the bars and everything. Anyway, we were put on this beautiful beach

23:00 to get acclimatised for about a week and we camped on the beach and we just used to run and swim for a week and it was great. We thought, "This is a good war". After seven days they took us up to Phuoc Tuy Province to a place called Nui Dat, 'Nui' meaning hill. And 5 RAR had gone up, 5 RAR, Royal Australian Regiment, had gone up a week before us,

23:30 just to secure the place. And when we came in to our area it was raining. It was in a rubber plantation and there was all this red mud in the plantation. Terrible stuff, it sticks to you and everything. And 5 RAR was just pulling out when we got there. And they were on a flat-top truck and they were throwing their bags on and everything and climbing up. The next thing there's an explosion. Someone threw a pack on with a grenade that wasn't secure and blew about five of them off the

24:00 truck, so there were wounded laying everywhere then and this is our first day up there. Anyway, it's this

wet bloody thing and we're into our position straightaway and we've got to dig in because they are expecting to be attacked at any time. So we start digging in and laying wire and that goes on for a couple of days. As soon as you dig a hole it fills up with water so you try and sand bag it and that. We had to get a hole

24:30 down from which we could fight from. Everyone had to get a pit down because they didn't know how long…you see, it was the first time anyone had come into that province and we knew the VC weren't going to let us just walk in like that. So after two days we start sending out patrols, clearing patrols, just to make sure that the enemy can't get in to see what we're doing. And the first patrol I took out was a half-platoon patrol, it had about 12 men. And we went out

25:00 about 1000 metres from the unit where we were and we were on the edge of a clearing and on the other side of the clearing there are 10 blokes walking around the edge of the clearing, half of them in pyjamas and half of them in greens or carrying weapons. And I didn't know what they were. I didn't know whether they were Vietcong or RF, Regional Forces, which is what they had, civilian sort of defenders. I didn't know what to do, I didn't know whether to

25:30 shoot them or what to do, so I had a talk amongst my blokes and we decided we'd do nothing and not even report it when we got back. Well, you didn't. When we were driving up there and we were going through these towns and everyone is in black pyjamas, civilians and everything, so we knew straight away that that was a fallacy. That's all they wore, black pyjamas. So we were settling into this Nui Dat and then they decided how are they going to keep the

26:00 population in control because east of us they've got all their plantations, their were bananas, soursops [small fruit-bearing tree], everything. They had planted everything out there. So how are you going to go out there and not kill civilians? So they made up these rules that they were going to bring everyone into this village just south of the task force called Wau Long [?], and they'd only be allowed to go out two days a week to harvest their crops and tend them and everything

26:30 else. But the old people didn't realise this, they used to go out all the time, so you had to be very careful not to shoot them. Your adrenalin is really flowing when you're on patrol and you're standing there and moving along with a gun and you see a civilian, you know you can kill him because he's probably a VC but you had to be very careful that it wasn't a civilian, and we were. Just after we got there, a week or so after we got there,

27:00 there was this village about 2000 metres due south of us and it was called Long Phuoc. It was probably one of the best villages I've ever seen in Vietnam, it had beautiful tiled floors and these lovely teak uprights and everything, but a Yank unit had come through a couple of weeks beforehand just to have a look at the area we were going to and they'd taken fire from that village, so we were ordered to go in and destroy this

27:30 village. And we did just that. We went in there with the APCs [Armoured Personnel Carriers] and we spent a week destroying this village. Pushing these beautiful teak things over and grinding all the tiles with the armoured tanks and all that and then located all the people out of that village back to this Wau Lon, this rat house just south of the task force. There was a reporter there called 'Pat' Burgess, I don't know if you've every heard of him, he did a lot of war reports. He

28:00 reported on this, what a mistake we'd made and they banned him from the task force from then on. But it was one of the biggest mistakes we ever made because we turned all those people against us. As it was all the fathers and the brothers and all out of that village were the enemy anyway, farmers by day and Vietcong by night.

So when you first arrived who was briefing you? Where were you getting your intelligence

28:30 **from?**

There was a big intelligence set up right through Vietnam and as soon as we got there they started feeding intelligence. I was only the sergeant at the time, but we'd been there about three or four months and our officer disappeared. I'm not going into that but he disappeared, so I had to take over the platoon and when we'd go out and patrol you'd go up to get your briefing and they'd give a briefing on the enemy. And they'd

29:00 say, "The T74 regiment consisting of about 2500 could be in this area here and [provincial Mobile Battalion] D445, which is 150 men, they're over there and so and so regiment, you could come across them", and you were going out with about 15 men. Well, I'd go back and I'd give the enemy situation, but I wouldn't mention it because the blokes wouldn't go with you if they knew you could come up against that, so I'd just say, "The enemy situation is we might run into elements of D445" or anything, you'd just terrify them

29:30 if you gave them the full thing.

But how does that make you feel?

I never believed it half the time because quite often it was wrong. You know, you could always run into D445. We'd been there about a month and D445 was the main force, VC unit, in the area, they controlled the province before we got there. We'd done a lot of patrols and we'd had the odd contact, hit one or two

30:00 and so on. We'd been there a month and the battalion commander, [Lieutenant Colonel] Colin Townsend was his name, a brilliant commander, he decided that we'd go looking for the D445. Now, most operations in Vietnam start with armoured personnel carriers or helicopters, so when the VC hear them coming they get in their tunnels and take off and avoid contact if they want to. Unless they've got a real strong force they won't fight. So Lieutenant Colonel Townsend decided we would walk out and they wouldn't hear us coming.

30:30 So A, B, C, D and Support Company, no APCs with us, we walked out about 1000 metres to the east, and when we got there we split up and, I think, we [B Company] stayed where we were. A Company went west, D Company went east and C Company went north. We trapped them in the middle, we had them trapped in the middle, and they hit C Company first up to the north and a bit of a battle broke out. And then they [C Company] said to us, "They're

31:00 heading your way, they're trying to break out so they headed south". So we're trying to dig tunnels and everything, not tunnels, trying to dig a little bit of a fighting trench and that. But we had no show because the next thing they were onto us. We had a couple of scouts out and they hit them first and they withdrew. They tried to overrun us. They isolated our platoon from the rest of the company and they surrounded us and they kept charging us. They kept charging the machine gun. This is our first big battle, mind, and they're National

31:30 Servicemen on the machine gun. And one bloke would get hit on the machine gun and they'd roll him out and then another bloke would get hit. It was a hell of a fight. And we were bringing in artillery to try and break them up but they were using what they called the tactic of the 'close embrace'. If they're out on top of us we couldn't bring in artillery, but we did. And one round exploded in front of me from here to the door and there were two blokes lying in the pit, including one of my corporals and

32:00 an islander, one Johnny Norris, and they just went up in the air and went into pieces, you know. It broke them up a bit and they withdrew. And I stood up and we still had the officer then and he stood up and we were going to try and get our platoon reorganised into a closer thing, but they climbed up into trees, the VC, and they opened up with everything and that's when I got hit, but I didn't know. Anyway, we called the artillery in

32:30 again and we eventually fought them off, but we had a lot of casualties. I think we had about two dead and 13 wounded or something out of 30 men. You know, that's a fair few casualties. So I've got all the wounded under this tree and this bloke called Wink, Tony Wink, he's laying on his back under this tree and he says, "Sarge", And the way his voice sounded I thought I don't want to hear this. I said, "Not now, Tony". He said, "No, Sarge, I've got to tell you".

33:00 I said, "What is it?" And he said, "Look". Because they had mortared us and everything and one of the mortar bombs, the tail of the mortar bomb, had just caught in the branch of the tree and was just hanging above us all. So we had to get everyone out of there pretty quick. Anyway, I got them all back into Company Headquarters for evacuation and this mate of mine, another sergeant, Henry Chisholm, he said to me, "You've been wounded". I said, "No, I haven't". And he said, "Yes, look there's blood all over you". So I said, "No, no, no, it's off the wounded". And he said, "Bullshit".

33:30 And I dropped my daks and all the flesh had punched up. The bullet had gone through into my stomach and forced all the flesh out. So I went into a bit of a swoon, "Oh shit, I've been wounded". So I had to go out then. I went back and they took us all to the American hospital, but they'd had a big battle too and they took most of our blokes but I was the only one they couldn't fit in. So they sent me over to the Australian hospital, which was just setting up and I was their first battle casualty.

34:00 **Was this at Vung Tau the hospital?**

Yes. Anyway, they were going to send us home and this bloke gets in my ear and says, "If you go home they'll heal you up and you'll be back again with the next battalion". He said, "If you stay here you'll take about a month to heal and it will come off your time". It thought, "Well, that's all right". So I stayed there and everyone is saying, "He's a hero. He stayed there." not knowing my real reason for staying there. I was in hospital for a

34:30 month and I came out of hospital on the 18th of August. Do you know that day?

Yes, I do actually.

It's the Battle of Long Tan [D Company, 6 RAR, engaged a regimental-size force of VC and were soon under heavy attack on three sides; the rest of 6 RAR and APCs rushed to their aid engaging the flank of a battalion-size force eventually forcing the VC to withdraw; the battle was fought in heavy mist and monsoonal rain and saw 18 Australians killed, 22 wounded and at least 245 VC dead]. So I went back to my unit, which was 6 RAR and B Company lines, and I got back there and about half an hour later this big battle breaks out. And we knew it was a big battle. And I'm just out of a month in hospital thinking, "I'd love to go back to that hospital". Anyway, you know all the details.

We can go into that but I'd like to go over what you've

35:00 **just told us.**

I've only started. All right.

I'm sure there's a few more details there isn't there?

Okay, what do you want to know?

Well, first of all, your arrival there with the section and taking command of the section. The Americans were already there were they not?

Where?

In Nui Dat?

No, there was no one there. There were…5 RAR had gone from Vung Tau a

35:30 week before us and they had set up their battalion area and they'd sent sections over to set up where we were coming in. So when we came in that's all that was there, a section in our company area. So when we pulled in they were pulling out and that's when that grenade went off.

So what type of briefing did you get from 5 RAR?

No briefing. They had nothing to brief us on. They hadn't had any enemy contact or anything.

36:00 They'd only been there a week, if that. So there was no briefing. It was just that they expected the enemy to attack us before we got settled and it was just dig, dig, dig, get your wire up, get your mines down and start a patrolling program to keep them away. Every night we'd make two or three blokes go out 500 yards in front of us and just lay there for the night in case of early warning – a nice old job wasn't it.

36:30 **So this was when you were setting up the boundary, the perimeter of the camp?**

Yes, setting up the whole camp. Right on last light you'd send three blokes about 500 yards out to give you early warning if they heard anyone coming.

So what fortifications were you setting up there?

We were digging in, initially fighting pits, then down as deep as you could go and then overhead cover with sand bags for mortar

37:00 attacks and all that. We were making a big, big fence of wire about 50 yards wide, all different type of fences and everything. In between the wire we were putting these Claymore mines I told you about with the command set up coming back to our pit. We'd be able to explode any one we wanted. You'd put them at all different heights and everything. We were putting a lot of glass, tins with stones in,

37:30 anything we could think of in there to make noise. We were hanging tins with stones on the wire, all different heights of wire and different types of fences. All the ones they have in the books and that. Everything you could think of just pure bastardry to stop anyone getting in. As much wire between you and out as far as you wanted and then, of course, you had to have a gap in the wire to go out.

Were you mining outside the wire fence?

No.

38:00 The mine field came later.

So how big was the area?

It was a big area. There were two battalions and then behind us there was battalion headquarters and then the Yanks starting moving in with big [self-propelled Howitzer] guns, 175s [175mm M107] and 8-inchers [M110]. And then the SAS came in on 'SAS Hill', another little hill. What could I say, it would be as

38:30 big as a small town sort of, you know.

Your brief was to set this area, this camp, just for your company, your battalion?

All the companies joined in. The companies all joined in onto a battalion – like a great big circle all joining in, everyone covering everyone else with fire. Like you'd set your machine guns up so they're

39:00 going like that so anyone who's attacking has got to come through a wall of fire. You don't fire straight like that because there's only one line of bullets. You fire like that (diagonally) then you've got a cross fire and then they've got to come through that. And that's what you'd do when you'd set up of a night time, too. You know, interlocking fire so you'd get the best line to fire to make it hard for them to get at you.

So the three soldiers that would be out there at night, 500

39:30 **yards [or] so out from the perimeter, and that's where they'd spend the night?**

Yes.

So were there night skirmishes that close?

Not when we were setting up, no. They started issuing us with these night vision things [goggles]. Nowadays, they've got beautiful ones but at the time they gave us these great big things that you could

40:00 barely see through. You'd probably see better without them, but you could pick up movement with them. We didn't have any skirmishes.

How were the nerves?

Everyone's nerves were on edge but to balance that you had adrenalin flowing. There is nothing like being in a war zone, I can tell you there really isn't. And when you go on patrol the

40:30 adrenalin flows that high. Like every step you're sort of thinking, "Am I going to go and step on a mine or something like that", but you've still got the adrenalin. You've got 30 men armed to the teeth and you're ready to take on anything. One sort of balanced out the other, I think.

Tape 6

00:30 **So was it the Americans that were supplying you with uniforms and equipment?**

Yes, when we went over we took over, I think it was…no, I don't know the name, it was American equipment, American basic pouches, American packs, water bottles. In Malaya we'd been supplied with British equipment and it was good, it was very,

01:00 very good. So good that a lot of us hung on to it and took it to Vietnam with us and got rid of it [the American gear]. No one said to us, "You have to wear this or you have to wear that". You had to be comfortable in the bush and if you wore stuff that made you more comfortable than anybody else that was good. We used to get what they called Ghurkha shirts in Malaya and they were these great big woollen khaki shirts that came down to around here. And I used to stick that in my pack and if we lay down at

01:30 night I'd just put that over me to keep out mosquitos and things. You couldn't make a bed or anything of a night time in the bush. We had American weapons and we had American weapons, but everything we did have was paid for by the Australian government. We paid our own way in that war, which a lot of other people didn't. Just after we got there, when we had a couple of contacts, if we hit them [the VC] with the

02:00 7.62, the SLR, they would stop. If they were hit they would stop. And quite often blokes would be firing at them with the old Owens and we'd find that the bullets would hit their packs and get stuck in the packs, it hadn't gone through their packs, so the Owen sort of wasn't really good over there. So then they started replacing the Owen with this Armalite [AR15/M16], an American weapon, which was very small and they say it was made for the Yanks but I personally reckon

02:30 they made it for the Vietnamese because of their small stature. It was a very good weapon and it had a very high muzzle velocity. So when they fired a bullet they'd tumble through the air and if they hit a leaf they'd go off in any direction, they wouldn't go through a leaf because of their muzzle velocity. If they hit someone in the fleshy part of the arm they'd just go through. If they hit a bone they'd take that whole bone out. And quite often we'd see things like that with people where the whole bone would go through the body.

03:00 **You'll have to tell me what muzzle velocity is?**

Speed of the bullet from the muzzle to the target, and they had a very high speed. So high that they deflected easily or if they went through flesh they went through but if they hit a bone they'd quite often shatter that bone and push it through so they were a good weapon that way. It was easy to carry plenty of magazines they were so light. They got that

03:30 way in the end they started issuing disposable magazines so you never had to keep your magazines. We had a lot of trouble with the ammunition over there, especially the M60, because it rained every day and quite often the rounds would rust in the links which would cause a problem. And we tried to come up with everything. We got poncho liners…no, not poncho liners, li-los, you know li-los [inflatable rubber mattress]?

04:00 We'd take one of those sleeves and put them in that but then they'd sweat and they'd still stick so it got that way that we had a hell of a lot of problems with them. With our magazines, the rounds would stick in the magazine if you never eased the spring every day. You had to learn all these things.

Were you having any contact with the RF, the local forces?

Some of the advisers were Australian advisers and they'd come

04:30 up to the camp. We tried not to work with them.

Why was that?

We didn't think much of them. We weren't supposed to work with them, we were supposed to work amongst ourselves and they didn't do a lot of patrolling anyway. They didn't go out much. They mainly provided protection for the villages and so on. That village of Vua Long [? Previous 'Wau Long'?], that rat nest I told you about, every

05:00 month or two we'd do a co-ordinance search of that. We'd get up at 2 o'clock in the morning and move out of the camp and completely surround the village. And they'd wake up and they'd be completely surrounded by Australians and there'd be a helicopter with a loudspeaker flying overhead telling them that they were surrounded and anyone that left the village would be shot. Then you'd have intelligence people go in and search every hut. You'd always pick up VC that way.

What evidence would they find of Vietcong?

05:30 Well, if they were sitting between 17 and 30 and they weren't in the [South Vietnamese] army they were VC, that's enough. No, if they were young blokes and they weren't in the army, why weren't they in the army? And why were they there? And a lot of them didn't have identification, the correct identification and that.

What would be done with them?

I don't know. They'd go back to an intelligence…I'll tell you a story about intelligence and this has been on all the

06:00 news things over the years and so on. There was, [US Army General William C] Westmoreland found out that the big mountains to the west of us, Nui Highs [?] I think they called them, there was a unit up there, a VC unit up there that had a big radio and was monitoring messages from the Australian task force to Saigon. So they sent our company out to try and find it. We went up to the top of this hill and when we got up there

06:30 we broke up into various patrols and headed off along tracks looking for it. I had about 15 men and I headed down this track. I told you we didn't walk on tracks but not up in the hills, you were all right up there, no one goes up there. So we followed this track and I had this dickhead out front as a scout. He'd stuffed up that many times before we'd sacked him but we were giving him one more chance. So we had him out the

07:00 front. Anyway, we moved along and we came across fresh shit and it was fresh, not with steam coming off it, but it hadn't solidified and it was very yellow, that's what their stuff was like. And it was really fresh so we knew there was a camp just up ahead of us. So he gives the enemy sign and we quickly jump into a straight line formation to go through them. And we move ahead about five yards and he's up with his weapon because he'd seen them and fired. And he never had a round up the

07:30 spout so it just goes click. And they're off. They fired a couple of shots at us and off. Our only tactic is to charge through as quick as we can to try and catch them. Anyway, we raced through but they were gone but they'd left all their packs and everything else. And there was a tunnel there so I think I got the dickhead bloke and another bloke with a pistol, and the way we searched tunnels was a bloke would be up with the pistol like that [weapon out in front at the ready] and the other fellow would be up behind him with the torch just going

08:00 round [shining it all around]. So I sent these two down and the next minute they both came flying out. I said, "What happened?" And the bloke in front says, "Well, I'm going with my pistol and the light shines on this bare leg swinging from the rafter and I just go to shoot and it's pitch black because the other bloke had seen it and taken off". So he had to take off too. Anyway, we got our interpreter up there and we're trying to talk this person out. They wouldn't come out, no way in the world. So by this time the whole

08:30 company has come up then to where we were. And [Major] Noel Edgar Ford was our company commander and we wanted to drop a smoke grenade or a tear-gas grenade down and he said, "No, it's inhumane". He wouldn't let us do that so we eventually got two blokes to go down. One of them was killed on 'Bribie' [operations were typically codenamed after Australian cities or places] actually, a very, very brave bloke, and he went down and they brought this person out. It was a nurse and she'd been left to look after the

09:00 radio. She was unarmed but she'd been left to look after the radio. So we actually found the radio. Anyway, it was getting late and we couldn't get her out that night so we tied her to John O'Halloran who was platoon commander of 5 Platoon and kept her for the night, fed her and looked after her and all. Anyway, we sent her out the next morning and she was the one that the intelligence did all that water torture and all on. There was a big story on A Current Affair and everything about it. It still comes up in the papers every now and then

09:30 someone goes to look at her. We looked after her but when we sent her back they tortured her. They did a story on A Current Affair on that which I was in and they actually got on to the bloke who was supposed to have done the torture. He took off when they saw him. When Westmoreland found out that we'd found her he made sure that five of the platoon got R & R [rest and recreation leave] to anywhere in the

10:00 world. They were that grateful. That torture business, a fellow who witnessed it, that John Sorell, who

was [Melbourne] news director for Channel 9 [Nine Network], he was in the camp at the time and he witnessed it all.

I don't know the story. Who tortured her?

The Australians, they went into a tent and she claims the Australians and the Vietnamese

10:30 tortured her with the water torture. Held her nose pinched and put gallons of water inside her. They did do it, they've proved they did it.

So how aware or privy were you to torture as something that was being used by the Australians?

Not when I was with the Australians. That is the only documented case we know of there, but when I went back with the Vietnamese I witnessed it. When I went back on my second tour I witnessed it.

11:00 We never tortured them. We were terrified of them because we hadn't seen them but when we caught a couple, they were kids and they were shaking like you wouldn't believe. We would give them a smoke and that and they were terrified. The best thing to do was to show your blokes what they looked like or show them dead. You know the Battle of Long Tan, can I go into that now?

Yes.

When I came out the big battle is going on and I'm terrified and I wanted to go back into hospital. I thought, "This is no good". Anyway, the next

11:30 morning after the battle we had to fly out first thing in the morning and I had to rejoin my platoon who'd come in at the edge of the battle. We got out there and there were bodies everywhere. There are 260 bodies lying there blown to pieces. Some of them looked bloody awful, it was a terrible sight. And we were all given an area where we had to bury so many. I think we had about 30 for our platoon. So we set up a

12:00 bit of a defensive position around these and they were all in the middle of our defensive position and we started digging graves. And they were fair graves, they were about that long and we were giving them a good burial. Anyway, late in the afternoon these VC walked in and there was a bit of a fire-fight broke out and then they took off. So the expert reckoned that they were pacing out a mortar range. That's how they worked out how to mortar you. They'd pace a mortar range and they reckoned that's what they were doing that and so we thought, "Well, bugger this we've got to get down". It was too late to move and we had to stay where we

12:30 were. So instead of giving them a burial like that, we started digging weapon pits like that and giving them a grave like that. So I'm still in the horrors because I've just come out of hospital and its night time and everyone's sleeping above ground, but not me, I climbed into my pit. And there was a grave just beside me and I woke up during the night and there's someone leaning over this grave and I thought, "What's he doing? We've already checked all the bodies. But I wasn't getting out of

13:00 my pit so I ignored it and went back. And I looked out over there and he's still leaning over and going through the body and that and I thought, "Oh bugger this". So I stayed in my pit. And come the next morning, you know what had happened? All the bodies had stiffened, those we'd put in the narrow things [graves], and they were all sitting up and legs and arms and everything were sticking out of the graves. What I thought was someone leaning over the body was actually the trunk of a body sitting up. A terrible, gruesome sight.

13:30 **That must have been horrible sleeping in a shallow graveyard like that?**

That's why I slept in my pit. No one else did, but I did because I was in the horrors the first day out of a month, you know, laying in a nice warm bed.

How was your wound, by the way, by that stage?

It wasn't bad it had healed over. A month was pretty good. Wearing a web belt tormented it a bit but it didn't

14:00 break it.

Was it a big wound? Were there stitches?

Yes, and they cut it like a great big slice of a cake and they left it open for about three or four days to sort of let the stuff heal before they sewed it up. I don't know what the thing was but that's what they did. Anyway, we followed up, there were drag marks and everything after Long Tan. When they [the VC] went into battle they used to have a

14:30 rubber ring around their ankle. And they had their assault troops and they also had their body gatherers. So their assault troops went in and anyone who got hit these body gatherers would just grab this elastic and just drag them off the battlefield. That was their job. So that's why you often heard about drag marks and that. So we followed this drag mark and we came across this body and he'd been running and an artillery shell must have gone off behind

15:00 him and it drove him straight into the ground. And his legs were wide apart and his neck is pushed right into the ground and his skull is about three feet in front of him. And all his strides had been blown off and his body was all blown and everything. It was terrible. Anyway, the blokes took the skull, unbeknownst to me or anyone else, and after a couple of weeks this skull appeared over their boozer, and it was called 'Skull Cave'. Because we were known as the 'Phantom Company', B Company,

15:30 so they called this thing Skull Cave. They threw this skull on an ant heap and got the ants to eat all the skin and guts and everything. Anyway, they put this skull over the cave and whenever they got drunk of a night they'd climb up and put a cigarette in his mouth and let the wind just glow it through and watch him smoke a cigarette down. There are a lot of photos of Skull Cave.

They must have been pretty hardened by then, by that stage?

They were. When those bodies were sticking up through the ground like I told you

16:00 about, you know, some of them would be saying, "Take my photo". And they'd be shaking his hand or pulling his leg. They were getting really hardened by that time and that was only three months.

What about yourself?

What about myself?

Well, you hadn't been in battle before so even though you'd had nine years of experience and training

16:30 **and you were older than them…**

Yes, I was, I was about six years older than them. When I'd been in Malaya as a lance corporal, to me the sergeant was an old bloke of about 40 or something but he was probably only 28 and we relied on him something terrible. That was 1963 and this is now 1966 and I'm the 'old man'. These young blokes are relying on me. They were good

17:00 soldiers. When we'd come in from out in the bush, say we'd spend a month in the bush…not a month, say we'd spent 20 days in the bush and we'd come in they'd try to get the cooks and the bottle-washers to do picket of a night. You always had to man your guns of a night just in case of attack and we were allowed to (UNCLEAR) [? Suggest he said something like 'knocked' here] ourselves off. And you got that way, they'd open fire at anything, if a stick dropped they'd open fire. We had no lights or anything. In a rubber plantation

17:30 it's pitch black and you'd just be lying on your bed and suddenly they'd open up and you'd go, "Oh my God" and you'd jump out of the bed. I used to like being in the bush with my 30 blokes, well-armed, who knew exactly what they were doing and then when you did get into battle you knew you could rely on them.

How long would these patrols go on for?

They could be anything depending if it was a company, sometimes you went out in a company patrol which may go for five or 10 days. Sometimes it was a

18:00 battalion patrol which would go for three weeks or something and a platoon patrol about five days. So it depended on the patrol or the operation. They were all named after cities and towns in Australia. Like the one I got wounded on was [Operation] 'Hobart'. Long Tan was called Long Tan because that's where the battle occurred. The next big one we went on was 'Bribie' and that was February

18:30 '67. We were sitting in the camp and we didn't know how strong they were, this enemy unit had attacked the town of Dat Do, which was way to the south of us, and they were withdrawing to a position where they were known to be in a defensive position. So A Company went in first and they were to be followed in by us in helicopters, and C Company and D Company were to go by armoured

19:00 personnel carriers into the battle area. So A Company went in and then they came back and they got us. A Company had found out it was a big enemy, the enemy was pretty heavy in strength and [A Company] had to withdraw. And as we were going in the door gunners were trying to show us where the enemy machine guns were so we could get an idea. But I told you what I was like in a helicopter and there was no way I was going to look out, so my corporal is looking and that. Anyway, we get

19:30 on the landing field and A Company is throwing its wounded on and we have to get off and get out of there quick because there was machine gun fire coming over us there. Anyway, we cleared the landing field and we go through A Company and they decide that B Company is going to attack the enemy position and A Company would give us covering fire. So we line up and because I was only a sergeant my platoon is in reserve, and the two

20:00 officers of 4 and 5 Platoons are leading the attack. And they head off and 4 Platoon gets bogged down but 5 Platoon keeps moving so I was ordered to move through 4 Platoon and continue the attack. So I ordered my blokes to fix bayonets and we moved through 4 Platoon and we charged at the enemy, all screaming and yelling, but we started taking casualties

20:30 straightaway so we had to go to ground, probably about from here to the other side of the door away

from the enemy. And we're laying there shooting at each other and 5 Platoon gets up and also charges the enemy. The machines guns and all got just about completely wiped out, eight dead and about 15 wounded or something. The whole platoon is gone and we're in a hell of a situation, you know, we're this close to the enemy and we couldn't bring in artillery and we couldn't bring in [helicopter] gun-ships. They sent up

21:00 an armoured personnel carrier to help us with its big guns because they had heavy machine guns, the enemy, and they blasted the hell out of us. And this APC comes up just behind us and I turned around to show him where the enemy is and the next thing, "Bang!" a big rocket blows him to pieces. So we've got this blown-up thing in amongst us, which was great for the morale. Then they lit a fire towards us and started burning this fire at us, which was making us move. And they've got

21:30 snipers on us and everything. It's getting on to dark and they reckon they are going to overrun us at dark. So they got about eight APCs come roaring through between us and the enemy with their backs down and we were ordered to make a run for it and jump into these APCs, which we did. We left a couple of wounded who we didn't know were still alive and they got us out of there. And that was the battle that the Australian's lost. Don't

22:00 let anybody ever tell you that it wasn't.

You retreated?

We had to, yes. But there have been a couple of articles in The Bulletin [magazine] this year about that battle and the company commander says, "We gave them heaps and they gave us heaps". We never. We went back, he took us back two weeks later looking for bodies because he reckoned there had to be a lot more enemy bodies. I don't think they found a body. We went back and we found this

22:30 pit and he says to me, "Dig that pit up". And none of the soldiers wanted to dig it. So one of my corporals jumped in, little Jock, and he dug and dug and dug and he eventually found this body that still had a bit of skin on the forehead and that, and he said, "Here". And he gave me the skull and I went over to the company commander in front of everyone with the skull behind my back and I tossed it to him and I said, "There's your body count, one skull". No, we got a hiding,

23:00 but as people say, it's like Gallipoli, no one wants to know that we got a hiding there. It's treated as a big event. And people say to me, "Why say you got a hiding on 'Bribie'?" We know it but no one wants to know it. The facts speak for themselves. That Australian War Memorial magazine came out and said it's the only battle the Australians should have lost and then gives the facts to prove we did lose it.

So what happened to the dead

23:30 **Australians? They were just left behind there?**

We left them behind then. And Vicci Opray was one of the blokes and he wasn't dead. And he woke up in the night and he could see these VC standing around and they were using the blood of some of the dead blokes to write, "Get stuffed Aussie" or something the equivalent of on the APCs. And Vic reckons he upped with his rifle but it jammed, which probably saved his life. We went back the next day

24:00 and pulled him out, he was still alive. And when we did pull out we blasted [bombed/strafed] that area with jets and everything and Vic lived through all that. About five years ago I was living on Bribie Island in [southern] Queensland and I organised a big reunion and blokes came from all over Australia for it and Vic came over. And Channel 9 wanted to film it but Vic said if they filmed it I'm not coming, so we knocked it on the head.

Why was

24:30 **that, why didn't he want it to be filmed?**

I don't know but he didn't want it so we didn't have it.

So when did you get Vic out?

The next morning. We went back in the next morning and got him out. I think out of my 30 blokes we lost four dead and 21 wounded out of the original 30 that went over, which was pretty high casualties.

25:00 But then we were the first lot into Phuoc Tuy Province and the enemy action was going to be high. You rarely went out without having a contact. You'd nearly always had a contact when you went out. But these National Servicemen they were brilliant. And when they came home the media at the time were all on about these marches and moratoriums and everything else so the blokes never said anything about their

25:30 service, they hushed it up. They'd go back to their towns and their cities, they couldn't tell their mates because their mates wouldn't understand or would ask them how many kids they'd killed that day or something so they bottled it all up, where it was different for us regulars because we could go to the sergeants mess and talk about it and it was a form of therapy. These blokes would come home and most of them had been promised at their jobs that they wouldn't lose seniority and that was all garbage. A lot of them had lost their girlfriends after12 months and they were in a hell of a state. No one

26:00 understands that. The regs are different to the Natios, they didn't volunteer, they got taken over there away from their jobs. They never gained, you know, promotion or anything that they would have if they had have stayed. Their whole lives were turned around. They couldn't tell anybody about it and now in their 50s they are having all the problems in the world because they bottled it up for all those years.

Do you have much contact with them?

I'm a pension officer. I do pensions at St John O' God

26:30 Hospital [Geelong] and I work every Thursday and do pensions for them, give them pensions from Veterans' Affairs, so I have a lot of contact with them. I'm supposed to be working today but I had to come to something else.

What could that be?

I really sympathise with the National Servicemen. I really do. And I can understand what their problems are. They've got to feel so bitter.

27:00 You imagine what it would be like to be just taken away from your home and your job when you don't want to go, you're not volunteering for it but you've got to go. And there's every chance that you're not going to come home in one piece.

Exactly. And I think the other point that you made earlier about not really knowing about what they were getting themselves into either?

The best thing that we could do was show them a dead body. We'd show them a dead VC to show them they weren't infallible. They were only kids, a lot of them were only kids.

27:30 **What were your instructions regarding POWs [prisoners of war]?**

Just get them back, get them back as quick as you could, which we did. As soon as we could get a helicopter out we did, the Australian helicopters, and I've got to talk about them now. They only had about eight helicopters out there and when we got into trouble or that and

28:00 we called them up unless we virtually cleared a football ground they wouldn't come in. They wouldn't come in. And their story was they only had eight helicopters and they were told by the Australian government that they weren't to damage it. So imagine how we'd feel when we had dead and wounded and we couldn't get them in. Some Yank would be going past and he'd hear our call and he'd just dive in and cut the bushes and everything and put them on and take them out.

Who took you

28:30 **out? Who did the dust off [helicopter landing] for you?**

A Yank, but they used to get into fights and that when the blokes ran into them. Have you heard that before, anything like that? It's a fact.

They'd just turn away?

They'd come out and unless you had virtually a footie [football] field cleared they wouldn't go in. Whereas the Yanks would come in to

29:00 anything. If there was a fire-fight going on they wouldn't come in, the Yanks would. I was very impressed with them, the [Yank] helicopter pilots, not their soldiers.

So how would you get a Yank helicopter?

They'd just be listening on the frequency, hear you on the frequency, if he was in that area he'd switch to the frequency for that area and he'd hear your call. And they just couldn't do

29:30 enough for you. He'd take you back and if you wanted him to come back he'd come back.

Did they have guns on board?

The normal helicopters had a couple of M60s mounted either side, but then you had heavy and light-fire teams which were helicopters which had rockets, mini-guns and everything on them. You could call for them in a battle and they were

30:00 terrific. They weren't like jets, they could sort of hover and you could direct their fire whereas the jets would come racing in and probably bomb you. The helicopters you could just direct them right on.

So is that what they do? If they were coming in say for a dust off they'd fire first?

No, the gun-ships were the ones who would fire. If they were coming in for a dust off and they took fire then the door gunners

30:30 would probably open up where the fire was coming from, but that was mainly for their own protection not to get involved in the fight.

So were you ever in the situation where you couldn't get a helicopter to pick up the wounded?

No, we usually could but you might have to wait a little bit longer than normal. We had two blokes, I can't even think of the operation, we were going along the

31:00 coast way down to the south and we were on the APCs and one of the APC drivers said, "I think I see some movement up in the sand hills there". So we stopped and I got one of the sections to go up and check it out, and Clem Black was the section commander, and they went up and as they approached a machine gun opened up and Clem dived for cover. And he had one of these old

31:30 Ghurkha shirts on I was telling you about and he had three bullet holes in the shirt, but the other two blokes, two National Servicemen, I can't think of their names, they got hit. They both got hit. Anyway, we raced up in the APCs and the enemy took off and we got a dust off in for these blokes. That took a little bit but we got it in and a few days later we got a letter from these blokes,

32:00 [Private] Peter Hart and Tony Braithwaite, that was their names, and the letter says, "We're not real well, we've got the Red Cross girl writing the letter. We expect to go back to Australia today and will keep in touch". And then about an hour later we were notified they had both died of their wounds. It makes you think if they were brain dead and someone

32:30 did the right thing, doesn't it. But getting a letter like that and then an hour later we were told they were both dead, very mystifying.

So at what point did you do patrols or manoeuvres with the Americans?

With the Americans? We did a couple of operations with them,

33:00 yes, mainly their APCs, not their foot soldiers. There weren't a lot of their foot soldiers in our area. I don't think we came across any but we did work with their APCs. I don't know, they didn't impress me. They had Claymores as well, the mines I was telling you about, and they were full of plastic explosive, that's how they exploded everything, and they used to make brews and they'd take the

33:30 back of the Claymore and get a bit of this plastic explosive and put it under their cup and light it and it would boil straightaway, that's how strong it was. I don't know what happened when it came time to set off the Claymores, there'd be nothing in there. But that's what they'd use. They'd just use their Claymores, the PE [plastic explosive] out of that, to make all their brews.

So can you tell me about those operations with the APCs?

I think

34:00 we went into the village of, it might come to me, way out to the east. We had to protect the village for a big operation that was going on. And it was just my platoon and a few of the APCs from the Yank division. We'd just set a perimeter up around the village. On the way out there we were

34:30 patrolling and this bloke jumped up in front of us on a push bike and we all yelled for him to "Stop!" and "Stop!" and he never stopped, so we shot him. And we found an old hand-cart and we laid his body on the hand cart and then we went into the village. And we went past the school and all the kids were sitting out in front of the school and they were waiting for their teacher who was coming to work on a bike, and you know where he

35:00 was. And then we had to go in that village for about four or five days. I don't think we were very popular but then again we had the armoured personnel carriers to support us.

Did you deliver his body to the village?

Yes, but I don't know why he ran, he wouldn't have got shot if he hadn't have run.

So how big a convoy would that have been?

35:30 Maybe five or six APCs, that's all, you didn't travel with too big a one. I'm trying to think of what other ones we did with them. Just after Christmas '66 we opened up, the Yanks started coming in to Vietnam in large numbers and they were moving down the highway from Saigon through Vung

36:00 Tau, from where I don't know. And we, in conjunction with the American APCs, had to patrol the highway and keep it open, which we did. And there were a fair few of them then working with us just opening the highway while truckload after truckload of Yanks went through. That's when they were building it up to about 300,000 or 400,000 [soldiers].

So the village in the other story

36:30 **that you were talking about, about the school teacher, you said you had to take the village?**

No, we had to protect the village. It was a little village way out to the east that eventually got overrun, but I can't think of the name of it. We just had to, I think we had guns there and we protected the guns in conjunction with the APCs because they were in fire support to the operation.

37:00 But it was just our platoon in the village.

So the VC were nearby and were threatening that area?

It was a VC area. The commander of the Vietnamese unit there had only had, all his soldiers had been issued with bolt-action rifles so they couldn't waste ammunition if they had automatics. And the marketplace was full of Claymores upside down cemented into the

37:30 cement so that if they did get attacked they were just going to blow everything up, so you walked over these Claymores.

So ready, like cemented in and ready to detonate?

Yes, if a big attack ever came on the village, which it did eventually. I can't think of the name of it, but it was way out to the east, it was a long way out and it was sort of stuck out there on its

38:00 own. It had two American advisers there too, I gave one bloke a new pair of boots for a shotgun, he gave me a shotgun for a new pair of boots.

Why did you need a shotgun?

I didn't need a shotgun but I had a spare pair of boots and it was a good-looking shotgun. It wasn't a shotgun like you have now but it was pump action, about 10 shot and probably about two

38:30 pellets in each thing. If you got hit with them you got hit and you knew it. It was a good shotgun. I brought it home.

So was there any action there at the village?

We did a patrol this day and we had a new bloke with us and we were patrolling along this

39:00 creek bank and we had an American photographer with us. And we patrolled along this creek bank and these two people jumped up and the scout, who was the new bloke, opened up and killed the woman. Anyway, we ran up and they were Nungs, which is an aboriginal tribe in Vietnam, and they were the only two living in the village. They were sort of,

39:30 no one had anything to do with them because they were aborigines. And she'd been shot in the heart and he was standing there with his finger trying to stop the flow of blood. And they were just out fishing. They didn't know we'd be patrolling the area. They shouldn't have been there, stood up and he shot them. He was heartbroken, we had to get rid of him, he was no good any more. The old man never said anything. We carried her back to the village

40:00 and he went berserk, blaming us and all, and the head bloke just came up and knocked him out, very callous.

So the scout who shot him?

The scout shot the woman.

Yes, the scout who shot the woman, what do you mean he was no good to you any more?

He was just a mess because he realised he'd shot somebody who was a non-combatant so we had to send him back.

40:30 I don't know what happened to him. I didn't see him again. He'd only been in the country about a week but he was cut to pieces. It wasn't his fault, you know, if you saw anyone you shot them. These people probably didn't understand they weren't supposed to be there, but someone jumps up like that and I mean your training is automatic you just straightaway shoot them.

Tape 7

00:30 **Just wondering if there's anything more, we were talking on the last tape or you were talking about the fellow that had shot the tribeswoman, is there anything more on that story that you wanted to say?**

No, that was it.

Just going back a bit. You talked about the Battle of Long Tan and you'd just got back from the hospital and, you know, the burying of the dead and all of that. The battle itself,

01:00 **did you hear any of that from where you were?**

Yes, I heard the lot. Everyone in the task force heard it and not only the small arms fire but it was continuous artillery fire from the task force. All the batteries were firing including the big guns of the Yanks. That was whistling over your head all the time on your way out because we were between them and the battle, like trains,

01:30 especially the 8-inchers.

What did Long Tan mean for the morale of the battalion up there?

Well, initially, because there were so many killed it sort of knocked them around, but when they realised how big a victory it was that

02:00 sort of lifted the morale. D Company had to be protected for a while after that, like kept out of battles and operations because they had to rebuild, they had 25 dead or something, quite a few. Some of the sergeants and officers moved around a bit but don't ask me why.

02:30 **Is that when you were made the sergeant around that time, were you?**

I was a sergeant when we went, I was the first sergeant made up in the battalion, but I took over our platoon when the platoon commander left around that time, yes.

Are you able to tell us the background to that?

I don't know, he just was put into another job back into

03:00 headquarters or back in the thing somewhere and they didn't have another officer so I took over the platoon.

You talk about 'Bribie' and the casualties there, were you getting new guys coming in after that or was it a matter of appointing fellows from elsewhere?

No, at this time the task force had a D&E platoon ['Demolitions & Explosives' platoon?], I think they called it and they started feeding us a few blokes down from

03:30 there so we started getting new blokes then. I lost one corporal killed and another one badly wounded going back to 'Hobart', so we had to get corporals then and we got one in and I promoted one in the platoon, I didn't, the officer did

04:00 that. And we had this other National Serviceman from Wagga, a bloke called Reggie Tye, and he was a big rough looking bugger. We'd had punch-ups and everything when there was no one around me and him. He refused to accept discipline and he was the greatest no hoper of all time but he was a brilliant soldier in the bush. But you couldn't get him to do things and he wouldn't follow orders and everything and I didn't know what to do. Anyway, when we promoted this corporal I had a

04:30 brain wave and I made him a lance corporal. And it was the greatest thing in the world, he turned out the best corporal of the lot. He was great.

What were some of the other challenges you faced with the added responsibility of being a platoon commander?

Well, we had a rat plague over there, there were rats everywhere so I decided this day that I'd run a rat catching competition to get rid of them. So I put it out that we were going to

05:00 have a rat catching competition and there was a photographer from the papers back home there. And he took a photo and he ran a story back here. And some woman in Canberra read the story and she got this great big cup and all and sent it over for the best rat catcher. Well, the newspapers have got hold of it and the colonel knows about it so he calls me up and he says, "You are going to have to run this properly,

05:30 you know, you're going to have to run it like a real competition". So I had to weigh the rats and measure them and everything and, anyway, we were getting rid of them but when they saw the cup the blokes starting breeding them and fattening them up and all to get extra points. And they used to find out where I'd bury them and they'd go and dig them up and brush them down with methylated spirits and make them look fresh and that and present them again. It all got out of hand but we did get rid of the rats.

06:00 **Would there be betting on that sort of thing?**

No, we used to do gambling over there. I used to run the crown and anchor [game involving dice] and that for the unders and overs [another game involving dice]. We had Time Life magazine, that photo I was telling you about, Ron de Paulo, he was a big time photographer and Dick someone from Black Swan, I think it was, the

06:30 name of the company, they came over and they were to go out on patrol with us. And the night before the patrol I went over to the diggers mess [soldiers below the rank of sergeant] and I ran the crown and anchor and the under and over and I won about $1000 off them. Anyway, their story comes out and it's got a big page of me in this Time Life magazine, a big colour page talking about 'Butch' Brady who's a platoon sergeant and a veteran of nine years. Anyway, they go on to say that

07:00 'Butch' used to run the local craps game [a game involving two dice popular in the US] they called it and said he only ran it for the welfare of the company. Then it said, however, the night before we went on patrol the bank, alias 'Butch', won $1500 or something. This goes all over Australia and everywhere and there is all sorts of repercussions. So I got fronted up to the colonel with my company commander and he sort of put in a good word for me. And the colonel said, "Why were you running this game?" And

this

07:30 company commander said, “Well, sir, he was going to buy a colour television set for the officers mess”. So I had to buy a colour TV for the officers mess. But they paid me in traveller’s cheques and I sent them home to Val and they’re no good because they’ve got to be signed by the person, you know the protection they’ve got, so she sent them back and I’m stuck with these cheques and the only way you could sign them was to go to Saigon and see these blokes and it was impossible to go to

08:00 Saigon. So I’m trying to work out how I can get to Saigon, so I put in this application to the company commander and I said I was a married man and I enjoyed sex and I didn’t want to masturbate because it went against everything I thought of and would it be possible for me to have a weekend nature-run to Saigon. Anyway, he approved it and I went down and I stayed in this French villa with these two blokes. They had a big villa, Time Life, and that and they cashed the

08:30 cheques on the black market and I ended up with about $1500 out of it. Someone got that application [for the weekend trip to Saigon] and it appeared in the battalion magazine for everyone to read later on, including my wife, but it didn’t have my name on it so it wasn’t bad.

So had you been writing home very much?

Yes, but the mail was terrible. They all say that the greatest morale booster in the world is mail, but when you don’t get it

09:00 it has the opposite affect and being the first lot over there the mail was terrible. You’d wait months for a letter. And this was a terrible thing for the morale, it used to lower the morale something terrible. So in that case mail wasn’t a good booster. You got one R & R while you were there and you could go to Taiwan, Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong, but you couldn’t come home, which you could later on after we’d

09:30 come back. We had a company commander, our first company commander, Noel Edgar Ford was his name, and he was a very hard man, we thought he had no personality or anything, a very hard man and no one sort of got on with him, but when we went to Vietnam he was a different man. He was all for the welfare of the troops and looking after the troops and he devised tactics that no one else had devised

10:00 before that I knew of and when we’d go out on a company operation of a night time he would go into what we called the ‘harbour’, your night position, but he would have picked a hill about 500 yards away and as soon as it got dark we’d all up, now imagine 100 blokes at night, and move into this new hill where we’d send a couple of guides to sort of put us in. And the idea of that was that quite often the VC would see you go into your night position

10:30 and either mortar you or mount an early morning attack. So by doing this it used to reduce the risk of that happening. So he turned out a good bloke. Anyhow, he came home halfway through, with six months of his tour to go and he went to the Australian Staff College [a 12 month course for officers capable of gaining higher rank]. And the word we got was that just before he finished staff college Harold Holt’s disappearance happened and they said that he was so disappointed on his way

11:00 home he parked his car above the heads in Sydney there and committed suicide because he was so upset about Harold Holt. And we thought, “This is strange”, but anyway he seemed to be that sort of bloke. Anyhow, years later we found out that when he’d gone on R & R he’d met this very wealthy New Zealand woman and he set up the suicide so his wife and everyone would think he’d killed himself and he

11:30 went with this woman.

More clever tactics?

Yeah, more clever tactics. One of his better efforts.

Is it possible for you to describe to us some of those longer patrols. You were saying there were five-day patrols and some even longer?

Yes, we used to take about five days’ rations out with us. That’s the most we could probably carry because after our first battle we discovered we

12:00 weren’t carrying enough ammunition. We went through ammunition too quick in the battle so we had to cut down a bit on the rations to get more ammunition in there. So we carried five days’ rations. You’d only be able to carry three or four water bottles and you’d drink that in a day so we always had to find water because you couldn’t get re-supply. And we always used to try to find running water because you couldn’t purify your water.

12:30 They had these little Millbank filter bags that would take a day to get a cup out of, but you never had that time. They had water-purification tablets but I don’t know if they worked or not. But we’d always try and find running water to re-supply our things. You couldn’t go without water, you had to have water over there because it was pouring out of you all the time. So we’d never take a change of clothes or socks or anything so you’d wear those clothes and socks for

13:00 15 days and when you came back in you’d just tear them off and throw them away. And you can imagine

what the stink was like lying beside a bloke of a night time. I use heaps of after-shave and under arm deodorant now because I can't bear the smell of BO or anything. That's because of that. What else did we do then? Meals, we never got a meal. We never cooked, we'd always eat out of the

13:30 tins. The blokes that smoked it was very hard for them because you always see smoke in the jungle, so they either had to dig a little hole and stick their head in it and pull their coat over them, which imagine what the smoke would do and that to them, but they had to have their smokes. You couldn't stop blokes smoking because they wouldn't carry on with you. I've never smoked in my life so it never worried me but you had to understand that blokes had to have their smokes.

14:00 They'd get very, very tired, especially the blokes with the radios and that, of a night time you were supposed to do two hours on and four hours off, you were breaking your sleep all the time. You don't sleep during the day time, you've got that 70 pound pack on your back plus you're carrying ammunition for the gun and everything else, everyone carried extra weight. It was a terrible, terrible experience. All the time you're sweating and

14:30 you're covered in rashes and everything because that's just the result of wearing wet clothes every afternoon and your pack dragging onto you and everything. I told you before that if we were ever uncertain where we were we would get artillery to fire a smoke shell and watch where that landed and take a bearing off it. If you're in a patrol of about 20 or even

15:00 with company size of a night time you'd always fire DF [defensive fire] tasks, which meant that when you went into your position for the night you'd always have the guns with defensive fire tasks set up 100 yards north, south-east and west of you, so if you were attacked you'd call for say A, B, C, D and they'd immediately put fire down to break up the attack. So you had to know exactly where you were because if you were wrong it could come down on you.

15:30 Map reading was very important but the maps were air photos, that's all they had. The French didn't have very good maps. No one had good maps of the area. So all they had was air photos and they quickly turned them into maps. So pacing was very important. You'd usually get a tall man and a short man to pace. They'd be carrying 10 rocks and they'd transfer them after 100 paces or whatever, they'd transfer them so they'd let you

16:00 know when you'd gone 1000]. That was really the only way unless you could find some feature that you know, but most of the time you were in the jungle. We'd often run into VC over there who, because we were so new in the battalion and many of them wore greens the same as us, they would think we were VC and they'd wave to us and then we'd wave back. And when you call a person to you

16:30 that's how you call them and we'd try and call them over to us and get a shot and that, get them closer. It worked a couple of times. It was very strange. Even with contacts on the track they'd give you a wave before you shot at them. They weren't used to Australians and we never wore helmets or flak jackets, which the Yanks did. We only wore our little green hats which is what they did and that's what the confusion was.

So when you say you'd wave at them the

17:00 **way they would wave?**

If they gave you a wave. If you want somebody to come to you, that's come here, and we'd try that to try and get them over to shoot them.

Did it ever work?

Yes, a couple of times, yes, close enough. Whether you killed them or not, I mean, you'd hit them but they used to run that fast when they got hit.

And their patrols were what sort of size?

It could be anything. You could hit a two man patrol, you could hit a 100 man patrol. You didn't

17:30 know. If they stopped and fought it was big, if they ran you knew that there were hardly any there or they weren't confident. If they stopped and fought it was a big one.

And when would you make a decision that you had to move back. I mean, what sort of size if you were out with, say, in a section or a platoon, what sort of size patrol would you sort of...

You know, if you see them in the distance and there were a lot more, you'd bring artillery on them.

18:00 If you were in contact you'd still bring artillery on them. If you weren't successful you'd probably try and break contact, but I can't remember ever breaking contact.

What do you think were the strengths of the VC? What were the strengths but also the weaknesses? What can you say about the enemy in that respect?

They couldn't shoot very well. They hadn't had practice

18:30 in shooting. On that first operation against D445 on 'Hobart' we came in contact with their bugle. They

used a bugle to pass messages in the battle, which was a good idea, you know, a bugle stood out and we used to hear this bugle and whenever the bugle rang they'd rush at us, there'd be a mad charge at us, so we learned to get terrified of that bloody bugle. And in later battles if we heard the bugle we knew who we were up

19:00 against. After the war, Peter Wilkinson did that story on A Current Affair and he did it on me and then he was going over and he was going to interview that woman in Phuoc Tuy Province and I asked him then if he could see if he could get the bugle for us from D445, but he never did. That used to put terror into us that thing. What else? Mainly they

19:30 couldn't shoot that good. They were off very quick when you'd have a contact. They'd really, really move. A contact, just a single contact, it would be so quick, it would be bang, bang and they're gone, so if you don't hit them with the first couple of rounds they'd be gone. No, I don't think they had too many faults. They were very young a lot of them.

You were saying it wasn't

20:00 **your company but one of the others had come across more mines and booby traps?**

No, not our Battalion. There were two battalions there at the time 5 Battalion and 6 Battalion and everywhere 5 Battalion went they seemed to hit mines and they were getting very, very demoralised. They'd taken a lot of casualties from mines and we were running into battles whereas they were running into mines. In the latter part of our

20:30 tour there this Brigadier [R. L.] Hughes decided that he was going to put a big minefield down. And he was going to run a fence from just south of the task force right through, this joined fence. And it was going to be mined, the other side of the fence, with hundreds of mines. So we were given the job of protecting

21:00 5 RAR plus a couple of engineers who were laying the minefield. And we used to go out in the morning and back in at night. And they had an APC, an armoured personnel carrier, and they'd stand on that and they'd drive the star pickets in [steel fencing posts shaped like a star] and then they'd go another five yards and drive another one and then another five yards and drive one in. We came out this morning and we went about 200 yards ahead of where they'd finished the last one and they drove their five yards and drove the picket in and "Boom!", the VC had set a

21:30 big, paced it out exactly where they were going to put it in and set a big mine there that blew them up. But that was one of the biggest blues of the war that minefield, because they had brilliant sappers, brilliant engineers, and they just started lifting all the mines out of the minefields and using them against the Australians. Everyone admitted it was the biggest blue of all time it gave them a hell of a surprise mind. A minefield is good but it's got to be covered by fire

22:00 at all times. You put a minefield down and you don't overlook it, it's useless.

So did you ever come across any mines laid by the VC or booby traps and that sort of thing?

Booby traps, not mines, booby traps.

How were they set up?

Trip wires. Our scouts would find them. But, as I said, we kept off the tracks and that's why we never hit a lot. Mainly where we would find them is when we'd attack an installation;

22:30 they'd be set up around the outside. Some of the schools and hospitals and that we found, you couldn't believe, they'd go and get about 100 people out of a way along or something in the middle of the night, take them out with their little shovels and make them dig. Little shovels and these buildings you wouldn't believe, they were massive. You'd go down and perfect walls and everything, great big school rooms and great big hospital rooms and everything.

In the tunnels?

Yes, they were the tunnels. You just couldn't

23:00 believe it, you know.

You told us about that one experience when you came across, I think it was the nurse that was supposedly tortured, did you come across any other tunnel systems where they were occupied and you had skirmishes?

No, a few times we lined up to put in an attack early in the morning but they'd gone when we went in there. A couple of times when we went out to the west to the hills

23:30 there they used those [United States Air Force Boeing] B-52s, those big bombers, you know the ones I'm talking about? You don't hear them, they fly that high. And we'd stay about a few thousand [yards] back and they'd bomb the hills and you'd go in there and you'd find VC in a state of shock just wandering around there, and there'd be blood coming out of their eyes and their nose and their ears, and they'd just be like zombies if they'd been in the area of the blast.

24:00 **These are people, civilians as well or the VC?**

They were enemy. They were up in the hills and they'd been bombed and we went in the next day and you'd find them wandering around. As I said, they'd be zombies. They just bumped into you like a rabbit with myxomatosis [a viral disease that causes the mucous membranes to swell often infecting vision], they were just a vegetable.

And what would you do, just leave them there?

Just keep going and leave them for someone else.

24:30 **In the notes you've got something about Christmas Day 1966?**

Yes, Christmas 1966 we were, as I said, we never got rations much but on Christmas Day these cooks had worked their butts off and they'd got chickens and everything for us. And all day we were smelling these chickens cooking and that and it was going to be fantastic. Anyway, we were the reaction company and something broke out

25:00 on the highway and at about half-past eleven, just before lunch, we got called out and the APCs roared up and we had to jump on board. And the cooks were running along throwing chickens into the APCs and everything. Throwing spuds at us and all just to try and get us something. But something broke out on the highway and we were out there for about five days and when we came back they gave us another Christmas Day. Yes, that was very distressing, more so

25:30 for the cooks than us.

What about New Year, was that celebrated?

No. I don't think we were in then.

So how long was that first tour all up?

Twelve months.

So you were out '67, what month were you out?

What do you mean, what month?

What month, when did you actually get in there? When did you actually get in, in '66?

About May.

26:00 May '66. Yes, I came home 12 months later.

So you had an R & R in Singapore, is that right?

Yes.

How long would that have been for?

Five days.

And how was that?

Good. I'm not going to talk about that.

26:30 I was married.

Say no more. Did you get into, it was hard to get into Saigon, you went down there once…

On the 'nature run', yes, that's the only time I got to Saigon.

What was Saigon like?

I didn't really see that much of it. They picked me up from the airport and took me back to this villa they had and they took me out to a nightclub.

27:00 There was, you know, soldiers everywhere and I don't really remember. After I got wounded they gave me a Saigon guard for five days. You used to go to Saigon and guard the civilians and all that. I did that for five days, but I only went to the one bar the whole time I was there. We just guarded this one location and I can't even remember that much about that either.

27:30 I remember all the operations. As I said, I was happy when we were out on operations because you knew you had your blokes with you, you knew what they could do and you reckoned you could handle most things you came up against, and if you couldn't you had artillery to help you and you'd feel confident on operations, really confident.

Are there any other operations that you think are worth recording while we're here?

Not that first tour, no, the second tour there was.

28:00 **Okay.**

When we came back home we flew back into Brisbane. Brisbane was different to every other city in Australia in as much as they did and always have had a lot of time for their soldiers, because we lived in Enoggera, and they still do, which is a suburb of Brisbane. We marched through the city and everyone cheered us and clapped us and everything. That was only in 1967 but the war was still 'popular', if you could

28:30 say that then. But we really got a good welcome home and everything. There was no one running up and throwing paint over you or anything like that. I don't think that happened right through the war in Brisbane. Brisbane was different to all of the other states. Every time you drove through Brisbane in convoy everyone would yell and wave to you and everything and no one was ever crook at you or anything like that.

29:00 Brisbane probably accepted the army better than anywhere.

Can I ask, where did you stand in terms of the politics of Vietnam, you know, the 'domino theory' [communism taking over one country after the other in South-East Asia] and that sort of thing?

I believed in the domino theory and, I don't know, it's been proven a falsehood now, I mean, all the Vietnamese wanted was independence, they didn't want to push further south or anything else, they just wanted independence. As far as the politics of it

29:30 go I was a regular army soldier, I believed in God, I believed that officers never told lies, which I found out was bullshit later, but if they had have said that we're going to attack New Zealand tomorrow I just would have said, "Well, let's go!" because it was my job. And I really mean that. I sort of believed everything and I was in the army and I'd go and do what I was told. Now I'm very cynical about it all.

30:00 **So they had you camped in Enoggera when you came back?**

Yes, but we were only, we came home and we went on leave and the battalion left Enoggera and went up to Townsville and we lost our CO and we got a new RSM and everything. I'd sort of got [into] a lot of trouble. I'd been three months on the dry in Vietnam, when we came in, because I used to play up in the sergeants mess and I did steal vehicles over there to drive home

30:30 from the mess of a night and I got put on the dry for three months, when I was in the bush I was a good soldier and they knew that, when we came out of the bush I'd just get into trouble. We went to Townsville and I expected to become company sergeant major of my company but it didn't happen because the RSM had rubbished me to the other RSM. And they gave the company to this sergeant who had performed very badly in

31:00 Vietnam. He'd performed that badly that they took him out of the company and put him on the 'ice run', which was just running into Vung Tau every day. And they gave him the company and, to me, that was a really bit slap in the face so I asked for a posting, an infantry posting, anywhere away from where I was. So I ended up going down to Amberley, to army aviation, to, I thought it was GD,

31:30 ground defence, but it was general duties. So I wasn't very impressed with that so then I put in for the training to the adviser's team [Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATV)] with my mate, to come back [to Vietnam].

Had you done, there was an aviation course or something?

Sorry?

You were telling us earlier how you did a course, an aviation course.

While I was there, there were whisperings about air traffic control in the army and that and I put my name down for

32:00 **it because it was a big-time job and I never thought any more about it but it eventually happened. When I went on the training team I got into a lot of trouble, too. I shot up a nurses mess and they were going to put me on a court martial and the CO sent me home before they did. When I got shot I wasn't supposed to go**

32:30 **back to Vietnam because I'd got what they call parasitic neuralgia], which is a paralysed leg. I still get a lot of pain in that leg and I wasn't supposed to go back to Vietnam. So they sent me home on R & R after I'd shot up this nurses thing and the colonel told me not to come back. So I went to the doctors and they said, "You shouldn't have been there anyway. You're not supposed to be there.", and so they kept me home. And they wouldn't carry the court martial back to Australia. So I beat it. And that's when I ended up back in**

33:00 **aviation on this air traffic control course, which was the highest paid job in the army.**

So how had you slipped through the net that second time if you weren't supposed to return to Vietnam?

Oh, they were desperate for troops and that and they probably didn't look too hard, and I'd done a tour

and they wanted trained soldiers. The lowest rank on the training team was warrant officer so they promoted me to warrant officer and sent me back over.

So how

33:30 **long between tours was it?**

Two years.

So you went back in ’69?

Yes.

So was the popular sort of support waning at that time, because it was around ’69 that the moratoriums started?

Yes, I went up to Da Nang then, up north, the task force was down south, but I went up to Da Nang and you could see the American soldiers,

34:00 mainly the negroes, there was no discipline, they weren’t really interested in saluting officers and all that sort of thing. And then I was sent down south [about 125km] from Da Nang, operating between Quang Ngai and Chu Lai. I’d only been there about a month and I went out on this operation with this Captain Tony Moggeridge, an Australian captain. We were with this

34:30 Vietnamese battalion and we pulled up on this hill this night, and we’d only been there 10 minutes and we were starting to get our gear out for the night, and the next thing all this shooting breaks out. And the bloody VC are coming up through trap doors in the hill and everything and shooting everywhere and that. Anyway, Moggeridge said to me, “They’re running, our Vietnamese are running”. I said, “No”, I’d never seen soldiers run, I couldn’t believe it. And he said, “What’s that?” And these

35:00 two Vietnamese go running past us dragging the mortar by the barrel. “Come on,” he said, “we’ve got to go”. So it was just on dusk and we took off and there was this row of hedges all the way down and they were making for the hedges, our mob, to get through the breaks. So we ran in and we were running over them trying to get past them all and they were firing traces over our heads, just over our heads, it was just a complete scramble. Anyway, I’ve got the radio and these helicopters are

35:30 overhead and I said, “The bastards are running, the bastards are running”. And he said, “Who, the VC?” And I said, “No, our troops, our troops”. He said, “I’m coming in to get you out”. I said, “No.” because he would have been blown to pieces with all the exchange, but they were going to come in and get us out. Anyway, the next thing I’ve got all these gun-ships and jets and everything overhead. So I controlled it all and they blew the shitter out of the top of the hill. And we get down to the bottom and they’re all milling around us, the

36:00 [South] Vietnamese and there are no officers, I don’t know where they were at the time but we couldn’t speak Vietnamese and didn’t have our interpreter and they couldn’t speak English, so we didn’t know what was going on. Eventually, we got a couple of officers and attacked back, well, you couldn’t say ‘attacked’ because they’d gone by then, but we got them lined up and we went back to the top of the hill and unbeknown to us one of the companies had stayed to fight, one of the [South Vietnamese] battalions had stayed to fight. And we blew them to

36:30 pieces with all the friendly fire, which was terrible.

So had you assumed that that was the enemy there or was that just they were in the cross fire?

No, we thought the whole [South Vietnamese] mob had run but this mob had stayed to fight and we cut them to pieces with the helicopters, not knowing what was going on, thinking everyone had run, we just brought all this fire in on top of what we thought was the enemy.

37:00 **How many men were there lost?**

About half the company, about 40 odd.

So because of the breakdown in the chain of the command of the [South] Vietnamese? So how did that work, you were going in there as a training team, what was the difference?

Well the Vietnamese, you had to coordinate every request that he coordinated but in something like that when it’s complete panic you

37:30 know it sort of goes by the board. If he wants gunfire or artillery fire he requests it through his colonel, who is sitting beside your colonel. Then you request it through your colonel and then they both agree and you’ve got it. At that time, the area it was in was the My Lai area [Quang Ngai Province], it was in the middle of it. You know the My Lai, the My Lai massacre [16 March 1968, Lieutenant William Calley led Charlie Company, 11th Brigade, US Army, into My Lai and, apparently under orders from senior command, told his troops to kill everybody; estimates of dead civilians vary from 347 to 504; the aftermath saw Calley court martialled and sentenced to life in prison, however, he only served three and a half years under house arrest]? Well the My Lai area, which was

38:00 known as the ‘Pinkville’, because all the village was painted pink. They got bright pink from somewhere and they painted it all bright pink and it was called the ‘Pinkville’. Well, this was just after the 1968 atrocities, so when you called for artillery or anything like that you virtually had to give them your Bankcard number because they were so paranoid about it, and also at that time they were trying to introduce ‘Vietnamization’ [US President Richard Nixon’s policy to encourage South Vietnamese to take greater responsibility for fighting the war while reducing the number of Americans serving].

38:30 So they were trying to use most of the Vietnamese artillery and everything else and the Vietnamese chopper pilots and that, but when the panic was on like that they just gave us everything, but usually you would coordinate it through your colonel and at the same time the Vietnamese battalion commander would coordinate it through his colonel. We were there to, they used to tell terrible porkies about the enemy they

39:00 killed, so we’d have to confirm that the kill was as it was and the same with casualties. We’d have to confirm the casualties and what they were.

How would you do that?

Actually count them, see them. If they caught prisoners and they wanted to torture them they would do it in front of us because they’d get better results, because the prisoners would feel terrible about it.

39:30 The torture may not worry them but the fact that it was being done in front of us. They’d ask us to stand there while they did it, whip them with wet bamboo or something like that, bamboo slivers, strip them off and do it in front of us and, I don’t know, they’d feel shamed or something and it would probably help them talk.

So would they generally talk?

I think so, yes, probably more so than if we weren’t there.

What other type of

40:00 **torture other than that would they utilise?**

I don’t know, that’s all I witnessed, beatings. They weren’t bad soldiers the [South] Vietnamese. They weren’t bad soldiers up north, the [North] Vietnamese. The problem was that the Yanks gave them [South Vietnamese] everything and gave them too much support, every time they’d get into battle you’d have Yank gun-ships or jets or artillery fighting the battle for them, so they’d just lay on the ground and let it

40:30 happen. And then when the Yanks pulled all that out they’d forgotten how to fight, I reckon. They withdrew too quickly and left them on their own and they weren’t ready.

So you were based at Da Nang now with the training team, is that right?

Well, we started of at Quang Ngai and then we moved to Da Nang, to Chu Lai as our permanent home. Chu Lai was where the

41:00 big hospital was where I shot up the nurses thing. So Chu Lai was a very big base. There were a lot of jets and everything there and we were about a mile down the road. When we came in from operations we used to go to this artillery base. If we didn’t go back to our unit when we came in for the night we’d go to this artillery base called LZ ‘Doddy’, landing zone Doddy. And the whole

41:30 [South] Vietnamese battalion would go there and they’d have a great big pit dug right around outside the wire and everything and that’s where the Vietnamese went in that pit, whereas we’d go inside into the messes and eat steaks and everything. And the poor little Vietnamese would be out in these pits.

So there were interpreters or there were supposed to be interpreters, were there?

Yes, you had an interpreter and a bodyguard. I had a real good bodyguard.

Tape 8

00:35 When we’d go out on operations with the [South] Vietnamese and we’d come back in after a battle we’d come back into this village just down from LZ ‘Doddy’, we always seemed to come in there. We’d stop and have a beer at the bars there, you’d be sitting at the bar and you’d feel a little

01:00 tug at the back and you’d look round and there’d be one of the ‘Binchies’, that’s what they called the Vietnamese soldiers, and Trung Wi was my ‘rackie’, “Trung Wi, Trung Wi come here.” and you’d go with him and he’d have three or four weapons and he’d want you to get rid of them for him. We could get just about anything for weapons, but what they mainly wanted was bags of cement. You’d ask him how much he wanted and then I’d go down to Chu Lai and I knew

01:30 the supply captain and he’d give us what we wanted, like 50 bags of cement or whatever. I could get a

jeep, a pistol, a refrigerator, anything I wanted off him for nothing if I wanted it, but to get it for the Vietnamese you sort of had to say it was yours. The weapons that they went mad on was CKC or SKS bolt-action rifles, single shot, not AK47s and that, they wanted the single-shot rifles

02:00 and you could get anything for them. But they didn't like the Vietnamese they really didn't. And that story I was telling you out there when they came in for training, which they did every two months, then our main job was to get wood for the cooking fires. If they thought it was for us, the Yanks would give us anything, but if they thought it was for the Vietnamese they'd burn it in front of you. They really didn't like the Vietnamese. I don't know

02:30 why but many times they'd sort of do things to show you that. But we could get anything off them.

So they had probably (UNCLEAR – sound bad)

Yes, and in that area there were three of us, I think, myself and Moggeridge and Dave Ether. Yes, three of us in this big area. That was a massive camp that.

03:00 That camp held the American division, that was the main infantry unit in that camp. And everywhere they went they also used to hit mines, mines and booby traps. That was what happened with Callaghan and the others, they were just sick to death of hitting mines and not getting any contacts and that, and that's why they did what they did when they went into My Lai and massacred all those women and children and that. We did an

03:30 operation with them once. The Vietnamese that I worked with used to call them the enemy because we worked in adjoining provinces and if they were having a contact with the VC and the VC were coming our way they'd just open up with 50 cal [calibre] machine guns on their APCs and that, not realising how far those rounds would carry. We'd end up with casualties, hundreds and hundreds of yards away from them. They never liaised or knew where we were.

04:00 We did an operation with them once and we were going through this valley and this tank they had with them hit a mine, the Sergeant went straight up through the turret and came down and cut his jaw or something, but they blew the track off but he could hardly wait to get back to get his Purple Heart [medal] because he'd been wounded in action. Anyway, when they blew the tracks off we had to go into a defensive

04:30 position and secure the area while they fixed the tank and the A Company commander, whose troops we'd wiped out on that, you know we didn't realise they were fighting, he was a real top soldier, he'd done Ranger School [US Army special forces regiment] and everything in America, he took his troops up on this hill and when he got up there the VC exploded a 500-pound bomb. He was a brilliant-looking Vietnamese and very tall for a

05:00 Vietnamese and it just blew him to pieces, it blew his legs off and everything. We went to see him in the hospital a month or so later and it was bloody devastating. Their hospitals are unreal, blokes laying on the floor and everything and the filth and flies everywhere and that. Here is this poor bloke who had his whole life before him and he's just a mess, his whole life is finished now. Anyway,

05:30 it was the American division where I got into all the trouble. We had come in from an operation and I went over to this nurses mess. We were treated as officers, warrant officers are treated as officers in the American army and we were always welcome in this mess. Anyway, I'd been drinking gin all afternoon and I went into the mess and I was pretty drunk and, apparently, this green beret [US Army special forces regiment], big green beret bloke came

06:00 in and put his pistol on the thing. You had to check your pistol and he just put it on the bar and walked off. And all the girls were dancing with the blokes and that on the floor and I picked it up and fired two shots through the roof and one through the dance floor just missing a couple, and he raced back and laid me out and there was a hell of a stink over it. I probably would have got away with it but the colonel who was in charge of the training team was visiting the area at the time and it was the talk of the whole base

06:30 so I was in big strife. So that was when he suggested to me that I take my R & R and don't come back, which is what I did.

So you'd had a bottle of gin that afternoon but was there any other particular background to do that, was it a particularly difficult time?

No, I'd had a bottle of gin. What's difficult about that? No, just between operations, with the Vietnamese,

07:00 when you're an adviser, when the battalion goes into the field, I think there are four advisers, maybe five, to a Vietnamese battalion. Now at the start of an operation, which is maybe 21 days long, everyone goes into the field, everyone goes in on the helicopter assault and all your advisers…once you're on the ground and it's established that there's no threat from the enemy and everything's all right, two advisers go back out.

07:30 After four days one comes in and one goes out. The next day another one comes in and the other one goes out. So you'd probably have four days in and four days out. Now while you're out your time's your

own, you might be called for what they called an ‘Eagle flight’. They had a sort of Ranger company there that used to do one day strikes on villages and helicopters would drop on one side of the village and they’d run through and shoot everything and the helicopter would pick them up and take them out.

08:00 And you’d go with them just to control artillery or something if they had left something heavy. But your time was your own and if you had a pass you could go anywhere in Vietnam. Now, before that time an adviser could go anywhere in the world and some of them really abused it. They’d go to the States, they’d go to Hawaii and they wouldn’t be heard of for a month, so they put the clamps on that. You could go anywhere in the country with this pass you had. I didn’t go anywhere. I just used to go and write myself

08:30 off at the Yanks’ mess, and that was a day that I’d come in that it happened. After that I was in a jeep with, I think, my bodyguard, I’m not sure, but I was thrown out of the mess and I was sitting in a jeep and he went around the corner and I fell out and I must have damaged my leg. Anyway, he took me up to this captain, this supply captain, who had this big air-conditioned caravan and all.

09:00 But I didn’t know all of this because I was out of it. I woke up the next morning and he said to me, “You’ve really done it this time”. And I said, “Yes, I remember falling out of the jeep and my leg was sore”. He said, “No, I’m not talking about that”. And then it sort of came back to me what I’d done. So that was the end of my days on the training team.

That was six months you’d been there?

Yes.

You briefly mentioned how

09:30 **things had changed in those couple of years. Give us the details of how on the ground things had changed in Vietnam?**

Well, mainly like I said the Yanks’ hearts didn’t seem to be in it, the soldiers and that. With the advisers we had [US] Marines there with us. Well, they were top soldiers and it wouldn’t matter where they went they would do their job. There were a couple of American

10:00 army blokes and one was pretty professional, but the rest were, I think, from colleges and that who just sort of had their rank and had to do their time and they were GI [general infantry] officers and that and their heart wasn’t in it. The soldiers around the base, they didn’t march, they lounged around with their arms around each other and

10:30 it wasn’t a war it was just waiting to pull out sort of thing. And, as I said, they’d had all that scandal with My Lai in that province, too. So it was all sort of going downhill but the Vietnamese were still fighting. The big thing was there was no support. You weren’t getting the Yank support you wanted. It was more, your

11:00 artillery support was Vietnamese and your helicopters were flown by Vietnamese pilots and that, who weren’t as good. It was just all running down. It was coming towards the end of it ’69 or ’70, you know.

When there was that incident where half a company was wiped out with friendly fire what was the upshot of that when you got back to base?

11:30 There was nothing said of it. That night, when we took the hill, the enemy was still thought to be in the area so they gave us what they called ‘Snoopies’ and everything, they were [Douglas] DC3s [aircraft] kicking out flares and putting down all this heavy fire support and everything all around the hill. And then the colonel, the Yank colonel,

12:00 and the Vietnamese colonel flew in. And he lined all the officers up, the Vietnamese colonel, and he had this big waddy [stick] with this big knob on the end and he just went around belting them all. Nothing was said about us, you know, bad luck. As far as they were concerned everyone had run. Not a word was said to us.

How difficult was it to

12:30 **(UNCLEAR) when you were just being an adviser and really wanted to get your hands dirty?**

No, I was happy to be an adviser then. The advisers will tell you that when you went over there and you met your Vietnamese battalion commander he would say, “Who are you to advise me? I’ve been fighting this war all my life and you come here for a year and then go home and leave. What can you tell me?”

13:00 That was a Vietnamese battalion with the Montagnards [indigenous Vietnamese people] and the hills people, they were companies that were raised by the advisers and they were company commanders, the advisers, and they were paid by Americans and it was a different thing altogether. They were companies that were led by advisers but with the battalions

13:30 you were there to, when it was available, coordinate air attacks, artillery attacks, count the dead and not much more.

So it was a supervisory type thing. Were you ever called upon to have any tactical input?

I wasn't and I don't think the officer was either, not in my time,

14:00 coordinating things, that's what you did. But that was at that period. It may have changed early in the piece. It may have been different with the early advisers.

So, I guess you had to be careful not to step on anyone's toes, at that point it was their war, then?

Not only that. You were also a bit careful about the

14:30 battalion too. You didn't know who were VC sympathisers in the battalion. It would be simple to put a bullet in the back of your head. You were very, very cautious there. But, as I said, I had a real good bodyguard who was a drunk and I made sure he got plenty of grog and cigarettes, but he never let me out of his sight. You were always wary of the fact that someone could put a bullet in the back of your head and who'd know?

15:00 **Can you talk to us about the other operations that you were a part of?**

A lot of the operations you didn't see. You'd get up at six o'clock in the morning and you'd take off and there'd been a battle going on way up front, which you never knew about until they started getting you to see the body count and things like that. Or they'd bring you into the village where the battle had taken place, mainly fought by the companies, and you were with the battalion.

15:30 So you wouldn't see the battle you'd see the after affects. Just after I got there we were on a hill, looking down across this hill onto this clearing edge, and there were about four VC moving along the edge of the clearing, and the battalion commander called me up and asked me if I wanted to shoot them. I didn't want to shoot them. Not like that. But that was the offer for you, "Do you want to shoot them?"

16:00 They were just moving along. They may not have been, they may have been villagers. I didn't see any weapons. He reckoned they were VC. We would go way out to the west and you'd come across a little village and there'd be half a dozen people there in the village and they'd have a cow. When we went on operations we'd get lifted out by helicopter and the first few days they had to carry

16:30 wicker baskets full of chickens and pigs and so on, and you'd eat like anything because they hated carrying the bloody tucker so you'd eat really well and then there'd be nothing left. So you'd go into a village like that and they'd kill the only cow in the village. And you'd have the villagers coming up to you because you were the 'covan' [Vietnamese for 'adviser'], the adviser, crying and begging you to try and stop them and that. You couldn't do that. You had to keep out of it. One time we went to a village and we were going to camp on this flat-top

17:00 hill just the other side of the village, but we knew the village was sympathetic to the VC, most of their husbands and that were VC, so what the battalion commander did was take the wives and children out of the village and make them walk up and down every area of that flat top hill to make sure there were no mines or booby traps there before we settled down for the night. Which may seem callous but, I mean, they're not going to walk into an area where there is a

17:30 booby trap because they knew where everyone was in the area.

It sounds like the Vietnamese, I mean the war had been going on for years before the (UNCLEAR) it would be hard for the Aussies or the Yanks to (UNCLEAR)

But then again you'd go into some villages and they'd ask the head man for the bed for you for the night and they'd pay him. You'd see them pay him to give up his

18:00 bed and all that, so that went on too. Some villages were sort of good but others they were hard. Maybe the ones they suspected of being VC they sort of treated them as such.

Were you ever able to trust any of the Vietnamese? (UNCLEAR)

Yes, I trusted the officers. I got to

18:30 know a few of the sergeants, the warrant officers, and I trusted them. The older ones who had been fighting the Vietminh, some of them had been Vietminh themselves who fought the French, and you could trust them. You knew them and they were good soldiers. They were very good soldiers. Their personal hygiene was good. You'd go into a village, we wouldn't change our clothes for the four days we were out there, but every night they'd use the village well and wash and that. They'd look at us with their nose up. But they

19:00 did, their personal hygiene was very good. They didn't look after their weapons that well, they used to lose quite a few weapons.

Lose them, how?

A couple of times during river crossings they lost M60s and that, especially if we were fired on.

19:30 If there was any firing from surrounding hills and that, they wouldn't give a stuff about the weapons they'd just go for their lives to get out of the river and leave the weapons. I saw that happen twice.

Would you have been armed?

Oh yes, you had to be armed. I had an M16 and a pistol. That was the standard sort of thing.

20:00 Some of the [US] marines used to have big low-slung 45s [pistols] and that. They were real gung-ho with cowboy hats and all. They were good soldiers the marines.

So when did you encounter them, was that in the mess or out in the field as well?

You might go out in the field with them. But there was a

20:30 gunnie sergeant [staff sergeant equivalent in Australian Army], Kelly, he was with us, but we had a little Hawaiian bloke and we had a negro fellow and two Australians.

You said there were three Aussies there at the camp you were at working as advisers, what were the other guys' roles?

Same thing, only there were four battalions. There were four battalions in that particular regiment

21:00 and myself and Moggeridge were with one. Dave Ether was with another and then in the latter part of my tour I went to another one away from the captain. They were just the same sort of thing, just doing advisory work.

What were the lines of communication if you had to report on what you'd seen

21:30 **be it the body count or just reporting what had happened, who would you speak to?**

Straight back to your base. We had a radio operator and we were always on our frequency. We had a Vietnamese radio operator who carried the radio, never operated it, we used it. But that night that they ran, I grabbed the radio. I couldn't see him, I don't know where he went.

22:00 Running down that hill with that tracer over our heads, it was about a foot over our heads, that was pretty frightening. I still think that I got it harder with the battalion in the first tour than with the second tour. On 'Hobart' and

22:30 'Bribie' I put my head down to die because I thought I was going to die on both of those. I couldn't see any way out and I thought, "I'm gone here". So that was twice. It went through my head that time we were running down the hill, but there was no way out on those two as far as I was concerned. They were hitting us with everything on both times. On

23:00 'Hobart', if we hadn't have dropped the artillery on ourselves we would have been gone.

How does it feel to come out of those situations when you think you're going to die?

You feel terrible about your mates dying but you think, "Thank God it's not me that's there". That's what you feel, a great sense of relief that it's not you, but then a few days later you want to go out again. This is why I praise these

23:30 National Servicemen. They realise all about stress counselling now. School kids see an accident or something and they've got to have counselling. Something happens and they've got to have counselling. These blokes were seeing it every day, the only counselling they'd get, they'd come back in and they could have a couple of stubbies and talk to their mates and then they were out again, more on top of more on top of more. No one's telling them anything about it, you know, this is the way you've got to look at it and that.

24:00 The night before 'Hobart' the Catholic Priest came up and said, "You're going out on an 'op' [operation] tomorrow, who'd like to go to mass?" I said, "Well, I'll go". And Johnny Norris, the corporal, the Papuan bloke, he said he'd go and this National Serviceman, Tony Purcell, he said he'd go. We were the only three that went. So we went up there and we went to mass and

24:30 communion and he gave us a little combat rosary, I've still got that at home. So we reckoned, "We're all right now". So we go out the next day on Operation 'Hobart', I get wounded, Johnny and Tony, the other two, get killed. That's the three of us who had gone to mass. So when I came back out of hospital, 5 RAR was opening their sergeants mess and I got an invite to go up there, and I went up there and this padre was there and I got

25:00 pretty drunk and I went up and abused him and thumped him. I got thrown out. I said, "So much for your religion and everything!" and I got thrown out of the mess, which was fair enough. And many years later, about two years ago, I thought about this and I thought, "I did the wrong thing by that bloke, it was nothing to do with him". So I found his address and I wrote him a letter. Anyway, I got a lovely letter back off him telling me not to worry and all this sort of thing and he died about a year later.

25:30 I've got that letter and somebody published it in a magazine, the whole story. He was up on the New South Wales coast somewhere.

You said you were dry in your last three months of your first tour is that right?

No, I was put on the dry for three months of the first tour.

Put on the dry?

Yes.

And what did that entail?

Well, when we came back in from operations, say you're back in for three or four

26:00 days you had the use of the sergeants mess. But, probably, the first day I'd get drunk and make a fool of myself and that would be it, I'd be banned from the sergeants' mess. And that happened for a total of three months and the only one that beat me was the sergeants' cook, Georgie Rosendred, who had three months and one week. So I didn't see much of the sergeants' mess.

So you still had a drink?

We had our own mess, yes, but the sergeants mess you could meet all your mates and that,

26:30 but I just wasn't allowed in there. I should have spent my whole 12 months in the bush and I would have been all right but when I got near that demon grog. I can't drink beer now. When I did go over there on the training team I got full of parasites from the Vietnamese food and when I drink beer now I get crook and pass blood and everything.

27:00 So I drink this garbage, Strongbow [apple cider].

So it was just really a matter of, you said no one got any therapy, there was no counselling, the Natios in particular, they were just thrown back into civilian life but was that sort of thing, the beer, the grog, was that your therapy and stuff?

27:30 The beer was, and that would have been for the National Serviceman. There are a hell of a lot of drunks now. But I could go and talk to others and we'd make a joke of it of a certain operation or a certain incident and turn it into a joke or something. And we could embellish it and tell warries [war stories] and that was a form of therapy, talking to

28:00 someone who'd experienced the same. But these blokes had no one to talk to, they'd come back here and half of them weren't allowed into the RSL [Returned and Services League], the RSL didn't want to know them and that hurt them. So they just bottled everything up and went their own way and let the emotions boil over and boil over for years and years and now it's coming out now. I'm seeing it all the time in the office there. I really feel sorry for the National Servicemen and I'd

28:30 like to see them get everything they possible can, because I reckon that was the greatest injustice of all. And the way they carried out that ballot system, in at Tattersalls, blokes like that Clarke, the runner, Ron Clarke, Johnson the cricket captain, the Australian cricket captain. All these blokes were queuing up to take part and they were drawing the numbers out of the barrel. It was a great game for them. I often wonder if they sit back and think, "Gee, I wonder how many of the names that I drew out got

29:00 killed out there". They don't say anything about that with Clarke nowadays. He's a big man feeling sorry for everyone and that, they want to bring that up and say, "How do you feel about drawing those names out of the barrel?" They were queued up. There was a list of those who wanted to do it. Lord mayors of Melbourne and everything, it was a real celebrity event.

Much earlier today you were talking about the first time you'd met those

29:30 **Natios and how they'd ask questions, but you said that was a good thing because it kept you on your toes and you said you could use that when it came to the sharp end of the stuff. Can you give us some examples of how that came into play where the Natios that came in brought something else to the effort?**

No, not specifically, I suppose.

30:00 I don't know. Our radio operator he was, you could sort of rely on him, he'd grasp a situation and without you having to take the set off him, say, during a battle he'd be able to keep the company commander informed. He could see what was happening and let the company commander know without the platoon commander or the sergeant coming on and having to do it, which released you to be able to fight the battle. He was

30:30 that good, you know. He knew everything that was going on and he could tell the company commander whereas it always had to be the platoon commander or the sergeant doing it. But this Dave, he had a grasp of everything and he relieved you of that job which made it a lot easier.

You were saying how well they fitted in, but I was just wondering if there was any friendly stick between the regs and the Natios?

Always, but I mean the

31:00 Natios outnumbered the regs too, 75 per cent of your platoon would be National Servicemen and that's a fact. But they got on very well, I mean, you had to get on well, you lived and slept and ate together for 365 days of the year, you relied on each other, you couldn't be having a blue or anything like that. No, they really got on well and they still do. They stay in touch and everything

31:30 right up until today. As I said, I run that memorial service at Bribie [Island]. I got $1000 off DVA to do it and blokes came from all over Australia. It was a great service. One bloke said to me, "How can you live on Bribie after going through a mongrel operation like that?"

How did it get the name 'Bribie' in the first place?

The intelligence officer just used to give

32:00 names to operations. There was 'Ballarat' and just heaps of names, you just look through the book, every town in Australia has got it. I think there was an Operation 'Geelong', but not with our battalion. It was just something they carried on. We're slowing down now, aren't we?

We are kind of. You can have a drink while I think of the next question.

32:30 When I came back, that's when I went to aviation and became an air traffic controller. Air traffic control at the time, I had to do my training with the RAAF, and air traffic controllers, or anyone in the army had to be paid on a parity with your civilian counterpart, and at that stage air traffic controllers were amongst the highest paid of the civilian

33:00 occupations. And we worked on a [pay] grouping system. And the advisers in Vietnam were on Group 16 or something, but when I did my air traffic control course and went out to Oakey in Queensland we were given Group 27, which sort of gave us more pay than a major so they had to change the whole pay system after that because we were getting so much pay. I think air traffic controllers changed the whole

33:30 pay system in the army.

Tell us about, you told us about your little escapade in the mess where you fired a couple of rounds, fired a couple of shots through the ceiling and then you said, was it the colonel who said just go on R & R?

Colonel Clarke.

Colonel Clarke. What was the story with the potential for Court Martial there?

34:00 Because I'd fired this shot and, you know, I could have killed someone and all that, I was to go to Saigon to face a court martial by the general down there because the charge was too high for Colonel Clarke. He said, "I can't handle this. It's got to go before the general and it's going to be a court martial". He said, "Take your R & R and don't come back". And I did it.

34:30 **And that was the general in Saigon, the American?**

No, the Australian general.

So they still couldn't, I mean, if you were coming back to Australia why wouldn't they try to track you down?

Because the witnesses were American and they would have had to fly them out to Australia, whereas they could have flown them down to Saigon with no worries but they wouldn't fly them out to Australia,

35:00 so it was all buried over there. It must be getting close to the end of the tape. How long?

Five minutes. Tell us about coming back and how you got into the air traffic controlling?

Well, when I came back I went into the big barracks and they said, "You

35:30 shouldn't have been over there in the first place". So I went on the unallotted list and I worked at the big barracks in Brisbane and I was just doing clerical work with some bloke in there, with some civilian bloke who was a good [rugby] union footballer, I think he ended up playing for Australia. But just out of the blue this letter came through saying that I'd been selected for the RAAF air traffic control course down at

36:00 Sale in Victoria. And that was it, I didn't argue, I just went on it. I did the course down there and then I was attached to the RAAF at Amberley for about six months. And then the base that we [the army] were going to get was at Oakey [220km west of Brisbane], out west of Toowoomba. That was going to be the home of army aviation, but there were also civilian aircraft used so it was going to be what's known as a

36:30 joint-user airfield. So I then had to go up to Mackay and do six months' training up there.

Did you pass that?

Yes.

And then where were you sent?

To Oakey. They gave them a big new air traffic control tower that no one in the army had the expertise to run so they had to bring a Department of Transport technician up there to live up

37:00 there and so on. It was a beautiful, magnificent tower but none of us knew how to work it or anything, so he had to come up and teach us. It had all the latest microphones and microphone telephones and everything, great gear. I stayed there, I was there 14 years I think.

And that was until you left the army?

No, I'd had

37:30 about four years there in air traffic control and I was getting, even at my age I wasn't keeping up with it and East West Airlines were starting to fly into Oakey and Maroochydore [130km north of Brisbane] and they rang the tower one day and asked if I knew anyone who might be interested in being their agent. And I did, me. So I got the refuelling business and I opened up a travel agency in town and took up a new

38:00 career.

What year was that?

1978.

So, no regrets of moving on from the services?

No, not really. I'll just talk about this if I can. Have I got a minute there to talk, Cathy [interviewer]?

Yes, three minutes.

I didn't believe in this

38:30 Agent Orange [toxic defoliant used in Vietnam] and that and these chemicals affecting everyone, but before I went to Vietnam I had a son, Michael, and he's six-foot 13-inches tall and he runs security at the MCG [Melbourne Cricket Ground], he's a giant of a man and has never had a sick day in his life. I came back from Vietnam and I had a boy, Terence, and I had a girl. Now, the boy died aged

39:00 19 from cancer and the girl has got all the problems in the world. She's got the problems of an old woman, an elderly woman. And this proves to me that there was such a thing as Agent Orange and chemicals that were sprayed that got into the food chain and the water system and we drank it. Val's theory is that maybe we had

39:30 these cells, or I had these cells, but whatever happened when I went to Vietnam sent them active or something and reproduced problems when we had the kids.

What did the medical experts say, the doctors?

They agree now but it's like Veterans' Affairs or the government is doing with this what they did with the servicemen at Woomera [South Australia; exposed to the nuclear testing] and the

40:00 Navy personnel on the [HMAS] Melbourne [and HMAS Voyager, in particular, who survived a collision between the two vessels off Jervis Bay, NSW, on 10 February 1964] and that. The longer they let it go the more die and the less they have to pay out. They know. There's proof that these chemical sprays and that are causing all sorts of cancers in veterans and their offspring and even now down to second-generation offspring. They're still saying they're researching it. Eventually, it's going to come out but the longer they leave it the

40:30 more are going to die and the less it's going to cost them. Look how much they have saved on the Melbourne and Woomera and all that. They're saying now that they're going to bring out findings on the Woomera later this year. Hundreds have died since then. The longer they leave it the more they save.

What have you been able to do about that in terms of getting them to do something?

I've written letters. People are starting court actions and so on up in Queensland.

41:00 We've got our name on the list.

Tape 9

00:34 Okay, so when we went into Nui Dat I told you we went into a rubber plantation, and it was what they called [a] 'dirty' rubber plantation. A 'clean' rubber plantation you can see through [for] miles between the trees, but a 'dirty' rubber plantation there is all sorts of undergrowth growing high. It was owned by the French

01:00 mob, I forget their name, but the VC had stopped them from looking after it. It was Michelin, I think, that had it. Anyway, the task force decided that because it was so dirty it allowed lines of approach to

the enemy right up to the barriers, to the wire barriers, so they decided they'd spray it all and get rid of it.

01:30 So they started spraying. Our boss held out as long as he could, our company commander, but they started spraying and every day you'd see them coming over and dropping it and your face would be wringing wet with it and so on. And when you'd go out on operations and you'd go out through the barrier where they'd sprayed right up to the fence you were pushing your way through branches and all this, leaves and bushes that were just dripping with this spray. So your

02:00 clothes are becoming completely saturated with it. As the day goes on and they dry out your skin is soaking all this chemical and everything up. It was everywhere you went that it had been sprayed. And after about a month you could see the affect the spray had, everything died and, I mean, everything died. Not only that but the spray had to be getting into all the water and so on. I don't know how it was affecting the

02:30 animals and all that. If you came across a cow and it was going to wander into your wire or it was going to come barging back into your wire, you were allowed to shoot it. Now, we never got fresh meat or anything over there for years, so this day we drove this cow all the way back into our wire and then shot it just as it was going

03:00 in. You had everything in these platoons: butchers, bakers, candlestick makers. We had a butcher so we took it back and he butchered it up and cut it up and we had a magnificent barbecue. The other thing you were supposed to do when you did kill these cows was send a sample up to the doctor before you touched them. We did it the other way round and we sent this

03:30 sample up and the word came back, "Don't touch this. Unfit for human consumption". Now we don't know why, whether it was the spray or what but that animal had been affected somehow or another by eating the grass and all that. But everywhere we went, and I told you that we couldn't stuff around we had to have water, so we were taking water out of running streams and everything and we weren't purifying it because we had nothing to purify it with. The Millbank filter bags they

04:00 gave us, they were a green bag, a canvas type bag that you could put a cup of water in and a drip, drip, drip, it would probably fill a clean cup in about an hour. We never had that time, we were on the move all the time. So we were just filling our water and taking the risk that the water would be clean just through it running, which obviously it wasn't with all the sprays and everything around it. We used to see the mountains to the west where they'd been sprayed and the whole mountain was

04:30 dying. The whole area was dead, there was no vegetation. All the rubber was just dead from these sprays. But you had it in your clothes for 10 or 15 days at a time when you went out. It had to get into your system. And the area we were in was one of the heaviest sprayed areas of the Vietnam War. So I firmly believe that a lot of the blokes' problems, psychiatric and everything

05:00 else, come from these sprays.

At the time itself were there any ill effects that you noticed or did they just show themselves afterwards?

No, I can't say so. We used to wipe the stuff off us and say, "Oh this is bad!" But they assured us that it was harmless, "Don't worry about the sprays, it's harmless". They assured us every time because we used to say, "What about all this stuff we're going through". "No, don't worry, it's harmless, we guarantee it". Now, no one else

05:30 bar Vietnam veterans can be automatically…if they've got diabetes straight off veterans affairs accept it as being caused by Vietnam, by sprays in Vietnam. No other veteran from any other theatre of war can get that, but the Vietnam veterans get it because it's accepted that it was caused by the sprays. So what else has it caused?

06:00 It's all going to come out in the next couple of years but, as I say, how many blokes are going to die before then? I feel a lot of these psychiatric problems are caused by this.

You mentioned how you weren't able to drink your beer after your second tour because of parasites. What was the story there, did doctors have a look at you during that time?

In

06:30 Vietnam?

Yes.

Yes, I was in hospital, I was shitting blood and there was no reason for it. I didn't have haemorrhoids or anything. I went to hospital and they said, "You're full of parasites". Now, the only way you'll get rid of parasites is when you go home and you start eating decent food, but that never happened. I've got to take six Panadeine Forte [strong paracetamol pills] a day. You know what Panadeine Forte do? They constipate you. With me they just keep me normal.

07:00 Old] Kevin Coleman who was a specialist here, he said, "You won't beat this, it'll kill you". He said,

"You'll end up with cancerous polyps and you just won't beat it. It will kill you". But when I went up to Queensland I got on to a Chinese specialist and he said, "That's garbage". And I have it checked every year and they cut out the cancerous polyps and I'm right. I can't eat eggs. I can't eat

07:30 bacon. I get crook. Lots of stuff just makes me crook.

Do the DVA know about this condition?

Yes, it's accepted. My paresthetic imaralgy [?]

08:00 is accepted. That's like somebody has got a red hot iron and is just driving it into your leg. What happened is that when the bullet went into me it didn't sever the nerves it damaged them, you can't fix damaged nerves. I've been good today, I thought I'd have a lot of problems sitting like this because when I drive for long periods with my leg like that… When I play bowls and I come off, I can hardly walk. I wear a bloody protector from

08:30 there to there trying to protect it.

How and why did you keep the bullet?

Well, I told you I was the first battle casualty in the hospital. The hospital staff wanted to keep it as a memento, they said, "Come on, you're the first casualty, let's keep it". I said, "No, I'm sending it home to my son", which I did. And then when I came home a

09:00 couple of museums wanted it and then the Vietnam Veterans' Association said if I gave it to them they'd put it on that plaque I've got and use it in their museum. They didn't start their museum up so I got it back from them.

You say you were the first battle casualty?

In the Australian hospital in Vung Tau, yes.

So all the doctors and nurses they were all Aussies that you dealt with? What was that like? What was the set up there like?

There were no nurses there.

09:30 They hadn't turned up then. There were only Australians there and it was very primitive. And I told you they cut me open like a cake. When he was sewing me up he gave me a needle and he was trimming all the skin or something and the needle wore off and I'm watching him and I'm feeling the pain and I yelled out and he dropped everything and he grabbed these needles and threw them into me and apologised and all. But there were no nurses there then. They were still under

10:00 canvas and all that. The only reason I went there was because the American hospital was full. They weren't ready for it.

You were in there for about a month weren't you?

Yes.

In that time were there other casualties coming in?

No, battle casualties. Most of them went to the Yank hospital. I had a gay nurse looking after me, a bloke, he was gay, he was a hell of a nice bloke but he wouldn't let anyone else come near me. Nobody else was allowed to

10:30 wash me or anything. If they came near me he'd go off his head. Gee, he looked after me. I reckon that's 10 minutes.

It's thereabouts. We can finish up now but is there anything else you'd like to put down on the record before we do?

No, I want it known that people have got to recognise that

11:00 National Servicemen have got to be treated different to regulars because of all the trauma they are going through and all the upheaval they had at the time that their names were called out. As I said, even the ballot was wrong the way they did it. And these blokes having their whole lives ruined and I don't think they realise that. I don't think they realise what they had to go through. It must have been that upsetting for them at the time, "You're going to Vietnam. You're going to war. Leave your job. Leave your

11:30 wife. Leave your girlfriend. Leave your family. And go over there and be killed or kill people". And then coming back and not being able to settle. And they couldn't settle in. They never meet mates like you meet in the army. There's no way in the world you meet people or share the experiences like you find in the army. And they never found people who could understand or they could tell about these things.

Whereas you think it's easy for the

12:00 **regs because they've got people?**

No, it was easy for the regs because they were able to have that therapy at the time. And the therapy I'm talking about is being able to talk about it with their mates and not bottle it up. As I said, we treated it as a joke and tell terrific warries and laugh it off. We'd take our wives to the messes who'd listen in and understand what was going on. Not all of them, but most of them. They just had that big start on the National Servicemen.

12:30 And that, Colin [interviewer], is that.

Thank you very much Kevin.

INTERVIEW ENDS