

Australians at War Film Archive

Leslie Burrows - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1624>

Tape 1

- 00:35 **Okay, Les, we're just talking about your life overview. I'll start with where and when you were born.**
- I was born in Brisbane at the - I've forgotten the name of the hospital now, Lady Bowen Hospital.
- 01:00 My parents lived at Wynnum. I was shifted several times, and shifted to the house next door which my mother and father had but it has now been shifted up to Ipswich and we got there in 1934. I've been in this house since 1958. I went to school at Guardian Angels' in Wynnum.
- 01:30 I didn't finish, I went to school at Manly for six months, Manly Convent and then I left there and went to work. I started off on a strawberry farm which I got two [shillings] and six [pence] for the week's work. I left there and had a job in Hancock and Gore making boxes, they've closed down now.
- 02:00 In 1941 I was sent out to Jandowae under the Wartime Children's Evacuations on the coast. Stayed out there for a year, came back and I got a job with the Americans there until 19 - the end of 1946. During that time I was employed
- 02:30 as a storeman and then was sent down to Eagle Farm opposite the Ford Company, and I was making boxes, repairing boxes and spraying boxes for the American air force. That finished up and I was sent over to the motor pool,
- 03:00 I stayed there for a fair while. And in 1946 about July I think it was, no, yeah, I was going to go to Manila but then they squashed that, and we went to Guadalcanal instead. We stayed there for six weeks
- 03:30 dismantling radio towers and patching up six generators. We went down to what they called the BSIP, British Solomon Island Protectorate, and then after six weeks were up, we got on the plane and came back via the New Hebride - which is now
- 04:00 New Hebrides - Vanuatu it is now. And then to Santos is New Caledonia and then back to Brisbane. I was finished with the Americans and I went to, got a job at Miss Conroy's Service Station on Ipswich Road, Annerley. I stayed there for about six years I think it was
- 04:30 and in 1951 I joined the army. I was, I told a warrant officer that used to come into the service station about joining the army and he said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "I want to drive trucks." He said, "Well I can do better for you than that," he says, "I'll take you down the workshop at Bulimba. You can work there." So he got an interview with the colonel in charge of
- 05:00 RAEME [Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers] up at Victoria Barracks. I was given an interview and when I joined the army I was sent to Bulimba workshop. But before that I was partly through my recruit training when I was asked or told to go to Peel Street to teach the ranks, the first
- 05:30 lot of ranks that came up driving. A couple of funny things happened, we were out at Annerley and the girls had these beautifully starched dresses on and this girl started to panic as she was going down in the paddock and I went for the handbrake and grabbed a handful of dress. I had to, then I had to leave it,
- 06:00 leave her dress go and by the time I got to the handbrake we had gone through the fence. Another time down at Port Lytton on the mud flats, we were teaching the girls. And I said, "Now you don't do this," letting out the clutch quick and making the wheels spin. I said, "You let it out gently." As I did, the axle broke, so I had to take it back to Bulimba on a front wheel drive and replace the broken axle.
- 06:30 After that I was made the driver for 5 Recruit Training Company at Enoggera, which also at that time we were training the ex-war World War II veterans and the K Force for Korea. I lasted
- 07:00 approximately 12, a bit over 12 months at Bulimba and then I was sent to Korea. Nobody knew where

the area I was going to was. It was called 16 Britcom [British Commonwealth] Infantry Workshop. We flew from, we caught the train to Sydney and I thought, "Oh beauty, I'll be on my own and I'll be able to sleep." But

- 07:30 before the train left, we had 50 national service, ex-national servicemen now jumping on the train and they were sending them down to New South Wales. As soon as we crossed the border they just disappeared, they all went to the bar, because they could drink being 18, where in Queensland it was 21. We got to Sydney all right and
- 08:00 got there on the Saturday, had the Sunday there. On Monday we went to Mascot and we caught a plane to Japan which stopped overnight at Darwin. At Labuan, Hong Kong stopped at Okinawa. While we were there we saw where all the American forces that
- 08:30 were in Korea, the 5th Air Force. And while we were there one of the Jet Fighters crashed. And then we went to, from there we went to Iwakuni in Japan and that was a RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] base and we just got
- 09:00 off the plane and put on trucks and down to the wharf where we went up to Kure. It was, when we got off the plane we were still in our khakis and it was very cold. We were all huddled around the engine compartment for warmth and we went up to Hiro which was 1RHU, 1 Reinforcement Holding Unit,
- 09:30 and we stayed there for over the Saturday. I think it was Saturday we got there, we got issued with our stuff on Sunday, Monday we went back down to Kure, back down sorry back to Iwakuni where we went in, got into a RAAF DC47 which took us to Korea.
- 10:00 We couldn't understand why all these blokes were there under this air duct but once the plane got in the air we found out, the hot air come out of it and they were warm and we were cold. We got to, we landed at Keppo Airport - Kimpo Airport, I think it is, and then got onto a Korean
- 10:30 train and went to a place called Uijongbu. The trains in places the windows were smashed, the floorboards were up, you could watch the track as it goes by. We got out at Uijongbu and they sent us, they made us go to a Kiwi [New Zealand] truck, he'd take us to, to where we were supposed to go.
- 11:00 What we didn't know, "You throw your gear up the back there, Oz [Australian]." So we threw it in, "Right to get in the back," so we got up the back and all the floor was full of oil, so all the gear that was issued to me in Kure wasn't any good. So the Q [Quartermaster's] store gave me a new lot. We, 16 Britcom Infantry Workshops was
- 11:30 160 Brits and 16 Australians. We had one Australian captain, a warrant officer, three sergeants and the rest were corporals and craftsmen that worked, worked with the British there. We spent 12 months in Korea and then came back, come back for three weeks leave in Tokyo and then when we finished the leave we went back to
- 12:00 Hiro, RHU. We were there about the middle, the beginning of February and we had to wait until the middle of April to come home. Why? Because the Queen was out here, she had a Qantas plane or two Qantas planes taking all
- 12:30 her luggage around and we were left in Korea waiting, in Japan sorry waiting for this plane to come up for us. We stayed there until the middle of June as I said, and then we were told that we were going to come back on the New Australia would be there. While we were in Hiro at RHU we had, we took eight days leave. A
- 13:00 couple of my mates we went over to another island and had a look around there and stayed there for eight days. While we were there also we had a war grave chap there and he was reading the book The Day I Die, and next thing he got a revolver or pistol and shot himself. We had
- 13:30 to stow the lines for half a day, we weren't allowed to go anywhere near them. When New Australia came up to and brought one battalion up and dropped them off at Pusan and came over to Kure. We were all taken over to Kure, it ended up being about two hundred of us. And we went back to Pusan, picked up
- 14:00 two battalions and then we sailed from Pusan to Brisbane. We arrived in Brisbane on Saturday morning, and they had a march through the town. The people that weren't going to go anywhere, go to Sydney, were allowed off the boat and you was taken out to Urunga. And we collected our gear from Urunga and came home.
- 14:30 I'd been posted back to Northern Command Workshop as it was then and I stayed there from June, I think it was, until late January 54, 55. It was posted to Northern Territory Command where there was one warrant officer
- 15:00 and about six men. I last, during that time I met my wife and we got married up there. We had our honeymoon at Mataranka which was a wartime base during the Second World War. We had our first child up there, Phillip. Had him on a Friday night, I was on picket
- 15:30 at the time I rang up at twenty-five past six and they said, "Oh your wife's in labour at the moment, call

back in half an hour." So I went on parade and took the flag down and came back and she'd had the baby at twenty-five to seven. I asked the orderly officer if I could go and I went to the hospital and I still had my big bayonet on my side

- 16:00 and saw my wife and my child. We lasted there until about 19 - early, till June 67. I came back to Brisbane, I went to, I was posted into Wacol as a drill instructor but in the meantime by the time it took me to get from Darwin to Wacol
- 16:30 the posting had changed and I was sent down to the transport office. I stayed in the transport place for about three months and I was posted then to the Jungle Training Centre at Canungra. I used to have a motorbike and sidecar and the chaps down there called me 'Moon-Man' because I had so much clothing on you could only see my eyes. My second son was born while I was there
- 17:00 and in October I was made up to sergeant. I was then, just before Christmas I was posted back to Bulimba and I stayed at Bulimba for a couple of years and then in 1961 I was sent to 1 Base Ordnance Depot at Maianbar [UNCLEAR]. I stayed there for a year and in 1962
- 17:30 I was sent over to Banyo, to the vehicle park, we did all inspections. The middle half of 1963, Victoria Barracks posting officer rang me up and asked me would I like to go to Malaya, and I said, "Yes." And he said, "You can take your family with you." So we all packed up all our gear
- 18:00 and we when to Malaya. We nearly missed the, we got to Singapore and one of my boys wanted to go to the toilet, so there was no toilets around so we just took him over on the grass but in the meantime there was this big semi-trailer bus was starting to take everybody away. So I started to throw him in and he ended up in the hands of our commanding officer, Colonel -
- 18:30 Lieutenant Colonel McDonald, as he was then. He ended up becoming chief of the army. We flew to Melaka and we stayed there for two years. We done several exercises around the place. The first one was the, we went bush, I couldn't tell you where it was but we just
- 19:00 went bush and that night we had a stand too and everybody was quite because in the meantime there was a troop of monkeys coming through and one of the blokes said, one of my boys, he's dead now, Noelly James he said, "Look at the monkeys up here," and one of the staff sergeants, quarter master staff sergeants said, "Bang, you're dead," and he said, "That'll teach you next time to be
- 19:30 quiet during stand too." So we did a few more exercises. One was too, we went to Singapore then went by British Aircraft to Kuantan on the east coast of Malaya, as it was then and while we were there we heard that President Kennedy got
- 20:00 shot. We came back to camp at Melaka and then after being there for a while we went up and we did, they did border patrols. We were at a place called Sik, it's inland from Gurun and we stayed there about three months.
- 20:30 We had three months there then we went back and were doing all the things the different thing with the battalion and fixing vehicles up. And the next year in 1965, in January I think it was we went up, back up to Sik and done
- 21:00 more operations up there. I forgot to, I think it was the first trip we had, yeah the first trip we had there one of our officers got killed and he was taken back and buried at Terendak Camp. The second time we went up, we were there for a while and the Indonesian Confrontation started.
- 21:30 We weren't allowed to do anything, if we saw an Indonesian, this is what we were told by one of the officers, that if we saw them we had to tell our orderly officer who would get in contact with Singapore, the headquarters at Singapore who would get in contact with Australia and it would all come back where at that time we could say whether we could shoot you or we can't.
- 22:00 One of my sons had a spot on his lung and they wouldn't allow us to come home for another month so we had an extra month there. I came back, I was posted to Bulimba workshops and in the meantime they started having field forces and we went to one, two different workshops that
- 22:30 was in the same area. I then went over to Banyo, Maianbar and Banyo and no sorry, sorry. I went there back to Bulimba and
- 23:00 and in 1967 we went up to Rockhampton to do a big exercise that they had up there and we were at a place called Pink Lilly. And in that time our commanding officer, Major Roberts,
- 23:30 called us all together and told us we'd be the next workshop to go to Vietnam. Wasn't too happy about that and after being, just coming back from Malaya, Borneo just a couple of years before and he said, he said to me "Come for a ride into town, will you drive me into town?" And he drove me into town and said, "Now, why don't you want to go to Vietnam?" I said, "Well I've got war service,
- 24:00 I've got everything I want out of that side of the thing and I just don't want - I just wouldn't like to go." But we finished up there and they selected us to go to Vietnam and being tradesman we didn't go through the large exercise they have at Canungra, they sent us out to Greenbank.

- 24:30 We were out there for a fortnight and I sort of got a bit of trouble there, I wouldn't run for them. I, the first run they had they took us out, gave us 20 minutes to get back to came, I took 30. When I got there, they said you have to report to the commander, the captain that was in charge of it.
- 25:00 And he says, "You know you won't get the two ribbons." I said, "I don't want them, Sir," I said, "I've already got enough." I said, "I've got war service about four times now if I want it." And he said, "Well you're still going to go through it all." So I went though it all and on the Sunday night before we were finished it all the instruction, we had, the warrant officer he said, "You know you blokes didn't have to go through all
- 25:30 this," he said, "You have to go, in any case, this is only sort of political so you've been trained for it." So when, so then we went back to our units and then I was told I was going to go to 8 Squadron [UNCLEAR] Regiment LAD [Light Aid Detachment] in Vietnam. Had leave and
- 26:00 February all of a sudden I was told, I was sent out to Northern Command Personnel Depot to be forwarded on - pardon me - and the day they told me about 12 o'clock that I would be on the 4 o'clock train from South Brisbane to Sydney. So I had to come home, I raced home.
- 26:30 My wife had to do the shopping, she done the shopping and I drove like made and I got up to the South Brisbane Station about five minutes before the train left. We got to Sydney, went out to Watson's Bay. We had - I had a fortnight's wait there. We then boarded a Qantas jet and
- 27:00 went from Sydney to Darwin, Darwin to Saigon. In Saigon we were taken, we were taken to a transit depot and then on to a Caribou aircraft which took us to Nui Dat. A vehicle was there waiting and I got in it and took us back
- 27:30 in to the LAD, and then the LAD commander took me over to the captain, the major. Major - I can't think of his name now. First of all his says, "Get rid of that slouch hat," because tankies only wear berets and he wasn't too happy with me, with the - but he was a very nice captain. I
- 28:00 went to the LAD and the first, that night they were fixing up one of our carriers and we ended up going to bed about 3 o'clock in the morning. The Tet Offensive of 1968 was over and there was, then the about a month later
- 28:30 Fire Support Base Coral, Balmoral and Coogee outside of Saigon started and there was severe fighting there. After a while, they wanted reinforcements so I went up with the crane carrier and
- 29:00 to there and I no sooner got there and there was a tap on the side of the carrier and saying "I've never been so glad to see you in all my life." It was a warrant officer caterer that we used to have in 3 Battalion. We got rocketed and mortared a few time while I was there. Nothing really happened to me but one of our
- 29:30 chaps was coming back from Fire Support Base Balmoral to Coral and he got, the carrier went over a mine. He was thrown into the air, he had 24 fractures of the one foot and something of the other foot. He was the first casualty that I know, that we had while I was there.
- 30:00 A funny thing one of the other carriers there, they generally put all their rubbish and stuff into a sandbag and take it back to camp but there was a big hole there from where a bomb from the B52s had landed. So he threw this bag into there
- 30:30 and it went in and up popped a Vietnamese, North Vietnamese. He was, he'd been wounded during the action there and he had - his ankle was all fly blown and
- 31:00 maggots. So the bloke pulled out his revolver, not revolver what do you call it? His handgun and to shot, well not to shot him but he pulled it out and he poked it at him but he forgot he had a piece of four by two in the barrel and anyhow
- 31:30 the Vietnamese chap just surrendered to him and there was, they gave him cigarettes and something to eat and drink and took him, handed him over to the provos [Provosts - Military Police] or whoever they were. I had to go, we had one of our carriers blow up at Fire Support Base Balmoral which was 3 Battalion
- 32:00 and I was sent over to see if there to see if anything could be salvaged off it. When I got there we came out the bush and the RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] was standing there with his hands on his hips and he said, "It's a bit far forward for you, isn't it Sergeant Burrows?" I said, "Vince Murdoch," and next thing, the RP sergeant says, "You don't call the RSM of a battalion by his first name!" Warrant officer was my
- 32:30 Company's CSM [Company Sergeant Major] while we were in Malaya. A very wonderful chap, he ended up being a captain, I think, and he's now living up in Cairns or Townsville. On the last day at Coral the helicopter came in and one of nine squadron this
- 33:00 flight, squadron leader or whatever his was came down and got bright polished shoes and he's tramping through the mud trying to get out. I saw a name on his thing board and I said, "G'day, Tom," and he said, "You're a bit - you don't call officers by their first name." I said, "Oh, only when I went to school

with them," and he said, "Did I go to school with you?" I said, "Yeah, name Les Burrows,"

- 33:30 "Oh yeah," blah blah blah. And then I saw him again down at Nui Dat they used to have a waiting room by the koala field next to where the Calvary LAD was and one of my sons his father was in Vung Tau and he got him a train set and he said, "Why doesn't my father do it?" And
- 34:00 I said, "I don't get to Vung Tau very often." So I asked Tom Ward if he had a flight down there whether I could go down and he said, "Yeah, we'll take you down." So he took me down there but I couldn't find it at the PX [Post Exchange - American canteen unit], the Yankee PX there. Another day there, another flight or squadron leader or what he was came up to our -
- 34:30 up to where our tent and asked me where he can get some cigarettes. And I said, "Oh," I said, "You won't get anything here now." I said, "But I can give you a packet," so I gave him a packet. He said, "How much?" I said, "Nothing." I said, "I don't want them, I'll give them to you." I said, "You can give us a ride in the chopper some time." So about an hour or so later one of the gunners come up and he said, "Squadron Leader so and so wants you down
- 35:00 there now, we're going for a ride." So I went for a ride for about 20 minutes and I was about to get out and they refuelled the chopper. Up in the air again and we went down to Baria and around to a couple of support, fire support bases and then I got off, back to Nui Dat and I got off. He said, "Well did you get your ten cents worth?" And another day there we were just about, it was
- 35:30 about 8 o'clock in the morning we were ready to go on our little parade we had and an American chopper came in and it started to refuel and all of a sudden there was a bit of bang and this chopper went up in flames. Of course everybody raced back and got their cameras and that and took photos of it. The 8th Ambulance
- 36:00 Section had a new hospital just built near the air strip, they hadn't occupied it and the front and back doors were open and one of the rocket pods took off and went straight through the front door and out the back door. There was nobody hurt or anything, only the chopper was finished.
- Just coming to the end of your Vietnam service because we are going to return to it later on and talk in detail,**
- 36:30 **but tell us what happened after or - ?**
- After Vietnam?
- Yes.**
- After Vietnam, I was posted back to Brisbane. I came back and went to Northern Command Workshop, as it was then, and then I was up at the service station at Peel Street. I was there for about a fortnight when the warrant officer in charge got a phone call to take me down to
- 37:00 Bulimba by 1 o'clock, to see the CO down there. I had an interview with him and he said, "What I want you to do," he said, "to go down to the Department of Works at Eagle Farm and take over the trade repair section there." There was only myself and all the rest were Department of Works' people. I was there for a few months then back to Bulimba. And
- 37:30 on the day that I went back, no sorry, yes that's right on the day that I went back, the HMAS Sydney had called in and they unloaded trucks and they were pulling into the wharf at Bulimba and six of the trucks just went straight off the edge over into the river. I was
- 38:00 lucky I didn't have anything to do with it until the next week when I came to work. Anyhow we fixed them all up and sent them back. And then I was there for a while and they sent me back to the department of works again. And then a warrant officer came over one Friday and said, "You're going over to Banyo
- 38:30 to take over the trade repair there." So I went over there, that was in 1970 or 71, and I stayed there for 10 years. We started off with the Department of Works people and then they pulled out, the Department of Supply people then they pulled out. I was given four soldiers and
- 39:00 we worked down the in the shed until we got, we ended up having about 10 to 15 soldiers there. We used to leave at 7 o'clock in the morning and get back about quarter to four of an afternoon. Pick up all our parts and everything, do all our work or whatever we had to do there and then we went home. I stayed there until I left the army in
- 39:30 1982 in, just before the Queen's Birthday about four weeks I think it was, three or four weeks. I received a, I got a letter from the Governor General's Office who was, I opened it and said that I was to receive the British Empire Medal.
- 40:00 It was confidential, I wasn't allowed to talk about it, say anything to anybody and then when the Queen's Birthday Honours List came out I was in it. The day before I was called up to the CO's office and the officer there said, "Have you got something you want to tell me about?" I said, "No Sir." He said, "Well I think I've got something to tell you." He said, "What ever you got from the Governor

- 40:30 General," he said, "You can tell us now." I said, "Well I was awarded a BEM [British Empire Medal]." Well congratulations and all that and then in August I think it was I had to go to Government House to receive it. I took my wife and two boys. The Government was Sir James Ramsey,
- 41:00 and a very nice gentleman he was.
- I've just got to stop there because it's the end of the tape.**

Tape 2

- 00:35 **Tell me about your dad?**

My Dad was, he used to work at the meat works up at Cannon Hill. He, during the war or before the war, during the Depression he went down to New South Wales selling

- 01:00 Chinese hand embroidery. Then he got a job at the abattoirs at Cannon Hill. During the war he used to with concert parties up as far as Toowoomba I think it was. Grovely, Strathpine, the hospital at Greenslopes and the prison at

- 01:30 Boggo Road. He was, I'm sorry I don't like talking about my father. He was saying - he committed suicide next door. He got very depressed in the end and threw himself over the

- 02:00 verandah rail.

That's fine. Do you mind if I ask you more questions about your time during the Depression or your childhood, is that okay or do you want me to just move on?

Childhood, yeah.

Okay. Well maybe I'll just move on to, maybe you can tell me when you remember hearing that World War II had started?

When World War II had started. No I can't remember when it started I probably heard it on the radio.

- 02:30 No I can't, I couldn't remember that.

How did World War II change your life when you were young?

When I was young I was sent out with the evacuees. If you had relations or something in the country they would, the government would send you out there,

- 03:00 so my mother got in touch with a cousin of hers at Jandowae and we went out, myself and my brother Ron, my third brother he, we both went together on the train to Jandowae. We spent a year there milking cows, getting chased by the bulls and up the windmill to get away

- 03:30 from them. It was a pretty lonely sort of thing place just with the two of us. We were, her family were there and other than that we stayed there for 12 months.

And what did you think, how old were you when you went?

Be

- 04:00 14, I think.

And at 14 what did you think about the fact that you had to leave Brisbane and what did you understand about - ?

It was an adventure. I'd never been. The furthest I'd been was to, to Annerley. We used to go by train to Park Road and then go out Park Road and get the train and go to Fairfield, Annerley and we'd

- 04:30 Urunga at least and we'd get out at Urunga and go to our auntie's place. I can remember one day we were getting in the train at Wynnum and I dropped the nappy bag between the platform and the train and the guard had to get the train to back up

- 05:00 so as he could get down and get it. Oh nothing.

Why were you carrying a nappy bag?

Mum, Mum had the baby, I was helping Mum. We were just going out to Auntie - her sister's place for the day, yeah, that's right.

And when you were sent out, out west -

Yeah.

During the war had you completed your schooling or?

No,

05:30 no. I had, I left before that.

And how well did you enjoy school?

Not very well. I'm a left hander and during that time at school I can remember for six weeks I'd go to school in the morning and I'd get smacked on the left hand. And I'd come home at dinner time

06:00 and go back the next day and get another six on the left hand, told to write with the right hand. And this went on for about six weeks, and Mum found an article in the Women's Weekly that said left handers, leave them left handers, don't try and make them write right handed. And after that they didn't bother me any more. And years later

06:30 I had the four boys and we were down, I took my wife down to the confession at Guardian Angels, and I saw this old nun sitting on the verandah and I thought, "You look like Sister Mary Ella!" And I went over and it was her, and she said, "I was just looking at you over there, admiring what a great Protestant boy you are, bringing your wife to

07:00 confession and you stay outside watching the children." But I told her I didn't like her. I said that was probably only boys, schoolboys talk, but I found out later on they were all right.

And so did your mum take the Woman's Weekly article down to the school?

No I took it down. She hardly left the house for,

07:30 for years.

Why was that?

Oh she didn't have any. She'd go down the road and come back again that's about all. She didn't, occasionally to see her relatives but other than that she was mainly staying at home looking after kids.

And was it hard to leave your mum and your family when you had to go out west?

08:00 No, we were able to look forward to it, a big adventure sort of thing. We'd never been on a long distance train or been outside of Brisbane at that stage.

Was there much movement of troops around trains at that time?

In Brisbane, yes, but not that we seen. We used to have a signal station out at Port Lytton and the, they'd come in

08:30 on a Thursday night to go to the Star there, which is burnt down now, or a Saturday night to the pictures. We used to have a Gerethy's Bus Service and they used to pick them up out near Lytton and bring them into Wynnum and they'd be hanging all over the bus. One bloke on each side on the

09:00 front, sitting beside the, in front of the headlights. But they were very good. My father at that time he was doing all these concerts for the troops and he, no it was after we came home from Jandowae, and he got to know some of the Chinese that were working at Bulimba.

09:30 They were actually making landing barges there and the Americans had it, they were working under the American authority.

Did you ever get to see any of the concert parties?

No, no, no.

And did your dad have a relationship with Chinese people from way back?

No, no.

From when he sold embroidery or?

No, not as far as I know.

Where did he get the Chinese

10:00 **embroidery that he - ?**

I wouldn't know. I don't know at all that one.

And how did the family out at, is it Jandowae?

Yes.

How did they respond to you and your brother coming to live with them?

Very good. See I used to have to go down and bring the cows in. Clean up the dairy after the cows had been there. It might sound a bit morbid, we use to kill the

10:30 poddy bull calves. We used to have to take them down and kill them.

How did you have to kill them?

With an axe. Hit them on the head with an axe and you'd leave them, we used to leave them in the bush and dingoes or whatever got them.

Why did you have to kill them?

Well they don't - at that time, they didn't want any bull calves.

And tell me about this time you got chased by the bull?

11:00 Well I was bringing the cows in for milking about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and I got almost to the gate where they go through the paddock into the, past the windmill and then they went to another paddock which led up to the dairy. I was just about, the last few were coming through

11:30 and this bull charged down the laneway and I could see it wasn't going to stop so I made my way up near the windmill. It stayed there for a while and then walked off and I was able to bring the cows back up to the dairy for the afternoon milking.

And being essentially a city boy when you'd grow up in Brisbane, how hard did you find settling into farm life?

12:00 Not bad. It was something different, it was learning to work. We used to do a bit, when I was younger we used to down on our fence we used to have a choko vine and we used to get a bag full, not a bag, a box full of chokos and sell them all around the place for pocket money.

12:30 And Dad would give us four pence, threepence to go to the pictures on a Saturday afternoon and a penny for two halfpenny iceblocks. And there was a lovely chap called Sam Green and he would have a picture show and if you come there with a baby, and he'd ask you if it was boy or a girl

13:00 and then he would go into his office and he'd bring you out a blue or a pink teddy bear for the kid. One of my sons, my first son got it and by the time the others got bigger or were born, the Star there was burnt down. It was very good. We used to go there for -

13:30 get in for threepence.

And who decided that you should come back to Brisbane after a year?

I think Mum did. My mother, yeah it would be Mum.

What had changed anything?

Here? Yes everything had changed there was all these Yanks getting around the place and my brother next to me,

14:00 Sid, he was a year younger than me, he said, "Do you want a smoke, a Yankee smoke?" And he pulled out a packet of Lucky Strike and that was starting me off with the Yank cigarettes then.

Where had he got them from?

From the black market probably. There used to be some places in town that you could get them or

14:30 around the place.

What kind of places?

Certain shops, I don't know what shops they were. The only ones I remember were - they're gone now. It used to be in Ann Street right down the [Fortitude] Valley. I think he used to have them under the counter.

And when you came

15:00 **back to Brisbane what did you start doing?**

When I came back to Brisbane, somebody said that the Yanks were looking for people so I found out where it was. It was up at, they had Somerville House, so I went up there and I had an interview with them and they said report to Storehouse 22 I think it was, it was at New Farm which

15:30 wasn't bad, because it was just a small walk from the end of the tram terminals.

What was the Storehouse 22 like?

Well it was one of the woolsheds they used to have down there. And they were all packed with bins and places to put stuff and

16:00 the boats would bring these big boxes and we used to have to take the equipment out of the boxes and

put them on all the shelves, put a number beside them of how many we've got. And then one night, very tired and went to sleep and used to have a guard come around and see what's going on. He woke me up and they sent me

16:30 down to Eagle Farm then. I was able to go down there on the train, catch a train to South Brisbane, the tram of course, Victoria Bridge and then, get the train down there and then, that was only for one week. Down in Johnson Street, the Valley I think it is, the Yanks used to

17:00 have transport to take you down to Eagle Farm. We had 180 passengers' semi-trailer bus, 120 passengers' semi-trailer bus and a couple of ordinary buses.

And what exactly did you do at Eagle Farm?

At Eagle Farm I was repairing boxes, painting boxes.

What were the boxes for?

Put equipment in to go to

17:30 New Guinea and all the other places as it was called for.

How big were they?

Any kind, big, small.

What were they made out of?

Wood. A lot of the wood was reclaimed by a priest who was on the other side of the airfield. Somewhere, somewhere the road to the Eagle Farm

18:00 airport is now, you know that driveway? They used to send a, send some troops out there to help this priest who was doing it. And one day they said, "Where's this bloody priest?" And he said, "I'm the bloody priest." And he was just in a pair of long trousers, no shirt or anything on. They reckon

18:30 they used to work like mad for him. I had to -

Where was he reclaiming the wood from?

From boxes and stuff that they had brought stuff over from America in. I had a little top sergeant, a little fat man he was and

19:00 one morning he come out to me and he said, "Where's them God damn niggers I sent you out?" And I said, "I don't know nothing about that," then he gave some sort of an order and next thing these ten black faces come out of the woodwork, out of them boxes they found a place to hide themselves in. And they went to work. I had an Indian, an

19:30 American Indian warrant officer that used to look after me and take me to lunch over on the aerodrome and every morning he'd come and he'd look up my nose to see if I'd, how the, whether I've been getting any paint up there from spraying the boxes. He used to bring me over a quart of ice cream a day. I believed later on that he

20:00 was killed in New Guinea.

What was he like?

A very, very lovely man. He'd do anything for you.

What was his name?

I couldn't tell you his name now. Oh my goodness. No.

Was the fact that he was an American Indian, was he treated any differently?

No he wasn't

20:30 as a matter of fact. They seemed to, the Negro Americans, they treated them very bad. I know, I don't know whether you want this or not but just over the road from us, where the bypass, where the Brisbane Road goes over the Eagle Farm Road

21:00 just about there, there used to be an American prison. One night they staged and escaping there was about six negroes, and they got killed and they left them on the wire for three or four hours, a lesson for anyone trying to, trying to escape.

What other ways did you observe that they might have mistreated the black Americans?

21:30 Just by the way they talked to them. They just, they were rubbish as far as the white Americans were concerned at that stage. But yeah when we got to, when we got to Korea they were altogether different. They sort of simulated with the white people. I had one negro that I knew

- 22:00 and I was walking through the laneway that used to be from the tram at South Brisbane Station. I can't think of the pub's name now, the Bohemian Stadium was next to it. And we were walking through there about 11 o'clock one night and this big black hand comes on my shoulder and I just shook like anything and he turned me around and said, "How are you mate?"
- 22:30 It was a negro I was talking to during the day time. Oh I was frightened though.
- What was South Brisbane like?**
- Well South Brisbane had the Doctor Carter's Hostel for the black American, and they were all over the place see. Dozens and dozens of them because they were more or less, that was their area and they had to stay there, they weren't allowed to go into town.
- 23:00 **What happened if they did?**
- Likely to bash them up and throw them in the cells, whatever they had.
- Was there any kind of that sort of black American culture starting to set up in South Brisbane? Any jazz clubs or, that you had heard?**
- No only that Doctor Carter that I think it was, that was the only club for the Americans there,
- 23:30 the negroes.
- And what was that club like?**
- I don't know I never went in there. But they seemed to enjoy themselves.
- And the ones that you worked with how did you find them personally?**
- I found them very good. A lot of them were very nice people. I didn't treat them any different from what I was and we got on all right
- 24:00 together.
- Did you think it odd the way the Americans treated the black Americans?**
- Yeah. You see it in some of the TV shows. That was exactly the way they were treated. They were just dirt to some of the white man, white Yanks.
- 24:30 **And how were you officially attached to the American forces? Were you - ?**
- I was a civilian employee. There was dozens of us. I applied for a job at Somerville House and they just, somehow they sent me to New Farm, Eagle Farm, that's -
- 25:00 we were assimilated into their routine or you know their working party. Some of the civilians they had like officer's positions and others just were, just the ordinary soldier's position.
- And after you had been working**
- 25:30 **repairing the boxes, what other types of work did you do for them?**
- I sort of finished and they sent us over to the motor pool. The motor pool was, I was at the Ford Company in Eagle Farm Road I think it is - Kingsford Smith Drive and they after a while they shifted from there over to hanger two
- 26:00 which was over near the driveway from Doomben, you know into the airport, old airport. We were there, there was civilians, we had civilians in the doing everything there. The lady used to do the fabric for the aircraft.
- 26:30 We had a big repair shop, you know a grease, grease ramp by one of the grease monkeys, and we got treated pretty well.
- What does a grease monkey do?**
- Grease cars. Grease oily vehicles. They just used to have a certain day that your vehicle had to have a service. So we used to bring them up, take them across the ramp, grease them, check the oils and
- 27:00 send them back again to the different places, the units.
- What kind of vehicles were the Americans using?**
- There was GMC [General Motors Corporation], there was international buses, there was auto cars, federals, trucks, Jeeps.
- What did you think about**
- 27:30 **the way American cars and trucks were put together?**
- Good, good.

Why?

Well they seemed to be, I don't know whether we were seeing or whether they'd done anything before we got them but they all seemed to be running pretty well. Whether they had a pre-service before they left American or what, don't know.

And mechanically were they good quality

28:00 **cars?**

Yes, yes, oh yes they were kept. The Australian Army had some, had a lot and it wasn't until about 1969, I think it was, when the last, they got rid of about that time. We still had the, they still had the Dutch and that and kept them for a bit longer.

And when

28:30 **you were working on these cars, greasing them, what would you wear?**

American overalls.

And what would your typical days work be in this workshop? Can you take me through from the morning?

Well we'd come in there and they'd have a lot of vehicles lined up and we'd just drive them up, up on the ramp, change the engine oil, grease the

29:00 springs, tail shaft, steering, any part that wanted greasing we'd grease them.

How do you tell if it needs greasing or not?

Well you've just got to get the grease gun up and press it until the grease comes out and then you'd let it go. Wipe around, wipe the grease off, wipe the grease nipple and then that's it.

And how do you tell if a piece of machinery needs greasing, does it look a certain way or sound?

No they used to have a

29:30 certain day or mileage that they used to get it done on.

And how many vehicles would you work on in a day?

Oh about 20 or more. Is that annoying you? About 20 a day and they were quite happy with what we were doing and how we were working.

What did you think about the work?

It was work.

30:00 I was happy to do the job. It was really good pay compared with people outside, out in the civilian jobs.

And what sort of interests were you building in mechanics and cars and trucks and stuff?

Oh not much at that time. It was afterwards I got out to Miss Conroy and everything started to come

30:30 better but -

Would the Americans feed you?

Yeah but we had to pay. Yeah a shilling or something for a meal, something like that.

What did you think of the American food?

Well I didn't like some of it. I didn't like that cream corn. It used to be all, just about everyday they'd have it.

31:00 **And what did you think about the Americans in general, as employers?**

As employers they were very good. We had, I had in the end, a very decent young officer. He was very good to us, he used to look after us and make sure we were health, wealthy and wise sort of thing.

What did you think

31:30 **about the way the Americans were behaving in Brisbane?**

Well I wasn't, I wasn't really interested in them, their behaviour at that stage. We used to see them with the girls and all that. That was it.

Around the workshops or anything would there be any talk about Australian girls?

No, no. We didn't

32:00 have, we only had one or two Americans with us, the rest of them had gone up in the islands by this time.

Did you ever talk to the Americans that you interacted with about what they thought about Australia?

No, no. Oh yeah I didn't talk to them they used to say, use to like we've been up to see the koalas

32:30 or kangaroos and all that sort of thing, up at Lone Pine Sanctuary. They used to like to surf, a lot of them loved the surf but we didn't have much to do with the everyday soldier.

And how about when you were just travelling through

33:00 **areas of Brisbane on your way to work. What would you observe about the numbers of troops of Australian or American in the city?**

Not many but at night time if you had to go to, go anywhere by train of a night time you'd see them, see a lot of them, especially hanging around the pubs because the American had more

33:30 money than the Australians and that didn't go down too well. That's why the big riot was on during, I forget what year it was 1942 or 43 had a big riot in, corner Creek and Adelaide Streets, and the Australian MPs [Military Police] would manhandle them, but the Americans would just go in with their

34:00 baton and crack skulls. Wouldn't care who they were just as long as they stopped the fighting. It was all over beer rationing, the Yanks were getting more.

Did you notice any differences just in observation between Australian and American troops?

Well Australians had just the khaki

34:30 where the Yanks had you know all these dress uniforms and different uniforms to go out on leave with where the Australian only had the one sort of uniform.

And what was behind the decision for you to travel with the Americans?

In 1946, there was a band of women

35:00 that had to go to, that was going to Manila to work for them and there was a big, big thing happening and they stopped them going. In the meantime they asked us would we go to Manila and was offering a few more and we said, "Yes." We got our needles, our

35:30 passport, our money and they said, "You're not going, back to your job," so back to the job we went. A couple of days later they said, "How would you like to go to Guadalcanal for a while?" Yeah it's overseas, a lad about 15 or 16 so we went up in a B26,

36:00 Bomber Martin Marauder, I think they called them and there was the radio operator and all the rest of us in this small space in the plane and we stopped at Cairns - Townsville at least and the next day went to Guadalcanal. We got out, out of the plane

36:30 I could see this Dodge weapons carrier there and it had a big hole in the muffler but I couldn't hear a thing, my ears hadn't popped. I was a bit crook for a couple of days. We had a good time up there we dismantled ten towers, radio towers and packed up six big generators. We

37:00 visited the American war graves there. We went down to the British Island Protectorate, as they used to call it then but we were the Australians are now with the peace programme over there.

What was, like describe what the place looked like?

Well it's, it was jungle. Then where we went

37:30 we used to have, we were about 10 or 12 miles from our base right we used to go out there by truck and on the way past, we used to go past Hellfires Pass as they called it. There was an ammunition depot and it blew up and just as though somebody had gone through and the trees were still alive lined up on each side

38:00 but all the rest of them in the middle was all down and they had burned. We went to church down at the BSIP one Sunday and all of a sudden there was screams, the women at the back of us and a monkey had come in and was going through some of the air and it was

38:30 jumping from one woman to another and our bloke got it and took it out and it was all right after that.

Where there any Americans there that would tell you stories about some of the fighting that had happened during?

No. Once we had, we were bats from Hawaii and they had a white, like their native Hawaii's and they

39:00 a white American doctor and a white American CO [Commanding Officer]. They were very good to us.

How did the Americans seem to treat them?

Alright. They just seemed to treat them as their own sort of business. Not like they treated the negroes.

And was there much evidence around the place not just in the environment, any other evidence of the

39:30 **fighting?**

Well there was tanks and trucks and Jeeps that had been blown up or blew up or something like that. They have a beautiful cemetery there, all white crosses no matter which way you look they'd be all in a line. But no I believe I know afterwards that resurrected them all and took them back to America.

40:00 **How many bodies or graves would there be?**

There'd be dozens, hundreds - hundreds of them.

We'll just pause there because were at the end of -

Tape 3

00:35 **What exactly were you packing up at Guadalcanal?**

We packed up six diesel generators and ten thirty foot towers, radio towers.

And how were you to do this?

Well they,

01:00 they got - the Yanks got them down with the aid of a wrecker that they've got there. They got them on the ground and we just undone the nuts and bolts and put the parts in a box and packed them up and sent them away. We don't know where they went to, we just had to pack them up and they took them away down the airfield and wherever they were going to send them from there.

01:30 **And why were they employing yourself, Australians, instead of doing it amongst the Americans?**

Well I think it was mainly because the Yanks had moved on, they had gone like by that time they were up at say the Philippines and Okinawa, well they were.

02:00 Pardon me.

Did you come in to much contact with the local people at the Solomons?

Not really. Only what, no only, we did we did try and make friends with some of them but it was only just a visit to the place and back again.

Okay, well tell us

02:30 **about in Brisbane your memories of the war ending?**

The war ending, I was, myself I was going to work. I lie on a [UNCLEAR] blue and white bus service that used to run from Lota to the Valley. I was out at what's called the Corner House and the news

03:00 come over the radio and we heard that it was all finished. And we got in the valley and there was people racing around and yahooing and very happy. I went to work and the women were driving, they had women drivers for the Yanks the staff cars and that. They were driving the semi-trailers and

03:30 all the big trucks around the place having a great time with us. I don't remember, I don't remember much about it now. It finished and that's it.

Did you get into some of the celebrations yourself?

Oh no. No.

You didn't go out drinking?

No, no.

When you say yahooing

04:00 **what kind of things were they doing?**

Well they were singing and talking loud and dancing around and hugging each other, hugging you and all that. Things that they wouldn't do ordinary.

Was it a good feeling?

Oh yes it was. You knew no-one was getting killed again. My wife's uncle got killed in,

04:30 I just forget where it was, it was somewhere in the Islands.

How did your life change once the war was over?

Once it was over I, I looked for a job. I saw a job in the paper that they wanted a service station attendant out at Annerley. So I went out there and I spoke to the lady and

05:00 she said start straight away. So I stayed there. I started and she was a very, very nice woman. Her name was Peg Conroy at the time, and she was the first and only women up to that time that had a service station. She had more gallonage than any other service station in Brisbane at that time.

05:30 I got her obituary out there which says that she was well before her time. A lovely woman. I put it on her for some money to buy a motorbike, she gave it to me. And then I wanted a car, I had an old T model Ford so I put it on her again for the money. And

06:00 she give me the money and each week I'd have to write in the back of the book how much I gave her. She got married, she came in with her husband and we cracked a bottle of champagne and let the customers do what they wanted to outside until we were finished. She had a, while I was there she had a baby

06:30 and, a baby girl, and she's dead now, and I went to her funeral and her husband rang me up and he said, "Remember what you used to say to Peg?" And I said, "No." "You used to go and say, 'Miss Conroy, your baby's crying'." Of course, that was about 1947 or 48 and you wouldn't those sort of things, you wouldn't

07:00 say those sort of things to a 'miss'. Single women having a child but she was married and he said they never forgot it. We had, we used to have about 12 different kinds of petrol. I can't tell you them all I can remember some of them, Plume, Shell, Neptune, COR [Commonwealth Oil Refineries]

07:30 no not, yeah COR, Golden Fleece, Vacuum, a few more of them but there all, the only one that is still going is Shell. All the rest seem to be - oh Mobil is still going. She used to have, at that time distilled had

08:00 petrol coupons but every now and then you'd get one of the permanents there they'd want 700 gallons without tickets and she'd sell it to the public without tickets because she'd always get someone coming in, "Look I've only got one coupon and I want about 5 gallons." She'd say "Righto, take the coupons and give them the five gallons."

08:30 And it was all hand pumped, not the electric ones.

What was the coupon system, describe what that was and what was it for and how did it work?

Well during the war you were on a measure of essential services, you were on a ration of say ten gallons a month, you might get ten one gallon tickets or you might

09:00 be on a hundred or two hundred gallons a month. You'd just get that number of coupons and you weren't supposed to have any more petrol after that. But Miss Conroy was able to do, get the petrol without the coupons so she'd give it to her customers.

How did she manage that?

Well she used to what's-a-name, the

09:30 well people like Vacuum or Mobil as it was then would ring her up and say, somebody from the office in town would ring her up and say, "I've got five hundred or a thousand gallons of petrol you could have without coupons," and they'd just bring it out and put it in the tanks. We'd just give it to the customers.

Could you have got in trouble for this?

Well you probably could have at the time but nobody seemed to worry about it. The war was over and everybody was waiting to get rid of coupon stuff.

Was there any talk or any occasions where people would make a fuss of the fact that it was a women proprietor?

No she was a very respected

10:30 by the public, and by the management's office of the petrol company.

And tell us about that pump, how hard was it to work?

Oh it wasn't very hard. It was between easy and hard. Some of them were

11:00 hard but had to be overhauled. Some of them were easy, you'd just pump up six or eight gallons, no

trouble at all.

Apart from pumping petrol what other tasks did you have to do?

Grease vehicles. When I went there they were doing about 20 a week. When I left there is was anything up to

11:30 about 72 a week. We had a pretty good set up where the foreman he had a motorbike and side car and we used to go and pick up the cars and grease them and service them and send them back. Another chap used to do the polishing of them. Another one was doing all

12:00 the punctures. It was just at that stage before the tyres were able to get, the ordinary person was able to get tyres and not the essential services.

So how did people get by without?

Well

12:30 you'd get, sometimes you'd get people at the rubbish company they'd say to you that they've got such a tyre and all that and do you want them. Yeah bring them out and sell them.

Were there any, like talking about getting fuel without coupons or the tyres, were there any like kind of not dodgy deals but kind of secret kind of dealing that you had to do?

Oh no,

13:00 not - no. There was you know, well you were supposed to if you got say a thousand gallons you were supposed to give them a thousand tickets but it was the. The oil companies would ring you, you wouldn't ring them and ask them for a thousand gallons. They used to come out, just come out and give it to you.

13:30 Okay, with the tickets, what did the tickets look like?

Only, a bit smaller than your business card.

And with these petrol changing hands would you know anything about how the financial records?

No, no.

No okay. Well tell us how long all up were you at this job for?

I was there for about six years. '40 - no -

14:00 '46 to '51, about six years.

And during this time had you joined the CMF [Citizens' Military Force]?

Yes.

Tell us about how you joined the CMF, we'll lead up to that?

At Annerley there was 5 Company Infantry Transport Royal Australian Army Service Corps, and I thought it would be beaut

14:30 driving those army trucks so I went down and joined up, a friend of mine was with me. Anyhow we joined up there we went to Wacol for a fortnight's camp. We done a course on Harley Davison motorcycles doing drills with them.

15:00 Say go left in a straight line or cross over and we used to do them and now and again they'd send us to different places to have a bit of a display, to get more recruits in the army. The only one I went on was down at

15:30 the old Deakin Raiders Course. We done the show down there for them. The next year we went to Toowoomba and there was an old hearse in the corner of one of the sheds that were up there. So the blokes there got it going and we used to run around the paddock in it. The last one I did

16:00 was up at Pomona and then I stayed on an extra couple of weeks and then went down to Cooroy and we had to take a gun up from Cooroy up to Ipswich. And on our way back on the Eumundi Range, there was a Jeep overturned

16:30 and the driver was hurt. He had part of his scalp taken off, he said, "I'm all right, I'm all right." He was trying to get back to his daughter in Brisbane, it was her birthday and he had other things to do and wasn't allowed to go so he took off. We ended up taking him up to Gympie Hospital and they treated him up there.

17:00 I don't know whether he got into any trouble or not, we had left before it happened. And then I decided to join the regular army. I was going to join the service corps but one of our customers, he was a warrant officer down at Bulimba and he said, "I can get you a better job than just driving trucks, we

can.

17:30 What are you like at repairing?" "Oh we do a bit here." And he said, "I'll get, I'll see if I can get you a better job." So and then he rang, or had a talk to our commanding officer that was up there, up at Victoria Barracks

18:00 and he said that he'd get me a transfer, he'd get me allocated to RAEME and I'd go down to be trade tested when I got down there. So I done a trade test and became a motor mechanic. We worked on -

Sorry we'll just pause there. Before joining the CME, why

18:30 **had you been attracted to the army at all?**

Oh well I think that what I really wanted was, I looked at was getting war service and getting a house. I thought you know if I ever get married and I was up for war service well I'll be pretty

19:00 right. And then I was, as I said I joined up and was posted. I joined up and having been in the CME, the CO wanted a driver - pardon me - for his Jeep and a three tonne truck that was used for

19:30 the `. They didn't have any, a regular army person at that time to do it and I was a recruit and one of the chaps that was in our hut he had already got a job as a clerk in the orderly room. And he heard them talking about this and he come up and said to me

20:00 "What are you like at driving?" I said, "Alright." He said, "You better come down to the orderly room with us." I went down the orderly room and I was given the job of driving the Jeep for the CO and the three tonne truck for the Q store. And that lasted for, oh about six or eight weeks and then the CO said to me "You're,

20:30 they want you to be a driving instructor for the ranks that come up here." So there was 24 ranks that come up here and they were stationed either at their home or out at Urunga and I had to report to Sergeant Elwood at Peel Street and from there we went on to getting vehicles from Banyo and

21:00 taking them to Peel Street and then the girls came, come there and we took them out to Annerley where they started their training for the drivers, to get their driving licence. While I was driving there, teaching the girls, we

21:30 were going down this bit of a hill towards the front fence and I grabbed for the hand brake but a grabbed a hand full of skirt. And I let it go but by the time I'd got the handbrake again the vehicle had gone through the fence. I was rapped over the knuckles for that. Then we were down on the flats at Lytton one day

22:00 and this girl used to make it jump and she would spin the wheels when she let the clutch out and I said, "Let the clutch out like this, slowly," and as I did the axle broke and I had to take it back on front wheel drive and put a new one in up in Toowoomba.

Did you socialise with any of these girls?

Yes. Yes.

22:30 The York Hotel they used to go into there of a night time and have a few drinks and I used to go with them. We used to walk across the old Victoria Bridge and the CO of the unit, of the Townsville Unit, Peel Street, found out, I got taken up before him and told I was a naughty boy and not to do it again but we still kept on doing it. Anyhow I

23:00 finished with them and then went down to -

Why didn't he want you to?

No fraternisation with the girls.

Did you flirt quite a lot with these girls?

Well I tried to.

Any successes?

No, no, not really.

Why didn't they want fraternisation?

23:30 I don't know. I don't know at all. Just the ruling that somebody planned but now it doesn't make any difference. You take the rack there, you take out of [UNCLEAR]. They've even got married women in the army, which wasn't allowed when I was in.

24:00 **And what kind of vehicles were you working on? You were driving vehicles, were you - ?**

Driving vehicles we had a Jeep, a Ford, a three tonne, a Chevrolet three tonne and that's about all we

had there at that time, oh they had a Chevrolet staff car. They get

24:30 their licence and then they went out, they went to all the different units around the place.

And how were you finding army life yourself, like - ?

Well that was good.

Well how were you adjusting to things like the discipline?

Well I was pretty well disciplined before I went in there with the CMF. I didn't have any trouble there.

Well tell us about that, when you first joined the CMF what it was like

25:00 **getting into that army routine?**

Well we just did as we were told. Left turn, right turn, quick march, stop, halt. It was generally of a Monday night and we did, you go down and you do so much,

25:30 an hour or so drill and then an hour of, have a break for about 10 or 20 minutes and then they'd take you back and they'd do what they called corps training. Like what the service corps did and as far as going to different places with vehicles or maintenance on them and all that sort of thing.

26:00 **And what were stag hounds?**

Stag hounds were an armoured car, not an armoured car, but it was more like an armoured tank. It had a 37 millimetre cannon on it and a place for 30 mil, I think it was a 30 millimetre machine gun.

26:30 A big, driven by two GMC motors onto the two gearboxes into one transfer case and then out to the four wheels. There was only four wheels and a very small opening like that for the driver to see out.

27:00 They were a terrible thing, they had a terrible time with head gaskets. You could bring them in one week and spend half the week getting, putting the head gasket on it and then go out for a weekend on exercise and they'd be back in next week for a head gasket. Some of them were all right, some weren't. We did have a

27:30 the first week I was working on them they had one wrap itself around the lamppost down at Doughboy and the local bus people that had the Pioneer bus, a bloke by the name of Argent - he was the - he got the fellow out and

28:00 he got an MBE [Member of the British Empire] for it. We went away, we went away up to Noosa, Weyba Creek [?], they used to turn off there and fire out to sea there before all that housing and road went through from Noosa to Caloundra. They used to have a firing range

28:30 there and we had just about every Police Station from Brisbane to Noosa, you had a stag hound in its yard for the night if something went wrong with it. We had a good time going up really.

29:00 Not me but some others they stopped at this Cooroy Hotel and weren't going to go any further. They stayed there for the night and the refrigerator went and one of the chaps knew all about refrigerators and he fixed the refrigeration for them and then from then on we used to go into Cooroy, into this pub and be very welcome. And

29:30 the lady who, the lady used to give us free beer, the first beer was on them.

And with the stag hounds was apart from the head gasket, were there any other problems that which would come up?

Oh gear boxes. Yeah especially reverse gear.

30:00 They used to there was a piece in them and it's called the pawl and it used to snap the teeth off it and you couldn't drive backwards with it.

And there was also an occasion you might have mentioned about breaking your arm.

Oh yeah.

What was the story there?

A friend of mine

30:30 that joined the ARA [Australian Regular Army], he'd never driven a T model Ford and I said, "[UNCLEAR]," raving about it. And I said, "Oh come down the weekend and have a go." So I, on the Saturday, I was cranking it up and it backfired and broke my right wrist and when I

31:00 enquired from the army about it they said go to Greenslopes Hospital. I went there and they had a look at it and put a big plaster on it. I stayed there for the Saturday night and Sunday, on the Monday the doctor come around and said, "Where do you live." I said, "Wynnum." "Oh" he said, "You can go home for a month then." So I had a month home and then took the plaster off and everything was all right.

Then went back to Enoggera

31:30 and having a morning meal, dinner I mean, dinner. The CO was walking around and he come up to me and he placed his hand on my shoulder and he was talking to everybody and he said you he said, "You've been posted to a local unit. You can go there on Monday." So then I just packed up my gear and went to Bulimba on the Monday.

32:00 **At this time what news were you hearing about the Korean situation?**

The Korean situation, at Enoggera they had 5 Recruit Training Company and there was also K Force, ex World War II diggers and

32:30 some of the recruits from there, they were all put into the K Force section awaiting posting. And we just heard different stories were going along. And I remember, I can't remember it all but, all that I know about it now

33:00 I've read and I sort of can't bring my mind back to that stage. All I can do is remember what the people that I was been with over the past few years have told me.

Well not over the last few years but at the time was there anyone returning from Korea with stories of - ?

Not there, not there but when I got to Bulimba there was one, one by the name of

33:30 Hill. I can't think of his first name now. He'd got back from Korea he'd been up he'd been with 3 Battalion he went up to the Yalu and back again. And he tells his tale of his young apprentice each year when he'd down at Bulimba and he was the only bloke I can, that really at that time

34:00 I knew anything about the diggers that had been there. He had a funny, he got out the army and joined the police force and he became a sergeant and he used to be on traffic control. And he copped one of our warrant officers he didn't like and he never liked

34:30 outside speeding just outside of Eagle Hallows, I think it was, and he gave him a ticket. And when the bloke got back here he was cursing a swearing about this. We have a great laugh over that every now and then when we see him.

This Hill bloke, what was his stories like?

Oh, I can't remember them all he'd just tell them

35:00 about the hardships about how cold it was and just things like that. I just can't remember what they were all about.

Did they have an effect of making you not want to go to Korea or want to go to Korea?

Well I didn't know I was going then. It was about, I'd been there for about a year about,

35:30 about December I think it was 1952. I was called into the adjutant's office and told I was going there. And I said, "Where about is it?" He says, "Oh it's in Japan." But nobody knew exactly where it was and when I got to Sydney we had to go to Marrickville, the personnel depot was in Marrickville in those days. And I met a chap there

36:00 by the name of Edwards, he said, "Oh," he said, "That's in Korea." "Oh well we'll get the war service." "Yeah." So there we went, we were still. I went and saw the adjutant and he told me all about it and nobody knew and when I got to Sydney, this bloke Edwards told me where it was.

36:30 And this happened on a Saturday or Sunday. Monday we were taken out to Mascot Aerodrome and put on a Qantas plane and we went from there to Darwin. We stayed at the Qantas Transit Depot at - oh I can't think of the name now - but Darwin and then from Darwin we went to Labuan, we stayed there the night.

37:00 Then we went to Hong Kong, we stayed there the night. Then we flew Okinawa just stopped and got fuel, back on the plane and then to Iwakuni in Japan. It was cold as anything we still had our summer dress on. Then we went from Iwakuni to Kure by work boat and then by

37:30 bus from Kure to Hiro where we stayed there on the Saturday night. On the Sunday they issued us with all the gear, a rifle and all winter gear. Monday, Monday they took us back down to Iwakuni, and there was a lot of

38:00 soldiers that had just been on leave and when we got them in the aircraft they all got around this big, all these little air ducts something like that up there and we thought, but they told us we all had to sit down but they stood up and we all wondered why. It wasn't long before we found out, we were cold and they were all warm, they were under the heated air ducts that they had there. And we

38:30 got to Korea, I think it's Kimpo Airport, Airfield and then we were put onto a train. The train had been all shot up and no windows, no glass in the windows, half the boards were missing out of the floor

boards, you could see what was going on as the train was going along the line.

39:00 That took us to Uijongbu, got out there and into a Kiwi transport truck, threw our gear in the back and he said, "Get in the back." So I got in the back but there was, the floor was covered with oil and all our gear was, was all had it. So when we got to 16

39:30 Britcom Infantry Workshops they replaced all our gear.

Well just pause there because it's the end of the tape so.

Tape 4

00:35 **How much time did you get to spend in Japan?**

About a day and a half when we first got there and then we had a five day leave which the American took us

01:00 over and then we had 21 days leave which the Australian Army - the RAAF took us over. And then when we finished the leave we had go down to Hiro at the 1RHU and we spent nearly three months there, two and half to three months there. Because the Queen who was visiting Tonga, Fiji,

01:30 New Zealand, Queensland, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne. We got all these, of a morning we'd go to the pictures and of an afternoon we'd go for a route march. That would be one week and the next week it would change over and you'd go for a route march in the morning and have pictures in the afternoon.

When you first arrived

02:00 **in Japan on your way to Korea, what were your impressions of the place?**

We couldn't see or do anything. It was just, when we got to Iwakuni, we just got into a bus there and they took us down to the wharf where we got straight into a work boat. And when we got into Kure we just got out of the work boat and into another bus and all you could just see

02:30 you know was little houses and everything just flying past. But when they put us in a hut, but next morning when we went for breakfast we had to sit down in the place and Japanese girls would come around and bring your breakfast for you, bring all meals for you. You didn't have to go near the line up for meals

03:00 at all.

And tell me what Kimpo, was it Kimpo?

Kimpo it was one of main airport places in Korea. It was, I can't remember exactly how many miles it was but I think it was about 12 to 20 miles south of Seoul.

And what was it like in terms of

03:30 **infrastructure?**

Infrastructure, there was all Yank planes, Yank cars, trucks, everything was Yankified. Fighters there, steel matting for the runway. It was all just, everything was very busy. All we saw of it was really like

04:00 we got out the plane, onto a bus and onto a train. You just had time to like look around not much time to take it all in.

And how long did this train journey take?

It only took about two hours I suppose, as far as I can remember.

What sort of things did you see of the country side around Korea?

All paddy

04:30 fields and houses made of mud by the looks of them. I found out later they were and all straw thatch for the roofs. Very smelly place but you got used to that after a while.

How about any effects of the war on

05:00 **Korea did you see, just in the country side?**

Oh up, we went around during the time we were there, there was a locomotive had been blasted off the line. Some places you could see shell holes and things like that. We never had much to do with the natives except the washer women, they used to come over

05:30 and do your washing for you. We had Lord Nuffield, I think he was, he used to give us 50 cigarettes a month. And we didn't like the British made cigarettes. We used to give them to the washer women for washing our clothes. They used to come in of an afternoon with a great big pile of washing on their head and sort it all out. This is yours, that's yours, that's.

06:00 Although sometimes you'd give them more, sometimes you'd give just what you had. They had some beautiful children with them. We used to make friends with the children.

What were the children like?

Shy, some didn't some of them were a bit forward you know. You'd give them chocolate, they wanted chocolate, you'd give them a chocolate [UNCLEAR].

06:30 We used to get, we used to have a lot of American rations ourselves. Of a weekend Saturday or Sunday we'd or different ones we used to go around to some of the supply bases there and get American rations to supplement the British, we didn't like the British tucker much.

07:00 And when I was coming back from I went for a, when I went over on my first leave and came back to the workshop, a day or so afterwards, I had to report to the cookhouse along with some other blokes and there was this big tall pommy bloke, a pommy lance corporal with one ball eye and he was

07:30 the chief cook at the time and he got into us because we complained about his tucker. So we didn't complain any more we just used to throw it and didn't even, sometimes wouldn't even go for a meal, we'd have our own meals in our tent. We had, we also had the only bath in the Commonwealth Division. Somewhere along the line

08:00 when we were going up and down the, down Korea somebody found a bathtub in the British Consulate and it ended up at the LAD, ended up with the British workshop and we had our own water tank and we were able to shower and wash everyday.

And describe the sort of Brit Com [British Commonwealth] area that you were

08:30 **based in?**

It was, part of it was flat and then it started to go up at the back, up onto a small hill. There was a big mountain behind it but as far as the workshop went it just went back to a small hill. They had, at the front we had a big inspection part which

09:00 held all the different vehicles what needed repairing. Then we had the cube part and on our right as you went in we had the Australian, on the hill you had the Australian tent, over further you had the British tents and down, just down below the tents there was the first, the Australian sergeants' tent. Then there was

09:30 heavy workshop, the ordinary workshop, instrument, electrical and all those sorts of places and that was on your right. In the centre was the ordnance depot and on the left hand side right up was the officers' mess, across from them was the sergeants and then they had bays for the unit vehicles.

10:00 The recovery vehicles from Seoul used to come up once or twice a week and take vehicles back down. They used to load Jeeps in the back of QLs, which was the British trucks, and they were taken back to Seoul or Inchon and returned to Japan where they were overhauled.

10:30 Sometimes they'd have anything up to 12 trucks with 12 Jeeps on behind one wrecker and they had to come up, get them and away they went, we never saw them again.

What would he damage be for it to be completely overhauled in Japan?

Well if it had two major components, like an engine

11:00 and gearbox or an engine and differential then they'd send it back. They wouldn't completely inspect it, just so they got that far well that was as far as they had to go. We did see one a water truck, a British Bedford water truck that we knew went through it was a

11:30 couple of months ago, it had come back in, they got it got it issued to them and then somebody forgot to put the handbrake on and it went down over a hill and smashed all up so it went back to Japan again to get it repaired. We didn't do much panel beating.

Why was that?

It takes too long.

12:00 We were supposed to only do, I think it was up to ten or twenty hours work if there was more than that amount of work on it well it moved to another work shop.

So what was the most common kind of work that you were doing on vehicles?

Changing generators, radiators, sometimes engines. I had the inspection part. My main job was

- 12:30 be to in charge of it but I used to have to be responsible for making sure that there was no petrol in the vehicles, no ammunition, no tools like wheel braces and spanners and things that you use for your maintenance. Spare tyre they all had to come off
- 13:00 before they went out and we put them in a secure place and they would be sent off later on. We weren't allowed to have any ammunition in them we had to get all that out because most times you carried a, if you had a .303 with an ammunition bandolier with about 50 rounds. So they all had to come off before they
- 13:30 went back down.

And how long would this check list take to complete?

Check list?

Inspection.

Yeah, yeah. Oh sometimes half an hour, sometimes more, sometimes less, average on half an hour. I'd have my sergeant, there was a sergeant, myself and three Brits.

And how

- 14:00 **did you work with them, how was that team structured?**

It was all right but they didn't like us too much.

Why is that?

Because we were getting as much a day as they were getting a week in money. And we could go like to the canteen and say right I want a case of beer, and they could only go down and say I want a bottle of beer. We used to have what was called a choofer, it's a 44 gallon,

- 14:30 sits on a 44 gallon drum and it's a round pot bellied and it has a chimney and it's fed by petrol. And we used to see how many beer bottles they can get around the choofer. The most they got round was two crates, that was it. They used to try and get more but they never got it.

- 15:00 You'd open the cases, sometimes you'd open the cases up and you'd find a couple, like three or four bottles would be broken in the case from the cold. And the beer would be it would be like an ice block in it.

What would you do with that?

Put it near the choofer and let it thaw itself out.

- 15:30 We had 11 Australians I think it is and one Kiwi, Brian Marsden. He was with the Kiwi gunners but there was no work for him up at the gunners so they sent him down to the workshop and we used to keep him in the corner as our mascot. When he came back to Australia in, he came back

- 16:00 in '54, he came down and stayed with us for a couple of days which was very good.

What was he like?

A terrific little bloke, terrific and he had a twin brother and his twin brother was a rouge. He was sent down to the Seoul boob [military prison]. He spent a week down there and he came back to us, came in on the Saturday, one Saturday after he'd been released and

- 16:30 he started, we all had a drink with him and then they said, "Oh we'll go back tomorrow," and so we ended up taking him back to the Kiwi lines on the Sunday afternoon. He got there and the Kiwi says to me "Hey mate do you want a go of the gun?" "Oh yeah I'll be in that." I ended up loading the gun, you're only supposed to fire a, he said, "I'm only going to fire a

- 17:00 few shots," twenty minutes later we're still there. We used to get on well with them.

What kind of gun was it?

A 25 pounder.

And what did you have to do to help him with the gun?

I had to bring the shell up and put it in the gun.

Hard work?

Yeah, hard work, yeah if you're not used to it.

What do you think are the similarities between New

- 17:30 **Zealand troops and Australian troops?**

We're the same. They, well this little Kiwi was a funny little bloke and there weapons were a different

one to ours and a different one to the British. One day this big Pommy staff sergeant come out and was inspecting the line, and this Kiwi's made a lemon squeezer

18:00 out of an Aussie hat and he had the red, blue and gold puggaree around it and he told him to get rid of it. He told him to get rid of the weapon, it wasn't a standard issue. And he just turned around and said to him, "It is in my army, it mightn't be in yours." He didn't like it, but he got away with it.

Describe what he'd done with his hat?

18:30 He got an Australian hat and he made it into a lemon squeezer. It's got four dints in it. A dint there, a dint there and a dint front and a dint back and he made it into a lemon squeezer and this Pommy bloke didn't like it. He said, "That's what I got issued with."

19:00 **And is there any kind of good natured banter between Australians and New Zealanders?**

Oh I got on with them pretty well. Well most of, all of us did.

Any sort of jokes that you'd make about each other?

Oh I couldn't tell you all that now. I can't remember it all. We used to, I used to have one big massive Kiwi,

19:30 he used to come down on his off pay week when he got to us and he'd want a few bucks to go to the canteen with. And he'd always stop and give it to you, give you the money back after he'd gone back to his unit. They used to love coming down, they used to love coming down and being with us

20:00 instead of being up there under [UNCLEAR]. Discipline was different. Discipline was hard but it was relaxed a little bit where up there they were regimental all the time.

And what are the differences between Australians and British?

Well,

20:30 there's no difference really, because where we all were called our army at that time we were based on British regimentation and all that but the only thing they didn't like about it was that we were getting more money than them that was a very sore point with them.

How did they treat you?

Well, they the -

21:00 all right, I couldn't complain really. I was in the pub in town here in 1954 and I looked at this bloke and he looked at me and I said, "I know you." And he said, "Yeah." I said, "Where do I know you from?" He said, "We were in Korea together." I said, "What are you doing out here now?" He said, "I'm a civvy [civilian]," he says, "I'm working

21:30 on the barge." I said, "Where about?" He said, "Outside Bulimba workshops." There he was he'd been sitting out there and I didn't know.

And what sort of differences do you think exist in the way the British Army run things or treat their troops to the way Australian Army do?

I think we're more

22:00 tolerable towards our thing that happen to what they are. I did, getting on a bit, I was chosen along with three other blokes to go on the coronation parade in Korea. And the Brits made us,

22:30 made us where their berets and rifles and hat or beret and the brigadier that was in charge of the parade came along. He said, "Where are the Australians?" "There, there and there." "What are they doing dressed up like that?" "The CO said they were to." "No they're not. Get their bush hats back on and their correct rifles." So we went on it. We got paid for going

23:00 on it, a five shillings piece, a coronation piece. I'll show you after. And it was good, it's good to remember it now. They had four, four centurion tanks on each end of the parade ground and they fired red, blue and white canister, smoke canisters

23:30 and set it off.

What other things happened during that parade?

Noting much, we used to just go and do our work.

I mean on that, during the coronation celebrations, what other?

No we had the big brigade all the battalions, different battalions of Australians

24:00 and British and all the corps, the service corps everything like that they had those on parade. The [President of South Korea] Syngman Rhee was supposed to come up but he didn't.

And describe for me that way that you lived at the Brit Com base, what your tent was like?

Well we had a tent with 12,

24:30 12 stretchers in it. We slept in sleeping bags. We had a houseboy to keep the place clean, him who was reluctantly taken after a few months of being there he was taken and put in the Korean army.

25:00 He used to make sure that the - we used to call them chilters, these heaters for heating the tents up, he had to make sure he had enough petrol there to keep them going. And clean our boots and things like that.

How much room did you have to move around in, in these tents?

25:30 Oh not very much you were able to get, you had about six beer boxes for your stuff. Then you had your stretcher and then your little mat and then the next chap started his.

How comfortable was your stretcher?

Oh, as

26:00 comfortable as you could get - I know what that is now, down the football field.

Oh right, not a school [UNCLEAR]. And what sort of bedding would you have?

Just I think that little mattress if I can remember right.

26:30 Yeah, a little mattress then the sleeping bag, that was during the winter and the summer you had, you just mostly went to sleep just in your underpants. It was as hot in winter as what it was cold. Hot in winter. Hot in summer as what it is cold in winter. It goes to the extreme.

How did you deal with the extreme

27:00 **cold?**

Well, just rugged up as best we could. The only thing is that you couldn't, you had to watch yourself with your spanners. You couldn't just go to a tool box and pick up a spanner and start working with them because it was that cold it used to take the skin off your hands. You had to, you had three pair of gloves that you could wear but

27:30 mainly down to one pair and you'd be able to pick your spanners up, put them on the top of a 44 gallon drum with a fire underneath it.

And how did you keep warm in your tents during?

We had these choofers, the petrol going into the sand and they like drip, drip, drip, but if you wanted it up further,

28:00 you could make it flow further, if you want more heat.

Were they safe?

Not really, the - we didn't have, we had the same tent all the way through for the 12 months I was there. The Brits lost a couple of tents and the drivers that used to come down from the different places they lost two or three tents.

28:30 Some of them, it used to be very windy, very hot. They used to take the Poms down to the bath house and make them have a bath. They used to have a book but we didn't have that.

29:00 they knew what we were. Our officer and warrant officer knew what we were like, but the Poms were very much into writing the names into the book of people who had showers and who hadn't had showers.

Did the British not bath much?

Well they didn't have the facilities that we had. They could only had a mobile bath out at,

29:30 down the road somewhere and they used to go to it down there.

And what was the bloke like that you shared your tent with?

Good. They were all right, they were very good, 12 of us. One a couple up from me he ended up becoming a Major. Billy Grogan right up the top he,

30:00 he became a RSM, a regimental sergeant major up at Bulimba and he was decorated a couple of times in Vietnam for, he was with the ATF [Australian Task Force] teaching the Vietnamese battalions.

30:30 A couple of them died and a couple of them never heard anything more about them. There was another one, a major down at Redland, not Redland, Victoria Point. We had another one that was a major, ended

up being a major he's living down in Cleveland way, now.

And what's it like sharing a tent with 12

31:00 **other people?**

Alright. You've got to do it, there's nothing you can do about it.

Are there any times where it's hard to tolerate other people?

Oh well yes, yeah. We had a big bloke, he's dead now. He was sent down from one of the battalions and he used to sing at the top of his voice

31:30 and we were trying to get to sleep and somebody yelled out "Why don't you shut up. We can't get to sleep with all that racket going on." "You can't be too tired," he said, "You want to get up the front and see what's like."

What was he singing?

Oh singing all different songs. I can't remember what he was singing now.

32:00 **And what sort of things would you do in the evening when you had a bit of spare time, would you spend time in your tent or somewhere else?**

Well spend time in the tent, drinking or going to the pictures. They had pictures there, you'd get good pictures. We had a couple of concert parties.

32:30 We had an American concert party. We had an Australian one and I'm not sure, I can't think of his name now. I had his name on I remember him the other day, went around doing concerts and things. And then we had a Vietnamese one,

33:00 not Vietnamese a Chinese one come up and oh, it was horrible. You know singing their songs and we couldn't understand it. The Yanks brought a complete show over. A big band, it went all through the units in Korea.

33:30 We used to go out, sometimes we'd go walking out have a look around the grand country side and have a look at the houses and all that.

Was this safe?

Yes where we were it was safe. There were, it was, they had a front line

34:00 and then we were well behind the fighting. Well most of it stopped, stopped in June. I had February, March, April, May and June. When the fighting was on it had stopped altogether and they built all these demarcation areas on both sides.

34:30 **And in the concert parties what sort of different acts would there be?**

They had jugglers, singers, male singers, single, doubles and trios or whatever you'd like to call them.

And what sort of stage would they have and how - ?

Back of a truck.

35:00 It was a big one, they used to put the two tails to tail.

And where was, where were the movies shown?

They were shown in the mess hall. They used to set them up in there.

Do you remember any films they showed you?

Any films? No, I couldn't remember them now.

35:30 No nothing jumps out at me.

And if you were just having a quite evening where there wasn't a movie or a concert party, what sort of things would you do amongst your mates?

Mainly catch up with your writing home and things like that.

36:00 If you were lucky sometimes or once or twice I went to other units. I saw the, the only time that the three battalions of the Royal Australian Regiment were together, one, two and three was down at Camp Casey. And we went down,

36:30 down the gate and watched the diggers going past. And somebody yelled out, "Hey you dingo Bs [bastards]. What are you doing back here, get up the front!"

What did you say?

I didn't say anything, I just came away and that's it. They marched them down. They had to march about 12 miles. Everything was getting a bit heavy by the time they got near us.

37:00 **And how many people were at the Brit Com?**

There was 16 Australians and 160 Poms. We hadn't had one of those, the adjutant's name was Jones, oh a hyphenated, a British hyphenated name and

37:30 he was real British. I can't remember, I remember one sergeant major we had, he was a 22 year old and he was trained to be a sergeant major. He went to the boys, what do they call it? The boys' army or something like that, just trained for a special job.

38:00 He was a real nasty little man.

What would he do?

Oh just the way he talked, talked to you. Then we got a chap from the Grenadiers and he like the Australian bushrangers, he had been. He was quite a good man.

38:30 Christmas we had two officers come around, it was an officer and sergeant come around. The officer gave us two bottle of Black and White whisky. One of our chaps said, "This whisky, it kicks you," he said, "It's like, it's a myth," he said, "Look." He'd taken about that much

39:00 out of the bottle, and he gulped all the rest of it and about 1 o'clock in the afternoon he was flat out on his bed. When it was ready for us to go to sleep, he got up and he was as sick as a dog. And I mean sick, he was sick all through his sleeping gear and all the stuff out. We had to throw him and his stuff out of the tent. But we had chicken, turkey,

39:30 cranberry sauce, something from, some other Yankee stuff most of it was American food for Christmas. It went down very well. We even got free beer from Australia, a couple of cans.

What kind of beer?

I think it was VB [Victoria Bitter], if I can remember right.

40:00 **We'll just pause there because we're at the end of this tape.**

Tape 5

00:35 **Okay, you were talking about Christmas and the various things you got, what was the feeling like on Christmas day?**

Christmas day was good, nothing to do. Should go back to Christmas Eve really. The warrant officers and sergeants both the Australian and British Army done

01:00 the guarding for us, all the duties. Christmas night we just what's-a-name, we just done what ever we wanted to do in our own tent, we had nothing else to do. We did make friends with an American, a couple of Americans.

01:30 One day there was this American MP by the looks of him and he had another American and he had the tripod of a gun strapped on his back and he was going up and down the road. We see him a few times so we got stuck into him and said to him "Why don't you give the bloke a break and give him a beer?" And he said, "No he's on,"

02:00 not allowed to have it anyhow he was a prisoner. And in the end after a couple of days the bloke came and brought him in with him and we had a few drinks. And then we got pretty friendly with him after that and he got us, he used to get us C rations or American rations we used to supplement the British stuff with.

02:30 I left, we left there myself and another chap towards the end of, between the middle of January and the end of January I went on leave to Tokyo. We flew by RAAF transport to Iwakuni

03:00 and from Iwakuni we got onto the train. The train was a steam train up as far as Osaka and from there on it was an electric train, beautiful seating in the train. The dining car was very good and all our meals were very good. It was

03:30 still under American jurisdiction. We said to them "What time do we arrive in Tokyo." They said, "6 o'clock that evening." So right on 6 o'clock the train was pulling in, it was 6 o'clock. They took us to Ebisu Camp and gave us leave of 21 days after

04:00 we got there. We went and saw all the different things around Tokyo, the Emperor's Palace, the Diet building, lots of shrines and things like that. Then we caught, finished our leave and came back and

went down by train to Hiro

04:30 where we met and were taken to the Hiro, 1RHU and then we stayed for about two or three months.

Was this the end of the war?

No, yeah this was after the end of the war. This was '54.

Well before we get there I have some more questions about the work in Korea?

Yeah.

Maybe I'll just ask you what was involved in a typical day?

05:00 A typical day, well we got up in the morning, down for breakfast. Start work about 8 o'clock, work through to lunch time, I can't remember what time it was. Then, I think we had about an hour off then we went

05:30 might say one to four and then it was our own time after that. The warrant officer in charge of the vehicle company he used to give out the jobs that you had to do, they were all written down on a sheet of paper, on a form and you'd have to do those sort of things. Replace the

06:00 carburettor, replace the brakes, the brake shoes, anything like that. Only small jobs you know nothing over about ten hours of work. All the rest went back to either Seoul or back to Japan.

What kind of vehicles were you working on?

We were working on Jeeps

06:30 with a Solex, a British Solex carburettor on it, Morris one tonne, Bedford one tonne, British Bedford QL and sometimes GMCs, a two and a half tonne that the Yanks had.

What were the

07:00 **GMC?**

General Motors Corporation, two and a half tonne, six wheeler.

Were there any unique problems that kept coming up?

Well they got over one problem of the engine blowing up, or not blowing up cracking the blocks,

07:30 leaving the water in the radiator. They had coolant I think it was and they were able to leave it in overnight. There has been and there was times when the wheels would be frozen to the road. You had to get down and, they generally had something else that was going and give them a big push and get them

08:00 rolling again.

So with the blocks freezing or cracking, sorry what exactly would you do to stop this happening?

Well they used to - you were supposed to drain the water out of them every night so it didn't do it. I think they got some coolant in the end and that stopped it.

And were there any other parts that would

08:30 **freeze or be affected by the cold regularly?**

Not that I can remember.

Any problems with the spark plugs or anything?

No not as far as I can remember.

What about due to other conditions like dirt roads or anything like that was there anything coming up regularly?

No, broken springs that would be the main thing.

09:00 **How often would they need servicing either time wise or kilometre wise?**

Well they put it down that maintenance, on the front of vehicles they had maintenance day was Monday or Wednesday or Friday. You were supposed to do maintenance on them every week, once a week.

09:30 until, a bit hard to remember.

That's understandable but yeah probably once a week or so?

Yeah.

Were the vehicles aging or getting damaged quickly?

Well they were getting aging they'd been, had them, all of them were ex-World War II. We believe that

10:00 some of the British Bedford QLs we had were in the Normandy invasion, so we were told. That just goes to be seen. We had, we had an Australian water wagon which was ours, ours alone, no-one else was allowed to touch it.

Why?

10:30 It was ours, it was Australian.

But why weren't you allowed to touch it?

No, no, I mean none of the Poms were allowed to go near it. We stipulated that, kept. Because these two used to, I believe they used to use the water out of it and they wouldn't have done that for us.

What were they like comparably as workers as mechanics?

As

11:00 mechanics there's a lot of good blokes. A lot of them were national serviceman. I remember we had, they used to have a motor which used to heat up some of the big working tents that they had there and they couldn't get the parts from the big and bearing

11:30 so some of them, one of these young blokes he made up the bearing out of solder which worked, worked good for a long while. Just one thing but there was other things that they were good at. But mainly there was a lot of

12:00 national serviceman in the British Army compared with what we, well we didn't have any overseas at that time.

So were you learning new tricks or new techniques for yourself?

Oh yeah. It was mainly because of the difference between the Australian vehicles and the British. And we were all mostly, all the vehicles that they had there were British.

12:30 **Were there any repairs that you used kind of improvisations or different things then the standard things?**

We used to take the parts off other vehicles that were going back to, back to Kure. There was a lot of that went on. When I was in Melaka, when I was at 3

13:00 Battalion at Terendak, there was a provo marshal came in, one of the crooks had died in town. And he walked in he says, "I know you." I said, "I don't know you, Sir." He said a couple of seconds and then he turned around and he said, "You changed Jeep seats for me in Korea." I said, "What?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "I don't remember." He said, "Oh yes you did." He just

13:30 put it aside.

Tell us was there any kind of trade for any goods and parts? Did you trade things with different troops?

No so much there. We used to get, no not much there. In Malaya - in Terendak it was.

But

14:00 **in Korea was there a kind of, even not for parts, even just for your own. I don't know for things like beer or anything? Was there a kind of black market kind of trade system going on at all?**

Oh not that I know of we used to. Oh there was the Yanks. The Yanks changed the engineers unit, it was the road maintenance and we

14:30 exchanged Kirin bottles for their Budweiser cans but other than that I don't think there was much went on. They might have been changing, some of the Yanks wanted hats we used to get hats for them, like the diggers hats. But that's about all I can remember.

What did you get for say a digger's hat, a slouch hat?

15:00 Well they used to, the Yanks used to like trading in beer. They'd give you a carton or a couple of cartons of beer for one. If you were really lucky you might get three cartons.

So tell us what because you were late, towards the later part of Korea,

15:30 **what were you hearing about how the war was going?**

Well we, not so much, we used to hear a bit about the, what the battalions were doing. But then when it came to the, we were going to have peace and all that. And it was going to be this and then exact day and nobody knew when it was going to

- 16:00 finish and then all of a sudden I think it finished sometime in July. And everything finished about 10 o'clock at night I think it was. And at the weekend, on the weekend that it happened we went over and had a look at freedom village that the Yanks had made up
- 16:30 for the prisoners of war coming back. We never saw any of them they had gone through after we'd been there. And everything, and then they decided to take up our camp and we moved everything over to another place about eight or nine miles away.
- 17:00 **And during your time at the camp had you come to see the sharp end of the war much?**
- No. No. We went up to 3 Battalion on Anzac Day but other than that we didn't see any of that at all.
- Could you hear or see any of the fighting at all?**
- No. We were
- 17:30 too far back. We were probably 20 miles behind the front line.
- Would you know anything about casualties or meet any of the men which had been right at the fighting in your role?**
- Not, not then, no. We used to, like the driver used to come down with their vehicles, they had to stay with the vehicle they were issued with.
- 18:00 They'd come down and they'd talk about different things like that but other than that we didn't see it or hear it.
- What would they tell you, the drivers?**
- Oh they'd tell you that you know we had to go up to the Hill 355 or something like that, or take ammunition up to here or water to somewhere else, things like that.
- And**
- 18:30 **what was your opinion through the period and time about Communism?**
- I didn't, I never even gave it a thought to be honest. We just knew that Communism wasn't right for us and that is about all. I couldn't say anything about that.
- And so tell us about the rumours about**
- 19:00 **armistice, before it was signed like peace, like were there times when people would discuss and say oh it's about the end, what was that like?**
- Yeah they used to discuss it. Blokes in the tent would hear something it was going to stop say Friday night but we couldn't hear or do anything or see anything about it. It was just
- 19:30 only rumours that you heard.
- And so tell us about the actual war end, how did you feel about it, peace coming?**
- Glad I didn't have to go anywhere near the front line. We were pleased
- 20:00 that it had stopped and there was no more killing. We lost a fair number of people there. 400 odd I think it was. I can't think of anything more.
- How long all up did you have to stay stationed in Korea after the armistice?**
- Well the armistice was in July. We stayed there until
- 20:30 January. I believe 3 Battalion was the last battalion to come home. They came home in '54, no not, yeah I think it was the end of '54 they came home. I think they were the last battalion out of there.
- So what were you doing for this period where there was an armistice but you were still there in Korea?**
- We still had the vehicles
- 21:00 to service and repair. There was no let up in that.
- Was it as busy as it had been before?**
- Not as busy. We still had plenty of work to do though and at that time, towards the end of January
- 21:30 they were starting to bring permanent Nissen huts for the people. The cook house, mess hall was a Nissen hut and some of the, I think the orderly room and the something else and they were just going to start on the lines and give us the Nissen huts to live in but I didn't see it.
- And what about your time off in this period had it changed?**

22:00 No, no. We used to get a bit of time off Sundays, or we'd get Sundays off. Have a look around the place. We had two Jeeps we used to go, just look around the area close to the camp. Go down to Seoul, went down to Seoul one Sunday.

22:30 Coming back the MPs got me for speeding. I was just past the sign, 'such and such MP company, thank you for your cooperation'. When I got the ticket, he said, "Your commanding general will talk to you about this." I never heard anything more about it.

Well what happened to you if you got a speeding ticket?

Probably get

23:00 charged or given a couple of extra duties or something like that.

Was there any fine or monetary penalty?

No not as far as I know. None of our chaps with us didn't get any, any fines.

Did you get into any sports at all in that period?

I didn't but they had, they had football field opposite us.

23:30 The Poms used to use it a lot playing soccer.

Tell us about being taken to Japan. Like you told us a bit briefly but tell us about that leave in Tokyo. Did you go out and party at all, go drinking?

Yeah we did, done a lot of that.

24:00 I went to, we had, one time we had an Ethiopian or Kenyan, a Yank, a Kiwi and myself all at one table drinking. I ended up being good friends with a lot of them. Probably all the

24:30 Kenyans or Ethiopians are dead by now.

What were they telling you about their homeland?

You couldn't understand them. You couldn't understand them, you just had to say, "Yeah yeah, drink up, drink up."

Did they get pissed?

Oh I suppose they did. We never seen them, we used to leave about 11 o'clock and get back to the camp. In time to get out

25:00 bedding otherwise they wouldn't, they'd shut up the Q store and you'd just have a mattress on your bed.

What beers were you getting into there? What beers were you drinking?

Kiran. I can't think of the other one.

25:30 No can't think of the name of it?

And were you meeting any of the local girls there?

Yes. Embarrassing that is.

Why is it embarrassing?

The young lady behind you for a start.

Oh she'll put her hands on her ears. Oh, she's actually going to the toilet anyway.

26:00 Yeah. We used to get the girls and go into the hotel and stay the night. Shack up with them. Got there one night and all of a sudden the place started to shake like anything. I said, "What's that?" She said, "It's an earthquake somewhere." I thought the pub was going to fall down on us.

26:30 There was what's-a-name, we used to do a bit of that.

So what were the girls like?

Well I think they all had their mother and fathers in the Hiroshima - got killed in the Hiroshima bombing. It seemed to be the main thing and you'd sort

27:00 of make her feel sad or feel a bit, you want to do something for them.

So they'd talk about it, Hiroshima killing their families?

Oh yeah. Most of them would tell you that, I don't think half of them had been out of Tokyo.

So it was a bit of story that was told to

27:30 **get sympathy was it?**

Yeah, yeah that's the word, sympathy.

And so what would they want if they told you these kind of stories?

Oh a lot of them shack up for a thousand yen or two thousand yen or something like that.

Did you get to know any girls in particular for a while?

Not there, down at Hiro I did.

28:00 One bloke he, I can't think of her name now, he tried to get her anyhow and she wasn't going to have anything to do with him. She was one of the mess girls, she used to serve us our meal and this bloke apparently he insulted her and after that

28:30 she sort of, I said something and he wouldn't sit at the table with me any more. "Can I have another table?" So the other girls would serve him.

What was she like? Did you have a bit of a relationship with her?

No, no relationship, just talk, good friends, good friends.

I'm just curious to know what their mannerism

29:00 **was like, were they sweet or what would they say to you?**

I can't remember it all now. They were there to be picked up, they knew you had, the Yanks first, Australian,

29:30 Kiwis and then the Poms and it sort of went like that. The Yanks got the most money we had the second best and then the others had lower than what we did.

And just a final question was it a bit of education for you?

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Okay, just tell us about waiting

30:00 **to come home like you mentioned a story about having to wait what was that again?**

We got down to Hiro and we were put into this Nissen hut and we had to stay in the camp. One week you'd go for route march in the morning

30:30 sometimes they took us down to a beach front where there was a beach town where there was a school and we used to play with these Japanese kids there. And then in the afternoon they give you all these pictures, a picture with special news from Australia, the Queen in Tonga, the Queen in Fiji, New Zealand, Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra and all that. And somebody yelled out "Get that dirty harlot off the -

31:00 off the screen and get the plane, give us back our plane and let's get home!" I thought, "Oh God! We'll be marching round the what's-a-name." There was some infantry officers were sitting up the front and nobody took any notice of it.

Was it definitely the case that the Qantas planes were - ?

Yeah, yeah.

How did you know this was the case?

Well there was nobody going out.

31:30 We asked them why. And they said, "The reason you're staying here," he said, "You'll be going home on a boat when a boat comes up." And we had to wait then until the New Australia took one battalion to Pusan and then they came over to Kure, I don't know whether they had to drop any people there but then we all went down and got on the boat.

32:00 But in the camp, when we were in the camp there was something, people were that bored and that they used to get into a lot of trouble. They'd take their AB83s which were record books, they used to take that down and they'd hock it. And this bloke, particular bloke, he was a corporal, he hocked,

32:30 hocked it and they came down and they said who, done a search of his gear and he had a chrome bayonet in there. A chrome bayonet was only supposed to be for the guards, people on ceremonial guards anyhow he got busted from corporal to private. And there was others that got busted down, one bloke from a sergeant down to a private.

33:00 One bloke was there and he was still under the provos and when we got on, we were on the boat and we yelled out to him, he's down there and the provos were trying to get him on, he'd push his arms right out here and then he'd give us a big wave and we'd all yell, "Good on ya so and so!" And he got on the

boat and that was it.

- 33:30 But we used to get out now and again, we used to have to do escorts. There was a Canadian transport company with Japanese drivers and a corporal and a couple of privates used to go down as escorts on the trucks, down to Iwakuni
- 34:00 and other places. On the way down they stopped at Hiroshima where that big shrine is now, where the atom bomb was. Everybody's, if you go into a bar everybody's mother and father was killed in that. I nearly lost my hooks there one time I
- 34:30 when we were going over to the Island of Shikoku, instead of going back to camp I stayed in Kure, in one of the pubs and then come out and met my mate, the other two mates were going with us. And they said, "What the hell did you get up to last night?" I said, "Nothing." I said, "Why?" He said, "The RSM's after you, he's going to kill you when he gets you." So I had that hanging over my head all
- 35:00 my leave. And as soon as I got back they said, "You're under close arrest. Go and get your blankets and stay in your hut." So next morning we got to give the blankets back and we go on parade and yelled out my name and said, "You're stood under close arrest." And he, I was just about to go, I went in the RSM's office
- 35:30 and he said, "I'll going to hang your hooks to the wall there." And one of our blokes come in and said, "Excuse me, Sir." He said, "He has done nothing," he said, "Remember your -" oh the sergeant anyhow, he said Sergeant so and so gave him that leave ticket. I had one, I didn't know it at the time, I had one from 4 o'clock in the afternoon until 12 o'clock at night
- 36:00 and the other one for the eight days. And this bloke it was, came in he was going home on compassionate leave and he just gave him, the sergeant gave him my leave pass to save making out another one and this bloke, this other corporal he knew about it
- 36:30 and he come in and said, "It wasn't him," he said it was so and so. And this bloke, the sergeant he got kicked out Japan and was sent to Philippines, transport officer there for the planes. But boy it was a go for a while there. He just walked through the gate and threw the pass and said, "My name's Burrows. I'm not paying
- 37:00 that taxi." I didn't have to pay him and it was very, very close though. Instead of being a what's-a-name, instead of being outside, I'd have been inside the boob.

Well tell us about finishing up in Japan and then coming back to Australia?

Well we,

- 37:30 oh there's another little bit of a story about where we were in Japan. We had a war graves chap with us, he came over on the plane, the same plane as we came over on, he was going home and for some reason or other he shot himself
- 38:00 and he was reading a book, The Day I Die. And we weren't allowed to go near our quarters for half a day anyhow until they fixed everything up. Then when -

Did you notice anything about his mannerism in the lead up to this?

No, nobody knew anything about it. No, nobody was what's-a-name, knew anything. We didn't even know where he got the pistol from.

- 38:30 **Where you told anything in the aftermath of it?**

No, no. They kept it all hush hush. I was getting near the time to come home too. They just took us by truck, bus at least from Hiro down to Kure where we got on the New Australia. We went over to Pusan we picked up 2 Battalion

- 39:00 and we came home. Straight down from Pusan around north New Guinea, East New Guinea at least and down to Brisbane. We were anchored out in Moreton Bay. And we had another RAEME bloke that was with the battalion, he was coming home compassionate wise
- 39:30 and he, he'd hadn't had enough time in Korea and he had six cartons of cigarettes and they took some off him and they were going to charge him tax on the other ones and he was going off his brain about it. We couldn't help but laugh and we got out to Rouge and it came in and docked at
- 40:00 Brett's Wharf. We got off and we all went our own way and had to go out to Enoggera, Urunga at least to get the rest of our gear.

We better just stop there because we're close to the end of the tape.

- 00:35 I had leave and I went back to the workshops at Bulimba. Nothing directly happened until January of 1955. I was posted to 6th Military District at Darwin.
- 01:00 Did I say '65 or '54? '54, '55 I was posted to Darwin and there was a warrant officer, a sergeant and myself. There was about ten of us nothing, we used to have to be gunners up there.
- 01:30 We did royal salutes and things like that. They had four 25 pounders, four Jeeps, they didn't have enough artillery men so we all had to be artillery men for the day. One of the salutes we did was for the first Italian warship to enter Australian waters. We fired 21 guns and they fired 22.
- 02:00 That used to go on a fair bit. That was down in the Governors - the Northern Territory Administration Office down near there on the Esplanade.

And what did you have to do to fire the guns?

Just pull them, press something as far as I can remember.

What did you fire them at?

They were only blank shells. Just fire them in mid air.

- 02:30 Do you know the end of the Esplanade up near the - ? Well they used to have the guns there and point them out to sea. This used to happen like Queen's Birthday, things like that. I forget what parliament it was. It was the opening of the Northern Territory Parliament by
- 03:00 Field Marshal Slim. He came up there and done the opening, we had a guard of honour for him.

What did these guns sound like when you fired them?

Boom Boom. Well you had four of them and they had to go at a certain time and the artillery men were behind you

- 03:30 and he'd say fire and they just fired. And we must have done about five or six of them while I was there.

Would they shake or make the ground shake?

No, no, nothing like that.

And what sort of things were you working on in Darwin?

In Darwin we were working on old Jeeps, old Internationals.

- 04:00 While I was there they got four replacement Jeeps and four new trucks but they had to go down to Alice Springs to get them so the transport people and a couple of RAEME people went down and got them. What was that turn out? Oh yeah while I was there they had a request come up from Canberra
- 04:30 for two men to go down to Humpty Doo to frighten the geese away. He used to be an interviewer too on children's. Anyhow they had the rice paddocks at Humpty Doo and the geese were feeding on them so they sent two blokes down there on a truck and they set up camp and instead
- 05:00 of, I mean they went through the amount of ammunition in a week that they should have over a couple of months and it wasn't doing any good. There was about three, three maybe four lots of people went down there and stayed for a week and after that they just said it was getting too costly for them and they stopped it. We had,
- 05:30 one time there we had ten navel vessels for the Australian, British and American doing a South East Asian exercise and they were all in the harbour at the one time. And they were in Smith Street at a pub there and there was approximately 10,000 sailors and
- 06:00 they were just getting the bottles of beer and when they finished throw them over their neck, over their shoulder and they were all busting off on the ground. So the shore patrols come along, cut off both ends of the town, got the council dump trucks and made them swab the decks. They had to clean up all their mess.

And how big was the army base in Darwin at the

- 06:30 **time?**

At that time it wasn't very big at all. I think it was close to say, you could safely say about 150 men. We had three parts. We had Larrakeyah, East Point and Frances Bay. Frances Bay was the ammunition area. East Point was the artillery area and Larrakeyah was

- 07:00 the main army base altogether, plenty of space there when we were there. We had some funny things happen, two with snakes. We had an engineer, a corporal called 'Genial' George and he had this dog Paddles, and he'd even booked a seat on the plane for Paddles to come home.
- 07:30 But one night there, there was a hell of a commotion and you could hear this dog whimpering and he

went down there and there was a python, it got the dog, strangling it. And he was there "Come on, Paddles! Come on Paddles! Get into it Paddles! Come on, get him off you Paddles!" And somebody says, "Get a pick hammer and knock him on the head." So he got a pick hammer and

- 08:00 knocked the python on the head and away it went. But the funniest one was a certain captain and his wife were there, in the married quarters. And she went to the toilet and there was a python in the toilet and she ended up running down the road with her pants around her legs.

Was Paddles okay?

Paddles was

- 08:30 all right, yeah. He ended up coming to Queensland in a box. You know in a proper box for carting animals around in. This Genial George used to be always on the grog and we used to have a monthly parade and he'd get up about 5 o'clock in the morning, was his clothes, iron them dry, iron his

- 09:00 Engineers – his Northern Territory badge and his chevrons onto his shirt with Tarzan strip.

What kind of a bloke was he?

Oh what kind of a bloke was he? He knew everything, had done everything. He was an electrician, knew his job though.

- 09:30 We went to, we used to go to Tiwi Island, Melville Island and pick up the natives. We'd get about 30 natives and take them back to the camp. They used to stink when they come from the Island. Then we used to take them back again after a month or two months, or three months I think it was. And

- 10:00 the back of the boat would be crammed with bags of sugar and this particular time that I was on, Captain Becharia was the paying officer and he paid them all and before he paid the last one they were up on the top deck playing cards. All the money was going. He made them give back all the money, he counted all of it, it was the right amount.

- 10:30 And he said to me, "What have you got I can fingerprint them with?" I said, "I've got nothing Sir. There will probably be some red lead on here." "That will do." So we got the red lead and we fingerprinted them all and he wouldn't allow them the money until we were right near Bathurst Island. And they all got off, straight away underneath the trees the cards were out again. You know, not

- 11:00 say hello to Mum or how are your kids or anything like that, just heading to the cards.

What were they, why were you picking them up and what were they doing with the island?

They used to be like doing, or working in the kitchen, cleaning the kitchen stuff, general duties around the camp.

What were they like?

They were nice guys really, once you got to know them.

- 11:30 They used to, used to always be St Mary's Football Club they used to play for them in their bare feet.

Were they good?

Yeah they were very good. We went back there and they in '93 we went over there, I better start at the other end first. I got married

- 12:00 up there. I met my wife, a friend of mine, first of all we had a Sergeants' Subject Day at B [trade] and C [military law] out at East Point and I got to know this chap and he said, "Do you want to go to the ball with a girl," and I said, "Oh yeah." This was after we'd met him out there. And they

- 12:30 came down and I met the wife, she was working in the barracks here, barracks at the Northern Territory Administration. So I met her and after that we went to the ball and then we got engaged, got married up there. Went down the Mataranka for our honeymoon, came back and there was not a place open in Darwin to get anything for tea. Even the old pie shop behind the, now here we

- 13:00 go, behind the pub in town wasn't there. So we found a tin of something and had that. My first child was born up there. I was on duty on the Friday night and rang at twenty five past six and they said, "Oh she's in labour, ring back in a little while." So I rang up, rang

- 13:30 back and she said, "You've got a boy." "Okay, can I come and see." "Yeah, righto." So I went over and saw the captain and he said, "Yeah, you can go." I went over and I forgot to take my bayonet off and I walked into the hospital with my bayonet on.

What was it like seeing your son?

Lovely, yeah good. He's got two shops of his own now.

- 14:00 **And what was it about Margaret that made you want to have a relationship with her when you first met her?**

Barbara?

Barbara.

Margaret, the only Margaret, I was thinking of the Margaret Mary vessel.

Sorry, Barbara.

Oh no we just seemed to get on well

14:30 together and everything went off all right.

How did you, you know with you working and this sort of thing, how did you manage to see each other and develop a relationship?

Well we knocked off at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. We'd start at eight and knocked off at four and after that between eight, no between 4 o'clock in the afternoon and 8 o'clock the next morning was your own time, you could do what you like,

15:00 so to speak. That's how it really come about. There used to be, well there was the Star picture show in town, the RAAF had a picture show and we had a picture show. I used to take her to the army pictures and then back into Marina House which was good. Then when we got married we got

15:30 an old army hut out at East Point, not East Point, Nightcliff. And we were there for a while and then we had to get out of there for some reason and we went, there was a lady down end of Daly Street somewhere, I can't remember where it is now. And then we got married quarters

16:00 which was, the quarters we got was a nine room flat, it was a big flat and there was nine rooms in ours with 11 sinks and one shower. There were two sinks in the dining room and two sinks in the bedroom I think it was.

16:30 And then they gave us a married quarter down in Close Street, we stayed there until we left there in 57, June 57. No, I think it was June 57, yeah it would be.

And where did you go then?

We came, we went by plane down to Adelaide, I had leave there and then we came up here, I had

17:00 more leave. And then I was posted over to 11 National Service Battalion at Wacol but the time I took to come from Darwin to here to there was the posting had changed and I wasn't wanted there. So they sent me down to the transport compound and we worked down there.

I might just ask you a few more questions about some of the Aboriginal people that you had working on the - ?

Yeah.

17:30 **How was this kind of work organised to, how did they get the job in a sense?**

Well they, as far as I know they used to say we want 30 and they'd send over I suppose it would be through the church, we want 30 men or 20 men or whatever it is and I think that was how they get them.

18:00 They all liked doing it, getting away from the wives, you know and the kids and then they come over here, they come over to the mainland and they had a, they used to have a good time over here. Especially like with the football, they played football.

And how were they treated in general by the Australian Army?

They were treated good, yeah. When they come over they got an issue of shorts and army

18:30 shirts and shorts. They used to wear them around the place. They were treated pretty well I think, they used to get their meals and all that.

Would they have their meals separately?

Yeah, separately to us, yeah.

And did you guys have any kind of social interaction?

Not really. They weren't

19:00 allowed in the canteen, they had to go to another place to get stuff, like we had the wet canteen and they weren't allowed in there. But they used to get bags, bags of sugar to take home with them.

Why would they want sugar?

I don't know. The back of the boat you could just say it was nearly like that. It had that

19:30 much sugar in it.

And how much English would they?

They could talk English when they want to. Very much. I did have, I was driving for a Parish down here when I finished the army and I had to go out the airport and pick about

20:00 ten of them up. They were going through to Washington, they stayed up at the monastery, the monastery's all gone now but they stayed there and then I took them back to the plane. We went around, got to Darwin the second time we booked a flight to Melville Island and one

20:30 bloke his name was 'Motorbike', and I was in the camp one night and my baby on my shoulder I couldn't burp him and I was patting him away and next thing this Motorbike came in and said, "Hello corporal," and I just about threw him over my shoulder. We had morning tea with the ladies there and I mentioned Motorbike but apparently he's dead - Motorbike - Motorbike - Motorbike, they don't talk much about

21:00 the dead though. If you don't know, you can't help to ask.

When did you hear the news that you might be going overseas to Malaya?

To Malaya. I was, I come back to Bulimba and then they sent me over to Maianbar. I had a year at Maianbar then I had a

21:30 year at Banyo and I was in my second half of the second year, first half of the second year and an officer from Vic Barracks rang me down there and said, "Do you want to go to Malaya for a couple of years?" I said, "Oh yeah." I said, "Can I take my - ?" He said, "Yes, yeah, yeah." So I came home and said, "We're going to Malaya." So we

22:00 packed up all our things and rented the house out and away we went.

What did Barbara think about it all?

Well she didn't mind. I told her she'd have a couple of servants while she's over there. We -

How many kids did you have?

Four. I had Phillip in Darwin, Stephen

22:30 when I was down at Canungra, Barry at Bulimba, Christopher at Maianbar. That's what I used to say to my wife when she was pregnant - when I get a posting I used to say "Are you pregnant?"

Just tell me quickly about some of the things you were doing at Canungra?

At Canungra. When I got there well I had, the quartermaster,

23:00 the quartermaster sergeant came down and said to build a cage around the certain bay in our repair place. And we had two trucks with spare parts in the back of them so I had to build this cage and then we

23:30 got all the parts out, stack them in little piles, found out which is which, went through the part numbers. Some we had to ring up ordnance at J Thorne when they were there and get the part numbers. And we got everything but a couple of nuts belonging to some sort of truck. Yeah the quartermaster

24:00 sergeant he kept at it and at it until he got it right, we got all the things right. Then I made sergeant while I was down there and the first thing I had to do was to go over to, the same night, I had to go over and get the CO's car. He'd smashed it up over near Beaudesert.

What sort of training was going on at Canungra at the time?

At that

24:30 time there was training going on for Malaya. We didn't have to do any training the only had to do was we went on a forced route march one day, that was about all. We had a sad moment down there once, there was some CMF people down there and

25:00 a young lad got drowned. So with the help of a local police we had to drag the part where we thought he was, where the body was. Anyhow he got sick of us trying to do this and he rang up Beaudesert and got a boat and a grappling hook and they found him after about ten minutes. He was gone.

How did he

25:30 **drown?**

He drowned yeah.

How?

Well he had too much pack and that on. You know all of his equipment was, you know he was only

supposed to go in and come up again or something like that.

Was there any repercussions?

No. No. We had a funny one. The colonel went through the bear pit and he

26:00 used to have to come along, up onto a thing about so high and jump over the top of it and in to this pool of water there. We used to call it the bear pit, it used to stink like anything. And the CO went over it and he broke his leg. He came, the quartermaster came down and said

26:30 "Can you get the seat of the Jeep and put it out to one side so the CO can put his leg up." So we found a place and one of us sat in it and put our leg out and yeah we'll put it there, we drilled a couple of holes in it, he was satisfied.

What did you know about what was going on in Malaya at the time?

Nothing. I wasn't, it didn't bother me. It was just something

27:00 that was there, that we heard about but nothing, nothing you could.

What had you heard?

Oh we heard there were Communists there and they were still after them. Mostly what people talked about was what they did and outside of the, in their spare time.

27:30 **What kind of stories did they tell you?**

Oh just when you get there you want to go to this place and that place, go to Singapore, go to Port Dickson, go to Kuala Lumpur don't miss out on those things. I was quite happy when I got a posting there. Our third son he went to,

28:00 they had a kindergarten there. The two big boys they went to the Mountbatten School. They were picked up of a morning and were brought home for dinner and then taken back after dinner or after your lunch to school again, they'd be back home again by about 3 o'clock. My biggest boy didn't know how to tell the time

28:30 and he - when he got over there the second one, one of the first lessons he had was telling the time. So it was a bit of a fight on the way with that.

What was the Mountbatten School like?

Very good.

What kind of a school was it?

It was run by the Brits. Lots of the things, it was all together different to Australian teaching. More British style teaching then what

29:00 they got here.

How well did the boys enjoy it?

Oh they lapped it up. You give them five Malay dollars each and they'd go into these little toy shops and they'd come out you know with a great pile of stuff. Everything would be like 25 cents each or something like that and

29:30 they used to have a ball. See their first Christmas there we got them bikes. And the youngest Chris he got a, we got him a scooter, it was an exact replica of the Vesper scooters. They were very, two training wheels at the side so he had a good time with that.

30:00 **And what sort of, like how did they fit in with any of the local culture or get to?**

Local culture. Well there was a thing called Ramadan. In the Ramadan we heard about this so we went down to the place. And there were hundreds, believe me hundreds of buses there, people from all over Malaya.

30:30 And we had Bill, Stephen, Barry and Chris, four of us. And all of a sudden we find out we've only got three of them. Stephen is lost, we'd last seen him down there right. We went, I went back and couldn't find him and the pay master that we had there he said, "Are you looking for one of your sons?" He said, "He's

31:00 back down there a bit." Anyhow we went back further and found him. He was just standing there in the same place that we'd left him. He was glad to see us and we were glad to see him.

And what was the Ramadan celebrations like?

It's oh, it was, I can't remember much of it. All that I can, what I can remember about it they don't eat in daylight hours, they don't smoke

31:30 and they've got Muslim police that go around and check on them. And you always see, you hear it on the radio of such and such being arrested for doing so and so during Ramadan. It was an eye-opener

32:00 to see so many people at the one place at the one time though.

And what did your wife think of life in Malaya?

As far as I know she liked it. No she liked it. In the beginning she had two servants, one was a - oh they are supposed to do, both be doing things around the house, housemaids. And

32:30 the first time I went up on border operations to, we went to a place called Sik in Kedah and while we were there they changed their minds about anyone under the second lieutenant having two armours, and so they took them off, took one off us and gave it to some lieutenant. We had a gardener who used to come around. We had,

33:00 yeah, barber used to come around every second fortnight he used to cut my hair. We had the boot boy he used to polish the boots each night.

What were the married quarters like in Malaya?

They were brick or stucco, put stucco over them I think. You had, downstairs you had a dining room,

33:30 a lounge room, a dining room, a kitchen and toilet. I think and upstairs you had two bedrooms down that end, a shower recess, the shower and then the main bedroom and on the other side it was turned over. The main bedrooms were at each end then.

And what kind of work where you doing in Malaya?

In Malaya we were fixing vehicles. When we went out to the bush we had to do infantry work.

Well tell me about the times when you had to go out to the bush?

Well they just say the first time was, they said, "Right we're going to have an air portal exercise,"

34:30 and you, you and you are going. And they said to me that I would go, I had to go and so many of my craftsmen had to come with us. The first time we went, we went to Seremban by truck down to Singapore by train and

35:00 by British aircraft up to a place called Kuantan. Now Kuantan is approximately in line with the sinking of the Renown and another British ship at the beginning of the war. And it was November, it was in November and I went down

35:30 to the British, the British had a canteen next to us and we were, a lot of us were like on war standing and they were on peace standing. And we heard that Kennedy had got killed. It didn't make any difference to us but we heard it. And

36:00 we spent about a week or so in the bush there and then at 3 o'clock one morning they said, "Righto we're going back to camp." There was only one thing wrong, it was raining like anything. They made us walk or march down to the trucks and we must have spent about an hour in the rain, standing around waiting to get on the trucks. And we got on the trucks and we had to have

36:30 all the flaps down because the rain was coming in, in all directions. And it was hot and there was nothing you could do about it. Anyway they brought from Kuantan back to Terendak camp where we immediately got home as quick as we could and got changed, next day back to work again.

And why did they make you do this sort of?

Well

37:00 just part of the job. It would, you had to have a certain element of support. We'd support them with their vehicles or if anybody else's vehicles got there. Just part of our training with the battalion.

And as sort of infantry members what sort of weapons did you carry with you?

We had,

37:30 we had Owen guns, we had sterling guns and we had Brent guns and .303 rifles. We had one chap I think it was the first time I went up to Sik. First time, this was another exercise we went on, we went as far as Ipoh on one and

38:00 stayed there the night and then onto Sik the next day. Sik is up like Butterworth, Gurun and then into Sik. And then where the battalion was doing their border patrol was up like where we turned off they went straight ahead

38:30 and up to the, near the Thai border, up past a place called Alor Star. And they were up there and one of the officers was going up the hill and he must have put his Owen gun down too hard and he got shot and the bullet went around in his head. He had a tin plate in his head, or steel plate in his head.

Anyhow,

- 39:00 he was buried in Terendak camp. We had to take the band down to Butterworth Railway Station and send them back. They done the funeral and all that then came back again. We had to, if we wanted anything in a hurry or wanted something we couldn't do we used to take it down to the, to a workshop on Penang
- 39:30 Island. We used to do a bit of smuggling there. Somebody would buy something and when you come across you had to go through customs and some bloke bought a typewriter and it just happened to be in a green case. So we put it down, we ripped the, not ripped took the middle seat out of the Land Rover and put this in its place
- 40:00 and he came around and inspected it all, "Okay, you can go."

We'll just pause there because we're at the end of the tape.

Tape 7

- 00:40 **Okay, just to clear it up where you were exactly, what places were you stationed at you time in Malaya?**

At Malaya we were stationed at Terendak camp. We'd done

- 01:00 a couple of trips to Singapore. The first one we did at Singapore, then from Singapore to Kuantan and Kuantan back to Melaka. Other times we went, we went from Melaka, Ipoh to Sik and Kedah. We were at Sik while the battalions were up on the border. We were there for
- 01:30 support for them. They used to have an armoured carriage on the train, a little armoured car thing and they wanted to put a, they wanted to see if they could get a water wagon in it and we couldn't do anything about it so they scrapped it,
- 02:00 continued getting the water by truck the other way. We used to go down to Port Dickson for grenade throwing. I can't think of the name, there is a little place outside of Melaka that we used to go, we went
- 02:30 before we went to Borneo. They put on a real war with us we had planes dropping, firing 40 millimetre cannons and 303's, a real war, a real beat up sort of thing. And they said that's what you can expect over there but apparently we didn't see any of it, or hear of any of it.
- 03:00 When we went to Borneo we were taken by truck to Seremban Station, and went down to Singapore by train. Got onto the boat, Her Majesty's Troopship Aubrey which we found out was just been an old
- 03:30 Sarawak Steamship Company logging vessel. They brought Ghurkhas back and we went over on the boat. We got to Kooching and there was vehicle there to take us through to Kooching River I think it was. And then you had to catch a ferry to go across to the other side, these
- 04:00 vehicles weren't allowed to go across. So we got out and got on the ferry and we just sat around until our vehicles came. They took us up to Bau. When we got there, the RSM called all the sergeants to one side and told us that
- 04:30 a couple of diggers - a digger and a sergeant had been killed that day. It was Reno Wieland and he, I had a tape from his wife there to give him but I ended up giving it to the RSM to let him sort it out. We stayed there for about three to four months
- 05:00 and then we come back to Malaya again.

What were you doing out there mainly, in Borneo?

In Borneo, fixing the vehicles. They are both dead now, I can say what I like. Kapyong Night, which is the 24th of April, we invite the officers into our mess. And

- 05:30 I was sitting there having a drink and the CO come up and tapped me on the shoulder and he said, "Hey young fella, I got one of your vehicles up at Kerokong today." He said, "It's got a broken spring, what are you going to do about it?" I said, "I'll send somebody up there to change it." Anyhow the RSM heard me talking about work to the CO, and he come up as soon as he walked off and he said, "Don't you ever talk to my CO in my mess again about
- 06:00 work." I thought to myself, oh blow you I'm not staying here any more so I went off and went to bed. And then he come rushing down the corridor or the verandah at least, and he said, "Kapyong photo, Kapyong photo," so I pulled the sheets over my head and went to sleep. I had a little,
- 06:30 there was a young boy used to do our boots and clean our rooms out and I was back here for a few years and in the army newspaper it said that he was looking for me. The same day I got the army

newspaper, Major

07:00 Clive Bryant, Major Bryant rang me up, he was the head of finance in RAEME down south. He said, "Hey did you read the paper today?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well that bloke's been looking for you." "Okay." So I ended up writing to him. We've been writing and sending cards to each other each year since.

Why did he want to find you?

Hey?

07:30 **Why did he want to find you?**

Well apparently I can't remember but when he was a lad I either gave him a bike or repaired a bike for him, I don't know what it was and he just wanted to be friendly sort of thing. He sends us Christmas cards each year and we send things back to him. Like he rang one, he rang,

08:00 he wrote one time when his daughter wanted an Australian animal t-shirt. I got her a t-shirt I forget what was on it now. He sent me back a plaque, 1 Division Borneo.

What was your impression of the local people in Borneo?

Well

08:30 the ones that I had to deal with. Soon after we got there the quartermaster said to me to go to Kooching to this Chinese bloke's place and have a look at some refrigerators. And while we were there we were racing around this air conditioned

09:00 opal, smoking big fat cigars this Chinese gave us. And next thing we were going up the road and passed this car and the RSM's in, passed this army truck and the RSM was in the back of it. When we got back there he tore strips off us. We had a good laugh over it afterwards, the other warrant officer, caterer and myself. But people we had to deal with were

09:30 all right. Once our main worry at Bau was keeping up the water supply to the camp. There was an old diesel engine there that kept breaking down, in the end it gave up the ghost altogether and we had to go into town and see the people at the - I forget now -

10:00 see someone at the Department of Works in town and they didn't have a pump at the time so we ended up getting two little Briggs and Stratton, one to put down near the water and the other one to push it up to the camp. And we had to keep an eye on this big water tank to see that it wasn't empty at any time. It got down to about half full, it went back down and started the engines up again.

10:30 The two little Briggs and Stratton went bung and we ended up getting a sewerage pump which was, they reckoned it was a sewerage pump so we ended up getting that and we used that for the rest of our time there. It done the job.

And was your wife and kids with you here?

No, no. They were still back in Malaya.

Why wouldn't

11:00 **they let them go?**

No, no, no. No wives went over there.

How close were you to the front of the operations?

The operations we were, well the first one was about half an hours drive up the road and the other three places I can't, Bukit Nukel and something else, I can't remember what they are now but they used to be by helicopter.

11:30 **What were you hearing about what was going on out there?**

Oh they'd give us, they were telling us for instance the time that Lieutenant Beale got his military crosses out of the - they waited for these Indonesians to come up the river and when they got close to them they shot them,

12:00 shot them all up and he got the military cross for. They told us, they kept telling us things like that. Or the, the week after the Sergeant Whelan got it, Sergeant Vella went out and the same thing happened to him. What happened to both of them they passed one of their diggers to get around the front of them on this track and they both struck a mine,

12:30 when they took their feet off the track.

Where you told to keep these things secret because of the situation?

No not really. No we had no secrecies from the families and that. No I can't remember.

13:00 All they knew that we were going to Borneo or we were going up on border exercises, or we're going out in the bush to do an exercise.

I mean the confrontations with the Indonesians when you'd hear stories about fighting?

Yeah they'd give us a briefing. We used to get briefings every now and then. We had a, while we were in

13:30 Borneo, the sergeant armour, a chap by the name of Gordon Clarke, he's dead now. The 2IC [Second in Command] of the battalion, Major Argent called him up to his office and he said, "How would you like to change your badge over to RAEME Infantry?" He said, "Why?" He said, "If you do I'll give you a trip." And he says, "Yeah." So

14:00 he said, "How would you like to go back to Pusan?" He said, "As a representative of a battalion?" And he said, "Yes." And the RSM heard about it and he went off his rocker. The 2IC said, "I give the orders here, RSM, not you." Anyhow he went back to Terendak Camp got changed and all the rest of that in different clothing and went to Pusan for this

14:30 United Nations Ceremony they had at the Pusan Cemetery. Yeah poor fella he's dead, he died about three Anzac Days ago, I think it was.

In Borneo where there new vehicles that you were - ?

No the same vehicles that we had in Malaya. We had to take,

15:00 we had an LSM [Landing Ship Mechanised] or LST [Landing Ship Tank], whatever they call them, they used to drive the vehicles on them or they bring the vehicles on by crane. We come back on the, I can't think of the name but we came back after the battalion. We went down the Ghurkhas took over from us and we had to go down to the

15:30 Bau Airfield and stay there the night. Then we moved down to Kooching and they loaded the LSM or whatever it was there with all the vehicles. Then they unloaded them in Singapore, we drove up from Singapore to Melaka.

Tell us in the tropics generally were there particular problems which were coming up that you had to fix?

No

16:00 not necessarily. Only one that I know of, somebody had got some gas out of a jerry can an put in the vehicle and somehow a piece of plastic had got in with it and it would go for a couple of miles and stop. Go for a couple of mile, get out

16:30 and blow through the lines. Stop. Blow through the lines again. Stop. The RSM, it would have to be the RSM's truck and I'd have to be on it. I kept having to do it and he was going off his rocker.

Was there anything about the conditions that would affect the vehicles at all?

Oh sometimes the heat would give you a vapour lock but not too often,

17:00 depending on where they were going.

So tell us about finishing up in the Malaya area and coming home from war?

Well my fourth son went to hospital. I think he went there in August

17:30 and we had to wait, I was held back a month. And then he was supposed to have a spot on the lungs and they wouldn't allow him to come home until it had cleared up a bit. And so we just stayed for an extra month. We were all ready to go and this Land Rover arrived with a couple of diggers in said, "You're not going anywhere, you can go back to work now."

18:00 So I went back and the transport officer told me what it was all about. He later became a lieutenant general of the army.

What had happened?

Hey?

What had happened?

What happened? He had a spot on the lung and they wouldn't allow him to come home then.

18:30 We came home, plane from Melaka to Singapore and then a 707 from there to Perth. We were about a hundred miles off the Cocos Island and one of my sons said, "When are we going to stop for petrol?" And anyhow we got to Perth and then to Sydney and we stayed

19:00 in Kings Cross for the night at the army's expense. Then the next morning we were coming home and the kids were getting a bit restless so I took them up on top to watch at all the planes and next thing I see the wife running out. So we just, I raced downstairs with the four kids and we were just in time, the

last one was getting on as

19:30 the ramp was coming up at the back, so we just made it.

And tell us what kind of, where were you stationed after this when you came home?

I came home after that I was stationed at Bulimba but I was working at Peel Street. Then

20:00 I was only there for a while and the colonel rang, rang up the warrant officer and said he wanted to see us both down in his officer at 1 o'clock. So I went down there and he said, he went through a lot of rigmarole and showing me charts. And it didn't have anything to do with what he wanted to talk to me about. And he said, "I want you to go down to, go to trade repair and to take over the Department of Works at Eagle

20:30 Farm." So I went down there and one of the best jobs I ever had. And it lasted a while and then, then I had to go back to the workshop the day was a Friday afternoon and it was Friday that the, it was the day that HMAS Sydney was in Brisbane and they were

21:00 unloading vehicles onto a barge. Anyhow the barge got over all right to the Bulimba side and then the truck started going forward and six of them went into the drink. And somebody said, "You better get the hell out of here in a hurry, you'll be staying here all weekend." So I went home, on the weekend some of them had to stay at it. They drained all the oil out of them, gave them a bit of a wash down

21:30 and said to them leave it go to Monday now. So I had to repair them, start repairing them on Monday. But we still, I think they lasted apart from the service about another six years but in that time that had a lot of trouble with pipes and that busting from where they had been eaten by sea water.

And tell us about

22:00 **how you heard that there's a possibility that you might be going to Vietnam?**

We were, we were on an exercise up at Rockhampton one general troops workshop went up there and one Saturday afternoon the

22:30 CO called us all together and said, "This workshop is now been warned that it is the next workshop to go to Vietnam." I said, "Oh god I don't want to go," and he heard me. And in the afternoon he got me to drive him into town and he said, "Why don't you want to go there, you get war service and everything?" I said, "I've got that about five times now." And he said, "Yes, I've got it a few times." He was in Borneo up

23:00 in the north, Sabah. I said, "I've only just come back from Malaya a couple of years." And I said, "I reckon there's enough sergeants around to go there before me." "Alright." It wasn't long after that that I was warned that I'd be going to Vietnam. And we done, a sort of a

23:30 revision course at tactics out at Greenbank running and things like that. Getting blokes doing the fireman's carry but I wouldn't run, I walked everywhere. And I was up before the captain and he said, "Don't you want to get the two ribbons?" I said, "No." I said, "I've got three now, that's enough." And he said, "That's not a very good attitude."

24:00 I said, "Well I'm married," I said, "I think there's a lot of people to go before I do." Anyhow by the time I got back I was ready to go. And the chaplain in the orderly room that used to send us, and tell everybody you'd just go in on the Friday night, beep beep, beep beep, beep beep, "What's that for?" He says, "That's your posting." "What do you mean?" He said, "I can't tell you now you'll have to come in Monday morning and find out about it."

24:30 So I went in Monday morning and the lieutenant there said, "You've been posted away, Squadron 3 Cav [Cavalry] Regiment." So went out to -

How did you feel about the idea of going to Vietnam? Describe for us why you didn't want to go.

I just didn't want to. I thought

25:00 well there'd be about say there'd be two sergeants, maybe five at the most be out of Australian. I thought, "Well there's others that should go before I do." But I went, they just picked me and that was it.

How did

25:30 **your wife and your kids take the news?**

Well that was, very what's-a-name, it was a very hectic time. Oh that's right I'd done the thing out at Greenbank and I still had the bolt of my rifle and I had to get it back to Enoggera and I said, "What about giving it, what about

26:00 if I gave it to the," oh what do they call it, the MTO [Motor Transport Officer], the transit officer at

South Bulimba here that would be all right then. So I came back and I drove like a mad thing and my son said he never wanted to drive with me again, he told his mother. Anyhow I had to go down pick her up, go down and get the groceries, come back, get all our men, and

26:30 go to Wynnum Wharf to get a chap to drive them back and then into town. I went down to, got in we went down to Sydney and I stayed a fortnight there before anything happened. Going back to Greenbank before we finished, a night before we finished a day before we finished at least, we had to do a five mile, a nine mile hike. And

27:00 we went down the road and half way through it and a Land Rover came along and the bloke said, "Do you want a lift?" And we said, "Yeah," so I got in and three others, he picked three others up further up the road and we, when we got near the camp there was a sergeant there and he said, "You've all failed." "Oh that's all right by me." And he dobbed us all in. Anyhow that night we had

27:30 a barbeque and we were talking to this warrant officer and he said, "There's no way any of you can fail," he said, "You're all technical blokes and they want you over there as quick as they can get you." So and that's what happened. I got to Sydney and we waited around for a fortnight and this bloke that dobbed us in he come down on the Monday and was away to Vietnam on the Tuesday.

28:00 So we got there, we got to Saigon and then we went to -

Well what was your trip like? What was the flight like?

Well the flight was very good. It was a secret sort of thing. When we got to, they take you out, they took us out at night out to Mascot Aerodrome we jumped in plane and they stopped in Darwin and then we went to Saigon.

28:30 No we didn't stop in Darwin sorry we stopped in Singapore. I wanted to ring a mate of mine who was a priest, he was over in Terendak Camp. And I wanted to ring him and there were no phones in the transit area and I wanted to go outside to ring him and this Singapore guard wouldn't let me out. But we all went, we all went over

29:00 incognito. White shirt, army pants, army boots and socks carrying a slouch hat, so no-one knew who we were.

And what were you seeing of Saigon as you arrived?

Well at Saigon it was just the start of the Tet Offensive and there was burnt out

29:30 planes and damaged planes and damaged huts, like a war had been through it, which it had.

What effect did these sights have on your thinking?

We were thinking, "What are we getting into here?" But they got us out, they got us out pretty quick and we got to Nui Dat and they had a Land Rover there and went up

30:00 and went, took us to the LAD and we saw the warrant Officer there and he took me over to the colonel, Major Kelt, who was the boss of the cav and first thing he said, "Get rid of that slouch hat." Tankies don't like you wearing slouch hats, but they've got to, but they do now because they've got to wear them. And he was, he was a pretty good sort of an

30:30 officer. He later became a lieutenant general. I believe he died of Alzheimer's.

And so tell us about arriving in Nui Dat and your first day or first evening there?

First evening. We went, we had tea we came back and there was somehow the cavalry they

31:00 got the loan of some Yank tanks. There was something wrong with this one, I forget what was wrong with it but they had to lift the motor out and put it back in. And we ended up giving them a hand and it took until 3 o'clock in the morning. I can't think of the officer's name now but about 10 o'clock he went over to the officers' mess and got a carton of beer, cold beer and brought it over

31:30 and we were drinking beer and working at the same time. We did have, other than that it was just ordinary working time. We used to change the well we didn't, but give them a hand to change the tracks, the road wheels, sprockets,

32:00 we replaced engines, transmissions, final drives, the only thing that we couldn't do was when they got mined. I was there for a while and I can't remember exactly but sometime in the end of May I think, beginning of May, it could have been late

32:30 April they got the Australian task force to go up to a place called, they called Balmoral, Coral and Coogee and 3 Battalion was over at Balmoral, we were at Coral and we were reinforce them our 8

33:00 Squadron 3 Cav Regiment. We got mortared and rocket fire a few times. None of us got hurt there but our LAD, the armour and the LAD were coming back standing in the back of the track and they hit a mine or

- 33:30 blew a mine command detonated bomb and it blew the guts out of the back or out of the bottom of the carrier. And he was shot out and he got nine, nine compound fractures of one leg and so many of the other one and left him an inch short. He was medivac'd straight out. We never even seen him.
- 34:00 **Did you hear what happened to him?**
- Yeah, yeah.
- How would they tell you about that?**
- Generally the, generally the CO calls you together and tells you what happened.
- What was it like having your own men starting to be - ?**
- Knocked off?
- Yeah.**
- Oh you know it doesn't go down to well. And of course
- 34:30 you think being RAEME sort of thing you know nothing is going to happen to you, you shouldn't, nothing should happen to you but we found out later on we had more strife. At Balmoral one night one of the tracks weren't up and the chap, the sergeant that
- 35:00 was in it, he was one of three that was with us down at the personnel depot in Sydney. And he was medivac'd [Medical Evacuation] out and they sent me over a couple of days or a day or so later to have a look at the track to see what we could salvage of it. There wasn't much it had blown itself just about to pieces. It came through the bush and there's this RSM standing there with his hands on his shoulder
- 35:30 and he says, "It's a bit far forward for you isn't it, Sergeant Burrows?" And I said, "Vince Murdoch." And the RP [Regimental Police] sergeant said, "You don't call the RSM by his first name!" Yeah we had a good old chat and I've seen this little RP sergeant since, we have a laugh over it. But we got, we came back from there
- 36:00 I was one of the last carriers out there and this helicopter came in from 9 Squadron RAAF and it landed and he said, "Where can I find Colonel Dunstan?" And I said to him "He's over there." I said, "He's over there, Tom Ward." And he said, "You don't talk to officers by their first name." And I said, "Only if I went to school with them." And he said, "Who are you?" I said, "Les Burrows." He said
- 36:30 "Oh Les, yeah," rah rah rah, we were mates from then on. And one of my sons wanted a train set and I asked him if he could take me down to Vung Tau sometime. So he took me down but we couldn't get anything. And another time I asked him to go up to, I can't think of the place now,
- 37:00 to get a copy thing and he took me up there but we had to go down to Vung Tau first to get some wood and back to Nui Dat and had this big sprocket for the Centurion tank and put on it. I was sitting on top of it with an ammunition box on top of that going up. And then when we come back I was sitting on the ammunition box again and he had a young bloke that was not long in the squadron he was running him through the
- 37:30 ropes and he just went, one officer said, "Are we stop at Red Carpet." He said, "We just stopped at Red Carpet," and he put his thumb down and he turned this chopper just about on its side and I started to go out towards the door. I had to grab part of it to stop myself.
- Can you tell us about your role when you arrived, what was your exact role that you were, what were you meant to be fixing and working**
- 38:00 **on?**
- Fixing the 113s mainly. Well that was our job. We had four, four sections each one had a craftsman or a corporal with them. I got there, I was the sergeant and I
- 38:30 had mainly from then on I was doing the paperwork, getting the paperwork up to scratch, it hadn't been done for a long while. I was doing that
- What were the 113s exactly?**
- What were they?
- Yes.**
- They are armoured personnel carriers.
- What did they look like?**
- Like a box on wheels.
- 39:00 I can show you one if you like.
- No that's okay, just describe it for me?**

Well it's like that at the front and it's got a board, what they called a surfboard on it to make a wash wave when they go into the water. They can come along the land, down into rivers and that, across the rivers and away. And you can put this surfboard up

39:30 and it doesn't get into the engine or anything. You've got a driver on the left hand side, you've got behind him you've got a turret, with either a corporal or a sergeant with either a 50 cal [calibre] or a twin 30 cal or a mixture of both. And

40:00 they take up to four, sorry four, four people on each side, four troops. When they get to, if they had to do the Vietnamese they used to put about a dozen in. Make them stand up.

We'll just pause there because we're close to the end.

Tape 8

00:35 **Okay, I'll go back to when you first arrived in Vietnam and get you to describe what your first impressions of Nui Dat were?**

Well it looked like a big rubber plantation when you're coming in. There was all these, there were two runways

01:00 there. A lot of huts and things that you could see when you got down Larwood, there was very, very few huts, there were mainly all tents people had been living in. Towards the end when we would get, the last couple of months that I was there we were getting all

01:30 huts made for us. But it was a bit hard to get your bearings for a while you didn't know where you were, you soon got it though. The CO was, when I went over to him he was sitting down with papers everywhere and he wasn't too happy about me

02:00 having a slouch hat on.

And what was your tent like?

Tent was all sand bag ground. It had wooden pallets on the floor. It had a steel locker and a bed. Electricity in the tent

02:30 **What was the electricity powering?**

Just the lights, never had any plugs or anything to put, well some of them had plugs made and they could put their hi-fi [high fidelity stereo] gear on. You get plenty of them over there from the canteen service.

03:00 **And how would you describe the atmosphere at Nui Dat, what sort of - ?**

Well the people there were there to do a job. They just seemed to get on with it and didn't seem to worry about anything else.

03:30 **And what was, did you have a workshop?**

Yes

And what was the workshop made out of?

The workshop we had, we had a store room. The stores section of the LAD was a long shed, and then we had the section with three bays. The rest of it, it was out supposed to be hard

04:00 standing was nothing but rubble and stuff. When it rained it would just be a mud hole, especially when the carriers came in and started turning around in it, they used to stir it all up. But I believe after I left there they got concrete, concreted it all in.

04:30 And also I believe that when we left, when we pulled out of Nui Dat, they picked up the concrete and took that away too with them, the nogs [Vietnamese].

And what sort of equipment did you have, I don't know what it's called, for lifting cargo up and doing work like that?

We had a, we had a

05:00 113 fitter's vehicle which had a crane on one side and that did all the lifting for us. We used to be able to lift engines out, lift one side of the carrier up while they changed wheels or changed torsion bar.

And have you ever worked

05:30 **on carriers like these before?**

No

And so what sort of learning curve was it?

I was learning in the field. I didn't, I'd only been in one of those a few months before up at Rockhampton. One of the chaps there wanted to get in the workshop somehow and he took us all for a ride around the area we were in.

06:00 **And what are they, what are they like to drive?**

Like to drive? I didn't do much driving at all but I got a licence, when I came back. They're all right but you're working on tracks and tracks if you pull one hard you go round in a circle

06:30 and you can break and have a vehicle almost down on its nose. I didn't do much driving while over there. I did a little bit here.

And what's their setup in terms of gears and things like that?

They're an automatic gearbox. You just put your foot down away you go.

07:00 **What are they like for manoeuvrability, what can you say - ?**

Very, very manoeuvrable, yeah. They turn pretty quick if you pull hard on the, say you're going left you got one lateral steering, I think you two brakes or one brake on the floor I'm not sure now, you pull on them and they can go around very quickly,

07:30 stop very quickly. You're asking me to go back nearly forty years now.

Well what other vehicles did you come across in Vietnam that you hadn't worked on before?

Oh none, we just had the carriers. Carriers and we had the water cart and we also had a left-hand drive Jeep. It appears that this

08:00 Jeep was confiscated in a rubber plantation and given to the LAD to run around in. It was a left-hand drive. All the other Land Rovers and it was made in Spain. And it, they could use all the right-hand drive parts for it. It,

08:30 it was taken in a rubber plantation and I believe there was some story going around that the owner wanted it back but they weren't getting it back.

And when you'd move around in general to different bases and places for work, did you take your own set of tools with you?

Yes. Not here, not here. I didn't have any.

09:00 I had some tool boxes here but not around Brisbane. In Vietnam they had, they had their own tool boxes and they took them with where ever they went but mostly had the - what did they call them a squadron, not a squadron, a platoon, the section - the section of carriers and you had a RAEME mechanic with them.

09:30 **And what typically is in a RAEME mechanic's toolbox?**

Oh all sorts of a socket set, adjusting spanners, pliers, hacksaws, hammers.

10:00 I can't remember and I used to have to do inventories of these things every couple of months, to see if they had them all. There was some special tools that they had for the 113s, but when they first went there they just had to, well I've just read a book, The Pony Soldiers, and

10:30 they had to find out for themselves by trial and error. Like one part there it say's they changed an engine because it wasn't any good but they found out it was only the blower shaft that had broken. They spend all that time changing engines and it could have been done in about half an hour. That's how much the people knew. They more or less

11:00 said right we're going to send a squadron to Vietnam and we'll send these many first and then over afterwards. You been the War Museum? See the 113s outside? Well there the ones we had, well some of them.

And

11:30 **commonly what's the most common thing that would break down on them?**

Mostly it was the blower shaft would go or the -

What exactly is a blower shaft?

Well it's, it blows a certain amount of air into the engine and it's connected by a steel shaft about thick as that and splined at the end.

12:00 I can't remember now but they used to have trouble with that and trouble with the torsion bars with, that each set of wheels has on them. They break, terribly rough country or roads.

Do you think that people driving the vehicles gave them a rough time?

No, they knew it was their, possibly some time,

12:30 but they knew that if anything happened to the vehicle that it could be their life that was at stake. They didn't do any crazy things, as far as I know.

Would you work on the big vehicles that were in transport convoys?

No, no only had to look after our own vehicles.

And how did things like all the dust

13:00 **in Vietnam affect your vehicles?**

Well they used to have to clean their air filters out for the engine, more often than what they were supposed to, sometimes they had to do it every day. Get used to get into every thing really.

13:30 I can't remember half the things now. It's been thirty years since.

Well tell me a bit more about how the workshop was set up in terms of different people working different jobs and?

Well we had, later on we had an officer he stayed mainly in camp and had to liaise

14:00 with the commander of the squadron. We had an ASM which is an army artificer sar major [Sergeant Major], he is more or less, he is the technical side of the LAD. And then I was the first RAEME sergeant they had.

14:30 And then they had, I think we had four corporals, it's four corporals, four corporal vehicle mechanics, two radio mechanics, one armourer, in the

15:00 end we had a sergeant storeman and a private, a craftsman storeman and we had about five craftsmen. And we had each troop, each troop had a corporal with them or maybe a craftsman used to go out with them and plus

15:30 there would be the another vehicle nine eight, call sign nine eight. He'd go out with, as a support, in a supporting role for the carrier. There would be two RAEME blokes with him. You know that was one of our carriers nine eight, well he was the support for that troop.

16:00 When we come back from Coral, the ASM and myself was sent down to Vung Tau for two days to have rest and recuperation as they called it. And when we come back there was this young bloke, a bit of a mouth was there and he said certain

16:30 things to us and we didn't like it but approximately a fortnight later he was dead. He was standing in the back of the carrier and going, they were going along and they don't know whether it was a command detonated mine or one hanging from a tree. But apparently he got part of his head chopped off and was lying in the bottom of the carrier and they thought oh he's just gone to sleep

17:00 and when they found him he was dead. And then another, that was one of our, that was our biggest casualty and then there was Corporal Powell, the armourer got done his legs hurt at Coral. Then there was another time Corporal Blackwell had a yarn, he'd been to Singapore with his wife and he came back and

17:30 he said, "I don't want to go out the bush any more." And I said, "Well you've got to go, it's your job." I told the ASM and he said, "He's go to go whether he likes it or not." And he went out there and a couple of days later they blew the carrier up, killed the driver he got double compound fracture of the jaw and some other parts

18:00 hurt, and then medivac'd back to Australia. And we had another bloke he reckoned he got a bullet crease across his head and we think it was a stick went past him.

Did you feel guilty about this guy who didn't want to go out again?

A bit yeah, yeah. I've seen him since. I saw him down a few years ago down at Southport they had that big

18:30 reunion down there. I felt a bit guilty afterwards. But like they say you've got to get over it. I still think about it though

How do you get over it?

I don't know. Every now and again it you know comes into your mind, that you had to send him out and he got hurt. I just don't what's-a-name now, I just

19:00 try to not think about it at all.

And tell me about Coral, what it looked like, how it was set up?

Right. Coral was a mud hole. All I can remember was we came down a road and we turned in and there was, looked at it and there was sand bags,

19:30 hills everywhere. And to the right there was a big, a big lot of sandbags which happened, which was the task force commander headquarters. We had Colonel Kelty's - Major Kelty - Major Kelty's track,

20:00 his command carrier, we had the squadron sar major and I was back here and our corporal was over here. There was a bit of a wash bench near their track where we used to wash our plates up after meals. It was really muddy. And

20:30 when I got there, I got a tap on the side and a bloke said, "Never so glad to see you in all my life." It was the warrant officer caterer we used to have in 3 Battalion, he was the task force caterer then. And we used to have, then over to

21:00 just in front of us was engineers, no something to do with 1 Battalion the Engineers were over further in front of us. Over to our left was the tanks, centurion tanks and the 2nd of the 3rd, 2nd of the 3rd United States Artillery which was supporting us back

21:30 at Nui Dat and they come up too. And then there was another Yankee, they had a couple of other tanks used to have 40 millimetre guns on it, two, four 40 millimetre guns and they could spray the place as much as they, as much as they could.

22:00 We felt the, you could feel the ground rumble when the B52's come over and were dropping bombs. We had a chap there by the name of Brooksey. His driver got out of his tank, 113 this

22:30 day and they put all their rubbish in a sandbag and threw it into this hole. And then as he threw it in they could see this Vietnamese and so he pulled his revolver out poked it he was going to shoot him and all of a sudden he remembered he had a piece of four by two in the top to stop the dust from getting in. Anyhow this bloke had his, one of his ankles had been shot there or something,

23:00 and it was all maggoty. And so they gave him a drink and they gave him a cigarette and let the Provo's take him away.

What was the difference in the atmosphere between Nui Dat and Coral?

Well the difference. Oh God. Well Coral you were on like a war footing all the time.

23:30 You weren't allowed to walk around without a weapon and you had to be prepared to move, or get into the 113's or something like that, take cover at night time. We had one chap in the Q store he used to go from morning to night and he'd really had it this day and they started

24:00 mortaring and rocketing us and he's up by the, with his back onto the crane, sitting up there and he's sound asleep and you could hear these things going past. You'd just open the lid a bit and, "Get in here!" "No!" So we grabbed him and pulled him in. And the same, the next day all the re-supply

24:30 trousers were all bullet holed or shrapnel holed. So everybody was getting a shrapnel shirt. We had one, one clerk from headquarters he'd bought typewriters and a lot of camera stuff and one hit this

25:00 and when they opened the box up all that was in there was a great piece of big plastic, he'd lost the lot.

How did he use it?

Well it got rocket, well some, a rocket hit it and just burnt it all, melted it all.

25:30 And what was the changes like in the work that you were doing at Coral to Nui Dat?

Nui Dat we didn't have much to do with Coral. I mainly a carrier, the fittest vehicle I had was doing all heavy lifting around the place.

26:00 I had to take some ammunition for the Yanks and do some other things like that.

What did you think about being at Coral?

Couldn't do anything about it.

But what did you think about being there?

I didn't like it. I had to be there, I got sent up there so that was it. I was up there for my 40th

26:30 birthday.

How did you celebrate it?

Didn't.

Did you tell anyone?

No.

What did you do on that day?

Mainly stayed in camp. Well I stayed in the area we were at. Nowhere else to go.

What were the Americans like that you were working with?

27:00 Well we had a good working relationship with the chap from the 2nd of the 35th Artillery it was and they had to move some place one time and he came down and he said, "I want to get a starter motor." So I said, "Yeah we can fix you with that," so we gave him that.

27:30 He came down again in the morning with some, the track so we gave him one of that and about two weeks later this American truck pulls into the thing and he says, "Where's your sergeant?" He says, "I've got something for him," and he came in and he had a box with 24 starter motors in it and three pallets

28:00 of track.

What did you think about the way the Americans were fighting the war?

I didn't like it. I didn't have much to do with them only that the artillery was attached to us. So I couldn't really say. All I know is what I'd seen

28:30 on TV.

How long did you have to spend up at Coral - ?

At Coral we were there for about a month, I'm not sure three weeks or a month.

And the other fire support bases did you - ?

No that's the only one I went to but they went to a lot of fire support bases.

What other places

29:00 **outside Nui Dat did you got for work?**

None really only, we used to take things down to 102 Workshops at Vung Tau and they'd either repair them or say we'll get them repaired and send them back to you.

What was Vung Tau like?

Full of bars, full of girls, bar girls.

29:30 Dirty. Take anything, take your watch off your arm without you knowing it. The ASM that we had he went down there and he had an army wristwatch on got it stolen. And about a week later on somebody else went

30:00 down there and they tried to sell it back to him. And when they seen it and he said, "That's [UNCLEAR]" and he took the number and he said that's the ASM's and he took it back off him. The kid, the what's-a-name was going on and on so he said, "I'll get the White Mice to you!" They're the Vietnamese police, and anyhow he just run off then and didn't want nothing to do with it.

30:30 **What was it like being away from your family?**

Lonely. Especially, especially when you know your wife's pregnant and going to have another one.

How far along was she when you left?

I can't remember.

31:00 He was. I was at another fire support base we'd been to. Before we get onto that we'd been up, we went up to Long Binh, a big American place. And we had to, 3 Battalion was guarding what we called Rocket Alley and we'd taken a couple of, sent a couple of carriers out each night to boost their fire power

31:30 and while we were up there we wanted some gasket material for one of the carriers for something or rather. I went around to try and get it and I went to this Yankee place and they'd never seen a 113 with a crane on it. And there was this guy walking across the parade ground or whatever you'd like to call it eating ice cream. So I said to this captain, I said

32:00 "You haven't got any spare ice cream, have you?" And he said, "I don't know, mate." He says, "I'll see." He said, "We've never seen one like, a carrier like that before," anyhow we got talking and all the rest of it. And next thing this bloke comes around and he brought around 24 quarts of ice cream. So we all had ice cream.

Could you just describe a bit about that base for me?

Their base, it was only like a car park with their carriers all,

32:30 all in there. It was just more or less a rest area for them I would say.

Was this at Long Binh?

Yeah.

Was it large?

Long Binh itself? Oh it's - Long Binh was the biggest, biggest army base out of American, I think it was. It was a terrific long, long thing. And they had a

33:00 a salvage, what they used to call a salvage place. And it had everything, every type of vehicle, helicopters and all that and it would go for about that corner up to that corner and up in the air too. Then we finished there and we came back and we went down, went on a, we went down to,

33:30 we went off the road we were going back to the Dat [Nui Dat] and we stayed there a couple of days and while we were there one of the carriers got bogged down in one of the places near a river or a tidal thing, I don't know what it was. Anyway we were sent out to get it back but we ended up

34:00 in all recovering 24 113s. Then we couldn't get back to the base in the night, the lights would be on so he said, "Stop." We stopped and we got out the next morning and here's a great big B52 bomber hole next to us. We didn't get rations because we were only supposed to be

34:30 going out for a couple of hours and we stayed out all night. And I had, all I had was a tin of asparagus so the driver and myself had half each. Then we got back to camp and the next day and one of our Corporals came over and he said, "Your wife's had a baby." "Oh what is it?" "A boy." and I said, "Not again,

35:00 she can take it back." Anyhow the CO said, spoke to him and he said, "How did he take it?" He said, "He's not too happy." He said, "He's not too happy at all," and then he came over and said, "Here have a cigar, it might make you a bit happy." He said, "Why, what's wrong with you? Your wife's had a baby boy." "Yeah," I said, "But that's the bloody sixth one." "Oh," he said, "No wonder you're cranky then."

And did you,

35:30 **did you have a drink to celebrate?**

Oh we had soft drink I think that's all that was there. I don't suppose I should say it but we used to have a warrant officer, sergeant he was then and he used to go out in the field and we made up this little bizzo

36:00 between us. He went off for his re-supply and if he sent in and wanted three infrared lights, that meant he wanted three bottles of rum. If he sent in and asked for three IR [infra-red] leads, that was three cartons of beer. The first one that came in they sent the three lights out and he got nothing.

36:30 He was spewing when he came back in but after that the sar major, our warrant officer said to the Averill [?] all the re-supplies sent to him before they went out so he fixed it that way.

And where did you get the alcohol from to send out?

Well we had our own canteen, our own sergeants' mess.

37:00 We had a very reasonable mess and a bar. We had one, one chap that got killed his father was in Vietnam and he came down to see him, he was a warrant officer and his son was a corporal so he couldn't come in the sergeants' mess and he couldn't go in the OR's [Other Ranks'] mess.

37:30 So the squadron sar major made him the barman for the night. Anyway they had a few beers but the only thing sadly to say about a week later he was killed, a mine got him.

Was he in the army?

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

And his father was?

Yeah, his father was with the

38:00 Vietnam Training Team, up in the north there somewhere. He got a ride down so he could be with his son for a bit. It was very sad though.

How did you, how did you deal with that like how did you - ?

Oh just think about it for a while then you've got to take it out of your, try and get it out of your mind and think

- 38:30 of something else. Mainly you know well I could think of my wife and family. Don't know how others got on. I don't seem, I myself don't seem to have come out of it as bad as a lot of other people. Like one chap was, I knew he was
- 39:00 with the army air force over there and he spent time in the Keith Payne Psychiatric Centre over there, over at Greenslopes. There is a few of them, personally I couldn't see how they all got affected so much and I didn't. But they do.
- 39:30 I had a bit of a hard time for a while with my wife but then I got over it. Everything's right, been all right ever since.
- Was that after you came home?**
- Yeah. No it doesn't affect me now at all.
- 40:00 I'm too busy with other. I'm under a doctorate professor out there and he's sending me from one place to the another. Test this test that. Been, I've been the Mater Hospital, no I haven't been the Mater Hospital. I've went to the x-ray place up there, now he's sending me to the Mater Hospital for an x-ray. Down at Cleveland for an x-ray.
- 40:30 **We'll just pause there because we're at the end of this tape again.**
- Good.

Tape 9

- 00:35 **Would you have a drink much in Vietnam?**
- No I didn't drink much at all.
- Why is that?**
- I didn't want to. Didn't have enough money anyhow.
- Do you reckon that other men did?**
- A lot of them used to go over the fence drinking.
- 01:00 It all depends on yourself, you don't want to drink you don't. I used to have a rum every now and then, a couple of beers that's about all.
- And how did you contact your wife once she had had the baby?**
- I didn't, I got a telegram from the sister
- 01:30 and that's how it, first of all they radioed it through and then I got the telegram and then I got a letter from the Courier Mail enclosing, with a photo of them.
- Why from the Courier Mail?**
- Brisbane.
- But why did the newspaper?**
- They was, anybody
- 02:00 who was in Vietnam and became a father over there, they put the wife and baby in the paper. Mine came under the heading of 'Sixth Son for Dad'.
- And how did you communicate with your family?**
- Only by mail. I did come home for leave, we were given five days leave. We were transported back
- 02:30 by the Americans to Sydney and got up to Brisbane and taxi home. And I went up to the school, no, no that was when I was finished. I think they were all home, it was August. But I
- 03:00 had a good five days here and including my mother-in-law and father-in-law from South Australia were here.
- And what was it like to see everyone again?**
- Oh magic.
- What was it like to leave them?**
- Horrible. Feel you didn't want to go, if you don't you might get shot or put behind bars.

03:30 **What sort of things would you write in the letters to her?**

I wouldn't tell her anything about what I was doing, try and keep it, keep the war out of it. All I wanted to know, all I ever wanted from her was to know where the kids were, how she was.

How often did you get mail?

04:00 Before the postie strike or after?

Well, tell me about the postie strike?

Haven't you heard of that?

Well tell me what your experience with it was?

Well we, there was the postal strike on in Sydney. They wouldn't allow any of the mail to and from Vietnam, as far as I can work out, and somebody put out

04:30 a poster with 'On RTA [Return] to Australia, Punch a Postie', but we hadn't, well it didn't bother us very much I think, I think we got our letters a bit late when they were having the strike and then everything went back to normal again.

05:00 You get mail everyday or every couple of days. You were always looking forward to it.

How often did you write letters?

About three or four times a week. Getting the kids presents was a hard thing. Like I got, I bought six

05:30 little radios or five little radios and a bunny rabbit or something with a radio in it. I got, when I come back I got to Sydney Airport and custom blokes there said that I couldn't have them all. I said, "Well I've got six sons and there's one for each of them." And I said, "Well tell me how many I'm allowed," and I said, "I'll go back down and I'll smash them with my foot and

06:00 throw them in the bin." "Just a minute," he says, "I'll go and see my supervisor." So he went and saw the supervisor and he asked me how many sons I had and I said, "Six." He said, "Righto that's all right, you can go."

What did your sons think?

Oh they lapped it up. I gave them a, I got them a set of walkie talkies at one stage, sent them home. They had great fun with them.

And how was,

06:30 **how was Barbara coping?**

She was, coped all right but the kids used to get on her, annoy her sometimes. She was feeding Tony, and David pushed the TV through the wall.

How did

07:00 **he do that?**

She wasn't paying enough attention to him so he just got behind it and pushed it, it was on wheels, pushed it through the wall. I'm not sure whether it was when I was in Vietnam or not but I can't remember she threw something at Stephen and he ducked or it missed him and broke the window out in the dining room.

07:30 **Did Barbara or any of the kids cope any bad behaviour because you were in Vietnam?**

No, no. No.

How much time off did you have in Vietnam?

Well we used to, used to have Sundays off. Most of the

08:00 task force just stood down of a Sunday or if you were wanted for anything you had to do it on the Sunday. No I think that we had, like being on the base you got more time to yourself than what the poor old infantry blokes got out in the fields. They might be out there for two, three or four weeks before he gets back and has a

08:30 couple of days off and he's got to get all his gear ready and go back out again. We were pretty, you know we were pretty sort of had our gear ready to go, didn't have to worry about washing dirty clothes and all that. You used to do your washing of a Sunday. Sunday morning you'd get the

09:00 washing machine had a little light burn where it come from I don't know.

What else would you do on a Sunday?

We used to go to church. I went to church one time and who should be there, Father Bill McEwen.

Father Bill McEwen used to be in my class at school. And I said to him "Come on down to the Cav [Cavalry Regiment] tonight after you're finished and we'll,

09:30 we're going to a barbeque." And got down there and he knew more of the bloke there than what I knew. He ended up being medivac'd out with malaria.

Would you ever go to any of the place at Nui Dat like the Everyman's Club or anything like that?

No, no. I know the Everyman.

10:00 Oh what's his name? I'm pretty good friends with him too. No they were at one end of the camp and we were at the other end. The only one's we saw were they used to call the Doughnut Dollies, the American Red Cross used to come down about once a fortnight or something. We never

10:30 had anything to do with them, they just walked through the place and go and see the CO and go up the task force and go around the other places and then get on a chopper and go back to where they came from.

Why were they called Doughnut Dollies?

Oh that's the Yanks' name for them. Apparently they used to distribute doughnuts when the blokes were getting on the

11:00 ships during the Second World War.

How were you feeling as your time in Vietnam was drawing to a close? How were you feeling about leaving?

Wanting to get out of there as soon as I could. I got, I got to Saigon and I met the chap that was taking my place plus

11:30 I saw him and then as I was ready to go on the plane there was a mate of mine that was, we were at Bulimba together, and I said, "You're a bit late here on the bugle." And he said, "Oh yeah, what's it like up here?" Anyhow he went to Vung Tau and I keep saying to him "They should have been there

12:00 when they were needing them not feeding them."

And how were you feeling about how the war was going when you were leaving?

Just glad to get out the place. You sort of weren't worried about anyone else but you were always thinking about these people in your unit, hoping that nobody else got hurt.

12:30 **How much did you care about the outcome of the war?**

I don't think it worried me. I was back here, I was home safe and sound sort of thing. I wasn't interested any more. It all seemed to be in the end, it all seemed to be a waste of our time and energy, everything that went into it.

13:00 Especially when they pushed those gates down at the President's Palace. I don't really talk about things like that. I was just glad to get home.

13:30 I wouldn't, I was home for about, I had my leave and I went back to work I was there a fortnight and the workshop manager called me up to his office and he said, "I've got a posting for you, where do you want to go? We've got New Guinea, Townsville, Rockhampton, Canungra." I said, "No, no,

14:00 no." "Why not?" I said, "You know why not. I came home with you. I've just been to Vietnam." I said, "Get somebody else to do it." And he said, "Get out of my office, I don't want to see you any more," only a friendly way though. I went with, the two of us went from Sydney we were both

14:30 in the camp at Sydney together and we both went up to Nui Dat together and then we both came home together. So he knew all about where I'd been and what I'd done. So I didn't move from Bulimba, the workshop area for the rest of my service. I went to

15:00 the Department of Works, from there I went to Banyo. I stayed at Banyo for about nine to ten years in charge of a workshop detachment down there. On the, in January, in January, in the Queen's Birthday Honours List '81, I was presented with the British Empire Medal.

15:30 I knew all about it about a month before but it had on the letter confidential and all the rest of that. I wouldn't even show the wife but she looked. She didn't say anything.

How did you feel getting this medal?

Oh I didn't think it was, I didn't think it should have been me I thought it should have been somebody else.

Why?

Well I didn't do that much.

16:00 There was other people there that were doing a better job than me but they ended up getting made up to officers. I know one chap there he got a major and I see him every now and then and we have a lovely old talk together. On the Friday, the Queen's Birthday Honours List came out on the Saturday and on the Friday

16:30 we had a, we used to have drinks after work in the Soldiers' Club and just before that the acting CO called me up and asked me what's happened to me and I said, "I don't know, what do you mean?" He said, "What do you got to tell me?" I said, "Nothing." He said, "I don't think so."

17:00 He said, "Didn't you get a letter in the mail or a phone call?" I said, "I got a letter in the mail, yeah." He said, "Well that's what I'm talking about." And he said, "What did it say?" And I said, "I've been awarded a British Empire Medal." And he just said, "Congratulations," and the workshop manager said congratulations and the RSM at the time he congratulated me. And then we went up to the ORs' pub

17:30 and one of the loneliest times I'd ever been in all my life. I couldn't talk about it until it came out in the newspaper. I had no-one to talk to so in the end I only stayed there about half an hour and went home.

And why do you think that you felt a bit unsettled when you came home from Vietnam?

I don't know.

18:00 I think maybe being away and being lonely, I don't know to be honest with you. I didn't go to any, I didn't have to go to any psychiatric thing or like that like some of our other chaps did. About all, about the only place I haven't been with this

18:30 professor out there.

And were there things that you missed about Vietnam, about the way you were living?

No I don't think so. I think it was more, I'm on a plane, I'm going home, I'm finished, I don't want to know anything more about it. I tried to forget all about

19:00 about what happened or what, forget about that 12 months. I was all right after a while, it didn't take me long.

How long?

Only a couple of months I think.

How hard was it to forget?

I still think of it now. You still, not flashbacks but you start thinking of,

19:30 like the other week I got a book called, a RAEME book called The Craftsmen, and in there was a, the Adelaide people made a memorial plaque to go on the craftsman ball aces where he lives in the cemetery now saying that he was killed

20:00 in Vietnam. The original plaque didn't have anything about his service. That sort of brings it back to you again.

Are there any other things like noises or anything that makes you think of Vietnam?

No.

And when you watch or when you see movies or TV shows about Vietnam what do you think of them?

20:30 Oh some of them I like, some of them I think they are just rubbish.

What are some of the good ones?

Oh I liked China Beach. A matter of fact that, no it's not China Beach,

21:00 Green Beret Boy. A sergeant that was with us at Bulimba, he died and they played this Green Beret music, what for I don't know I couldn't work it out. Nobody else could either, he wanted it played so he got it.

21:30 Boring aren't I?

Don't be silly. And was it hard to leave the army?

Yes didn't get pay days, missed pay days. Yes it was in a way but in another way I was glad of getting out. One,

22:00 one of the reasons was that I was old. I was 65, no I'd be 65 next birthday when I got out. 55, 55 on the birthday when I got out and we had a woman adjutant who was a nine year old girl when we were in Malaya, she used to live down the road from us but she never remembered me there. But I remembered

her.

- 22:30 She used to give men a rough time. But one of my craftsman that was with us in Malaya he came back and became an officer and when he, he was a major and he used to give her a hard time then. She one time there I believe one of the officers got killed down south
- 23:00 and they had a ceremony up here for him and he kept the mess open and he had nothing to do with him and she said, "Where going to close the mess now." And he said, "Get out and get back to your office." He said, "I'll tell you when the mess is going to shut." So she went out and nothing was said as far as I know. He was a funny guy. He used to, this is going back to Malaya, I could never
- 23:30 find him after dinner. And one day these two legs fall off the side of his canopy of this truck and he turned over in his sleep. So I got the truck and I took it around the camp and he's holding on to it, holding on for grim death, gee
- 24:00 he went to town. And then he came back as a major to Bulimba and I had to ring him up from Banyo when I come back from leave and he said, "I'll see you on my verandah at 3 o'clock this afternoon, sergeant." So I went back and I'm shaking in my boots and he said, "Get down there. Sit down." He said
- 24:30 "Right I want an old bloke," and he said, "I want him to look after Banowie for me and I'll look after him, meaning you." "Okay," and we were good pals after that. Then a couple of years later on he, we were walking down to one of these after Friday drinks and he come along beside me and said to me "You know you've been posted don't you?"
- 25:00 I said, "Where and when?" He said, "You're going to 3 Base Workshops." "When?" He said, "Last January." I said, "But this is March." He said, "Yeah I put on it you must be joking and sent it back to them." Never heard another thing.

And like do you feel a part of the Anzac tradition?

Oh not, sort of, I have, I like the Anzac

- 25:30 Day parades and comradery and all that sort of thing that goes with it but I don't, I don't believe I'm a true, a true Anzac as well in the form of like I think the Anzac were fighting people and I'm not, I wasn't. I was in support of the fighting man.
- 26:00 I just don't feel like being a proper Anzac. I like Anzac Day though.

What does Anzac Day mean to you?

Well to me, first of all I go to the mass down here to honour the people who I know that got killed. Then I march, when I was in uniform up

- 26:30 until a couple of years before I left I used to have the Vietnam veterans and then an officer came in and he took over. Now I go, go down here and catch a train up to town and march with my mates in town. All the workshop people, they're mostly all officers now. We have a good time, have a good talk.
- 27:00 **And when you look back at all of the years that you spent, what do you think the main lessons that you learnt are?**
- That I should have gone further with my education and if I did I'd have probably ended up a major in the army. But I, I left school
- 27:30 like around about 14 I think before scholarship and I think that was why I didn't get on much further in the army. And I wasn't very interested in, in the end I wasn't, well the last seven or eight years I wasn't interested in going any further.
- 28:00 I just wanted to be left alone where and that was it. Come home to Mum and the kids each night. Do a duty once a month that was all right I didn't mind that. The only thing I miss was the pay parade.

And when you look back, what would you say is your worst experience during your years?

- 28:30 I think hearing in Vietnam hearing about the young soldier that got killed, the young ball ace that got killed. I don't think there is anything worse than that. I used to, going
- 29:00 back a bit I used to drive the army ducks. I used to have a lot of fun with them. We used to go, well I went to a couple of floods and one we went to, we went up the flood at Ingham and the people up there we were in the pub having a beer and a couple of them started saying "Well you should have been here a week ago." And our warrant officer that was with us said, "Don't you
- 29:30 blame us, blame your council and that. They didn't ask for us until we got here." And he said, "If we'd have known we would have been up here earlier." And then we had to take milk, milk and bread down to one of the swollen rivers. And I got my pics in the papers giving a
- 30:00 young, a young kid a drink of milk with a Salvation Army chap.

And when you look back what would you say your best experience has been?

Best? I don't know. There's that many of them I suppose. I suppose meeting my wife for being in the army,

30:30 that would be about the best. One thing I left out was when my fifth boy was born I came down, I was up at Tin Can Bay, and they wouldn't let me stay at home but they'd send me back when the baby was born. So the baby was born sometime in the morning and I left

31:00 and came down in a Land Rover and I had all my army gear plus a rifle and I walked into the Mater Hospital carrying it all and they said, "You can take it back to where it came from." And next thing I got - a nun got me pinned up against a wall saying "It's not her fault, it's yours. It's your genes that made it a boy not hers."

31:30 Leave it on that?

Well just one more thing. Is there anything that you think we've missed, anything you'd like to sum up with, any final words for the archives?

No I reckon you've done a pretty good job. I've never talked so much in all my life I don't think. I'd like to thank you for coming and I appreciate your

32:00 patience with me.

It's our pleasure, we've had a wonderful day with you.

INTERVIEW ENDS