# Australians at War Film Archive

## Andrew Kelly (Jock) - Transcript of interview

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http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1629

## Tape 1

00:30 **Good morning, Jock.**

Good morning.

**Thank you for giving your time today. The archive wouldn't exist without you so thank you.**

My pleasure.

**I'd like to start off by asking if you can provide us with an introduction to Jock by telling me where you were born?**

I was born on the 27th of

01:00 November, 1938, in Edinburgh in Scotland. During the Second World War my mother and I left Edinburgh and went to live in Glasgow with my grandfather. During that period of time my father was in the army and during his service in the army unfortunately he was killed in Burma on the 6th of May 1944. From Glasgow

01:30 we eventually moved back to Edinburgh and there I spent my childhood and younger days. I started work in Edinburgh and got married to my first wife and immigrated to Australia. Whilst I was in Australia my marriage didn't succeed. I then joined the

02:00 army and served almost 25 years. During that period of time I went on a tour of Vietnam on the Australian Army Training Team [AATTV: Australian Army Training Team Vietnam]. I got out of the army in 1983 and went to work for Minda Homes for 2 years and then went to work for security up at Numbaa on the gas fields. I had a

02:30 breakdown unfortunately and was hospitalised for 7 weeks in the Adelaide clinic. Due to that they gave me my service pension and a TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated] Pension. From there I've retired and I'm now living at home and that's it.

**That's a fantastic introduction, thank you. There are just a couple of questions I'd like to ask you**

03:00 **about that introduction. How old were you when you enlisted in the army?**

I was 24.

**And where did you do your rookies?**

At Kapooka in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales.

03:30 **Just to clarify the postings. After rookies which RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] were you posted to?**

After Kapooka I went to the School of Infantry, which in those days was at Ingleburn in New South Wales just outside of Liverpool. I was there for approximately 3 months. From there I was posted to 2 RAR in

04:00 Brisbane and from there to 4 RAR in Woodside in South Australia. From there to the 3rd Training Battalion back up in Singleton, New South Wales, at the beginning of National Service. I went up there as an instructor and from there to Vietnam.

**When you went to Vietnam, which battalion was that with?**

I only went with the Australian Army Training Team, which is in an advisory

04:30 capacity.

**I also understand you completed an Advisors' Course at Canungra?**

Yes.

**Where did that come in?**

Whilst I was at Singleton we went and did I think it was a six-week course in those days up at Canungra to be posted to the Australian Army Training Team.

**So that was before the AATT?**

That was before we actually

05:00 went to Vietnam, yes.

**The places that you went to when you were posted to Vietnam you went first to where?**

We landed at Tan Son Nhut Airport, which is not far from Saigon. We went to Saigon for a briefing and from

05:30 Saigon I went to Pleiku, which is up in the central highlands and that's where I was up until I got wounded.

**And how long roughly into your tour there until you were wounded?**

3 months.

**OK That's fantastic that's give us a really good idea of how long you were**

06:00 **there. After you were wounded you were flown eventually back to Australia?**

Yes. When I was wounded I was obviously taken to a field hospital and cleaned up and I was flown back to Pleiku where they did some more work on me. From there I was to go back to Saigon or down

06:30 south but due to infection I got dysentery. So also on the aircraft they had to unload me. I was a bit of an embarrassment to everyone.

**OK We'll get the details of that story a bit later but roughly when you arrived how long was your recovery all together?**

All together my recovery was 18 months.

07:00 **OK. All right well that's great. Thank you for that. I think that we'll now go back to the very beginning.**

By all means.

**Can you tell me, you mentioned that you were born in Edinburgh and spent some time in Glasgow and then went back to Edinburgh?**

Yes.

**Tell me about growing up in Edinburgh?**

Well,

07:30 what I can remember, as you can appreciate I was very young, I remember moving from Edinburgh to Glasgow. And one of the things that comes into my mind in those days is that we went from bus from Edinburgh to Glasgow. And I remember asking my mother, "Are we in another country yet?" as we went along the road between Edinburgh and Glasgow; remember there's only about 45 miles between the two places. But as a child distance is a great thing.

08:00 The next thing I remember is living with my grandfather. He worked on the railways in Glasgow. What he actually did I'm not terribly sure. Not far from where my grandfather was one of my sisters lived and she had five children all older than me. From there I started school in Glasgow

08:30 and I vaguely remember my mother telling me my father had been killed in Burma on the 6th of May 1944. But that's about all I can remember on that score. I don't remember grieving or being sad. I think I was too young to realise and remembering I had never known my father. He'd gone off in 1940 or whatever the case was

09:00 so I don't ever remember seeing him. We were living with my grandfather and for some reason, whether it was a family upset or whatever, we moved in with my aunt who had the five children. In those days the housing was abysmal. It was two rooms and both rooms had beds in them. There was no such thing as a bedroom and a living room.

09:30 And I remember six of us, six children, slept in the one double bed. Four girls and two boys all slept in the one bed.

**How did you manage to squeeze in?**

With great difficulty but no one thought anything about it because all the families were doing it in those days. Families were going to live with relatives because of the financial situation and the

10:00 rationing. I think if you combined your efforts life wasn't quite as difficult. And once again being so young I don't realise how difficult it was. But I would imagine it was pretty horrific trying to raise a family and trying to feed them on the rationing scale. Money wasn't plentiful. I don't really know what a soldier got in those days but it wasn't a lot of money.

10:30 Life was pretty rough I think and no one thought anything about it. You know you said, "The kids sleep in one bed" and no one sort of said, "My goodness, boys and girls in one bed" and all that nonsense. No one thought anything about it.

**How did you sleep was it top to toe?**

Top to toe, yes. That was the only way you could get a bit of space. Mind you there was a lot of giggling and carrying on you can imagine.

11:00 **So this was your life in Glasgow?**

In Glasgow, yes. My mother worked. She worked in the Vesta Match Factory where they make matches. And I remember her going to work each day. I also vaguely remember that all the kids, not just me but my cousins as well, were left to our own devices during the day. There was none of this getting picked up from school

11:30 and being sat down with a glass of milk and some bikkies [biscuits] after school you were just left to your own devices. You walked to school in the morning and you walked home in the afternoon and you went out and played in the streets and kicked a soccer ball around or whatever you did.

**Can you describe the house?**

I can't remember my aunt's house terribly well or my grandfather's. I know that my grandfather's house had an attic. And that's where I

12:00 slept in this attic and it didn't have a light. Remember I was five years of age at that stage and I had to go up there in the dark and it was pretty terrifying from memory. The stairwell itself was in an enclosed area and I remember you could come down the stairs and there was a hole in the wall. So I used to sit there and peer through this hole and look into the living area of the house and see the family. And I'd sit there for

12:30 hours just listening rather than going to bed because I was terrified. The houses were pretty small. I know there were only two rooms in my aunt's house and a toilet. No, the toilet was outside and it was shared by other families. Another four families used it as well. There was no shower and no bath, just a toilet.

**How did you have a**

13:00 **bath or a shower?**

We used to have a bath every Saturday night in a galvanised basin or bucket, whatever you want to call it. It was a fairly big one. And we used to drag it out and my aunt and my mother would heat up kettles of water and put them in. Mind you, they didn't change the water after every kid. Everyone just got in one after the other. And once again we all just accepted it. It was the done thing.

13:30 Until I came to Australia I never lived in a house with a bath or a shower.

**What was the heating like?**

It was just a coal fire and that was all there was. There was electricity in that house but it was just a coal fire and it was damn cold in the winter I can tell you especially during the night when the fires went out obviously. You'd get up in the morning and stand there

14:00 shivering, all six of us.

**Tell me a bit about your mother?**

My mother came from a large family. My grandfather was married 3 times and he preceded all three wives; they all died. His eldest son was 43 when his last son was born.

14:30 From his third wife, which was my grandmother, he had five children and those were the aunts and uncles that I knew. I didn't know any of the other family. Strangely enough out of these 5 children, four of them were sandy haired and freckled. My mother had jet black hair and

15:00 very dark eyes. In fact she looked almost either Greek or Spanish to look at my mother and her brothers and sisters were all sandy haired and freckled. I'm not saying any more about that.

**And what was the family talk about that?**

Her nickname was Darkie. No one ever thought any more about it. But it was very unusual when you saw them all together and she was so dark my mother, very dark.

15:30 She started work I believe at what is called the Caledonian Hotel in Edinburgh as a housemaid or whatever they called them in those days. And that's where she met my father and he was a porter. During the war when my father was away and we moved back to Glasgow as I said she worked in the Vesta Match Factory.

16:00 I know she loved dancing and I believe she was a very good ballroom dancer in her day. She had no more children. I was the only one. She was married 3 times. When we moved back to Edinburgh she went to work in I think it was a factory that made biscuit tins and she did that during the

16:30 day and she was an usherette in the local cinema at night to help to raise me and pay the bills. Although my father had been killed and she got a pension of some description, I think it was 10 shillings a week, which was about $2 in today's currency. She remarried as I say twice more after that.

17:00 She died about 10 years ago from lung cancer. And once again all her relatives bar one, all her brothers and sisters bar one, have all died of cancer and they were all very heavy smokers but whether that attributed to it or not I don't know.

**When you were young growing up how close were you to her?**

I was very close to my mother.

17:30 What I have noticed and of course you don't see these things as a child but once you become an adult and a parent yourself, my mother was a very hard woman. And when I say that I don't mean physically. She was not an emotional woman. She was not the sort of woman that would come up and give you a cuddle but she was always there for me and I was always well fed and well

18:00 clothed. She worked a lot so we didn't spend a lot of time together in that respect. And of course still being a young woman she had her own life and she went dancing etc. Although my children are out here in Australia, when we went back to Scotland my mother wasn't over

18:30 emotional with my youngest daughter who we took with us. It was just her granddaughter and that was it. She was a hard woman in that respect. Whether it stems from her own childhood who knows. That was my mother in a nutshell.

**What did you miss about not having a father?**

I think I missed, and once

19:00 again I only realised it as I got older myself and became a parent, that I didn't have anyone to focus on as a father being a boy. Although I had uncle and cousins, male cousins, we didn't sort of bond in that respect. So I had to rely on my Mum for guidance and assurance and that type of thing.

19:30 I think that was my biggest problem if you want to call it that and just no one to sort of follow or to discuss or speak to about anything that boys and fathers talk about. I never had that opportunity.

**What was your aunty like?**

She was similar to my Mum. The one we lived with in Glasgow, my Aunty

20:00 Jessie, she had her five children and from memory she didn't have much of a life with all these kids around. I don't really remember her husband that well. Once again I think he was in the army as well during the Second World War, so we didn't get too close in that respect.

**How did you come to move back to Edinburgh?**

20:30 I think because of the situation of living with my Aunt Jessie and all her family, my Mum decided to move back to Edinburgh. What her reasons were I really don't know but we moved back into the house that she had vacated to go to Glasgow. Once again, it was in a tenement building and there were

21:00 sixteen houses in this tenement. Each had two rooms and a toilet and a room that we used to call a darkie. It was a room with no windows and it was a very, very small room. I think when the buildings were first put up it was a storage room rather than a bedroom or whatever you used it for. That was once again

21:30 no bath and no shower just a toilet, but it was in the house and it was only for that family whereas the other one was shared by other families. The heating there was a coal fire. And I remember when we moved in there was no electricity; it was just gas and we had a gas lamp. My Mum eventually put electricity on. Also

22:00 in the house was what they called the coal bunker where the coal man would come once a week and drop a hundredweight bag of coal into this bunker inside the house. That was it. We did have hot water but the way of heating the water was you had to put the fire on. If you didn't put the fire on in the summer, you didn't have hot water. The cooking side of it was one gas ring. It didn't

matter how many pots you had you only had one gas ring.

**How old were you at this point?**

Well I was at school so I must have been 6 or 7 or thereabouts and I started school in Edinburgh.

**I'm interested to hear more about the tenement that you lived in. Can you describe the building, how high up was it?**

These tenements – we lived in number 16. There were 11 on each side of the street of these tenements. There were 16 of these houses in each of those tenements. Once again, some of the families were rather large to live in these small houses. I remember the lady downstairs from us. She had seven children and her and her

husband. Another family had a husband and wife, two children and her two brothers living in it. Once again it was just wall-to-wall beds and chairs. The buildings themselves they used to call them a close in Scotland. It was up and down stairs; there were no lifts or anything of that nature.

The building itself I don't know how it was; even then perhaps 150 or 200 years old. The height of the building was perhaps a couple of hundred feet I suppose. And of course on top of those were all the chimneystacks for each of the fires. To look at the building each house contained three

windows. One was in the sort of kitchen as we called it. It had a bed as well and your cooking facilities and your hand basin for washing up. There was a toilet window and a bedroom window. And in both those areas the living area and the bedroom was a fireplace. You could build a fire in the bedroom and in the living area. That's about it.

**What colour were the buildings?**

Dark grey. Everything was dark grey; sooty covered because of all the smoke and smog. I think the actual brick was grey anyway. It was very drab and very dreary when I think of it now. Once again you just accepted it. You probably never even noticed the colour of it. I noticed it more when I went back to Scotland the first time from Australia. You just don't realise how grey and drab it is in those

areas. Some people would have said it was a slum area. I know there were areas worse than ours, and by that I mean the same type of tenement set up but on each landing of this tenement was just the one toilet, again shared by four families. And some of those families had five children in it so you could imagine what it was like. And of course the problem always

arose whose going to clean it and whose going to do this. There was always that in-fighting in that respect.

**And in your tenement building where would you play?**

Well between the buildings it was like a big rectangle and in the centre was what they called the back green. And in there they had steel poles for hanging washing lines on. And that's where we

played. During the war they built air-raid shelters in these back greens underground and anytime there was an air raid everyone went to this shelter. Inside the shelter from memory there were wooden bunks so if you had to stay in there overnight or whatever, you stayed. I really don't remember what the lighting was. I'm not sure. But it really was underground; you went downstairs to get into it

and I don't know how many rooms there were, I just remember the wooden bunks. There were no mattresses on them or anything just wooden bunks. And the kids played in the back green and or in the street. There was nowhere else to play. The nearest park was probably 2 or 3 miles away. That's about it.

**What sort of greenery was around?**

None. There was the

odd weed growing in the back green. At the top of our street there was a railway line that went past and that had weeds growing on the sides of the railway line. Over the other side of that railway line again was a brewery so there was no greenery. The only greenery that you saw was when people put their tulips in a pot in springtime on the windowsill and that was it.

**So that green that you've just mentioned, how communal was that?**

It was very communal because during the start of the Second World War they used to be fenced off with iron railings and of course they needed the iron or steel for munitions or whatever they used it for, and they came and cut them all down and took them all away. So there was just a small concrete

ledge left between each back green. Every back green was communal; you could go wherever you wanted and that was it.

**And how many flights up were your buildings?**

Four. There was a ground floor and we were on the first floor and there were two above us again. Once

again you never sort of noticed then but the

29:00 mothers with new babies who lived on the top floor had all these stairs to go down with a pram and they used to just bounce down one at a time. The housewives had to carry all their groceries up and all that sort of thing. And the coal man carrying a hundredweight of coal on his back visited each house once a week delivering coal. That's the way we lived.

**Up at the top of the stairs was there a**

29:30 **balcony?**

No there was just what we called the landing. As you went up the stairs you hit the landing and there was a door here and a door there and the landing went along and there was another two doors at the other end. Those were the four houses and then you went on up to the next landing. There was a steel banister as they called it protecting you from falling over on the stairs.

30:00 **What was the trouble like on the block?**

There wasn't a lot of trouble not that I knew of anyway. All the kids got on fairly well. You tended to stay in your own street. As I said, there were 22 of these

30:30 tenements in this street. That was Wardlaw Street. And all the children just played in the street of in the back greens. Or if they wished, walked to the local river and did a bit of fishing or whatever it was. Of course during the war it was mainly women that were there. All the men were away. And I would say 95% of those women worked somewhere whether it was in the

31:00 local biscuit factory or local shops or whatever, so kids were left to their own devices. We seemed to get on well. Any you could say fighting or scuffles was between this street and that street. There were little gangs and "this is our territory" sort of thing but it never got out of hand. There was never anyone seriously

31:30 hurt. This was Wardlaw Street and that was Wardlaw Place and this is Wardlaw Terrace. You all lived in your own little community and were very loyal to each other.

**What was it about that loyalty to the street? Why did that exist do you think?**

I think it was just recognition. You knew each other. You knew that this fellow lived in Wardlaw Street so "I'll help him" you know, whereas the other

32:00 fellow was a stranger virtually. I think it is something that comes through on the military side. You back your mates up because you know them and you know you can rely on him because you've lived with him and you've worked with him and you've played with him and you get drunk with him and whatever it is you do. You know this fellow and you don't have to check to see if he's behind you to check that you're safe or secure. I think it is the same sort of thing in that little community, that

32:30 tight community, that you look after each other. I think this sort of thing is obvious in places like New Guinea where the natives look after each other. They are all loyal to their own village. I think it may be a natural thing, I don't know.

**Given that you were left to your own devices quite a bit who gave you some discipline?**

My mother. She was very quick with her

33:00 hand; a good slap on the ear. I always remember those air raid shelters I was talking about. When they built them, they were probably about 10 or 12 ft high and they had a sloping side. It was concrete. And of course the kids used to climb up on top and slide down them, not on anything just on your pants. Of course I used to wear a big hole in mine. I remember my mother had bought me two new pairs of

33:30 pants and I'd run a hole in them. I was sitting outside the close and someone said "Andrew Kelly, you've got a hole in your trousers". And I heard my mother say "Andrew" and I thought, "Oh no, when she calls me Andrew I'm in trouble". And she saw the hole in my pants and she went to give me slap and I said "No, not that hand". She was left-handed, my Mum, and because she had her wedding ring it used to

34:00 clip me. "Not that hand the other hand". She gave me a slap all the way up the stairs to our house. Then again I suppose she didn't have the money to buy me new trousers every day. She could talk until she was blue in the face but I'd go sliding down those concrete slopes. I was terrible.

**What other things did you get into trouble for?**

I remember

34:30 she gave me a key to the house's front door. I would have been about 8 years of age I suppose. And I went down the local river fishing and when I say fishing I don't mean with a line and rod and all that. It was just catching little guppies in your hand and putting them in a jam jar and taking them home until the poor buggers died and I had to throw them down the toilet. But I lost the key. And I'm sure it fell in the river but I

35:00 wasn't sure. So that was another thing "You can't be trusted" – Whack – "You never do as you're told" – Whack. You know I suppose she had to rely on me a lot, which I didn't realise of course. The enormity of losing your key and making yourself exposed to someone breaking in or using the door I suppose that was what she was worried about more than anything.

35:30 I didn't really get into too much trouble at all, just the usual childish things. I remember one year I think it was 1947 and it was an extremely cold winter. There were very deep snowdrifts in Edinburgh, which doesn't happen all that often. Once again she hadn't given me a key to get in the house so I had to come home from school and

36:00 wait outside until she came home. There were fairly big snowdrifts in the street. And of course the kids were playing with the snow and throwing snowballs at each other etc. etc. I got home from school at approximately half past three in the afternoon and my Mum didn't come home until about half past five in the afternoon and I played out in the snow with all the kids. In the UK, it gets dark fairly quick in the winter and when I say

36:30 quick, at about 4 o clock in the afternoon it starts to get fairly dark. Kids or the other children just drifted off to their various houses and I was still in the street. I remember feeling very warm and very tired at I suppose about 5 o clock that evening and I just wanted to lie down and go to sleep. Anyhow my Mum turned up and we went inside. Later on I

37:00 said to someone, I don't know who it was, whether it was an uncle or a doctor, about this feeling and he said, "If you had laid down and gone to sleep, you would never have woken up. That is one of the signs and symptoms of people who die from exposure. You suddenly become very warm and very cosy and you just want to lie down and go to sleep". So obviously it was exposure and it was just one of those things that happened but it always sticks in my

37:30 memory. Once again you just played in the streets and that sort of problem was there because of the way of life.

**Because you didn't have any brothers and sisters, I'm wondering who you played with most of the time?**

Just the local children, the next door neighbour, across the road and up the street. We all got sort of

38:00 involved in the Cubs and the Boys' Brigade and the girls were in the Girl Guides. In those days I can't remember whether it was the Salvation Army but they used to have these bible classes in one of the local halls. I used to go along and sing hymns and it was not for the religious guidance, it was to get a cup of tea for nothing. That was the attraction. You know "We will gather by the river" and a cup of tea

38:30 afterwards. It was a bit like Billy Connolly [Scottish comedian] because he lived in that era as well. It was just the other children but I must admit I can't remember any other family in that street where others didn't have siblings. They all had one or two brothers or sisters in the family and I was all on my own. But

39:00 once again going back a bit when we moved back to Edinburgh, and I don't know how long we'd been there, my mother invited her youngest sister to come and live with us. And she came along and she brought her one son with her. So there were actually four of us in the house at one period there. And Alan, that was my cousin, he was younger than me by six years so we really didn't have a lot in common as far as

39:30 socialising or playing together. I went off and played with my friends and he went off with his age group. But when he came to live with us I don't know what age he was but he was still in kindergarten. And my aunt, my Aunt Effie, she worked in one of the cafes in Princes Street which is the main street in Edinburgh. She used to take Alan to the kindergarten in the morning and although I was only 7 years of age or 8 years of age

40:00 or 9 years or age or whatever it might have been, I used to have to go and pick him up. That was one of my responsibilities. I'd get on the bus and go and pick up this 3 or 4-year-old boy and take him home. Once again no one ever thought anything of it. You wouldn't get that happening today.

**OK. Our tape is just to run out so we'll just swap over tapes.**

# Tape 2

00:30 **Jock, it's very interesting hearing about your childhood. I'm wondering what food did your mum put on your table?**

My Mum wasn't a great cook and once again time wasn't plentiful with her working and all I can remember ever eating is sausages, fried sausages, and the odd fish and chips.

01:00 I can't really remember too much about the food. I do remember during the war period, I used to have to do the shopping. My Mum would leave a note and I'd go to the butcher's shop and in those days it

was quite common for there to be a queue outside the butcher's shop. You had the money in one hand and your ration book in the other. We used to go in and give the butcher the note and he'd cut it

01:30 and do whatever he had to do with it and then take the ration book and pull the necessary tickets out. It was never very substantial type meat I don't think. I remember once hearing that there was horsemeat available or whale meat but whether we actually got it I can't remember. It was the same in the grocery shopping. You went to the local grocer

02:00 and in those days the girls behind the counter used to cut a piece of butter off and knock it into a block for you because it was in bulk. Depending on the time of the year or what the weather had been like you might get one or two eggs each a week if you were lucky. Sometimes you wouldn't get any so to get an egg was quite a thing. "Oh, we've got two eggs this week". "Great".

02:30 I never saw a banana for instance until I was about 14. I didn't know what a real banana looked like. I'd seen photos in the movie and that type of thing and because of my Mum's, inability is not the word to use, but she never got fresh vegetables or anything of that nature; spuds or potatoes not a problem but beans and peas and

03:00 carrots, it was very, very rare. My grandmother used to sometimes do those but she liked rabbit and rabbit was fairly plentiful in those days. We ate a lot of rabbit. Bread and milk was rationed to a certain degree and lollies or sweets as we knew them they were rationed. You couldn't just walk into a shop and buy

03:30 four or five bars of chocolate. You had to take your little ticket along with you and you were allowed so much per person. My mother was a very heavy smoker and in those days you could buy your cigarettes in packets of five and it was about one [shilling] and threepence or 15 cents a packet in those days but she always had to have her cigarettes. I vaguely

04:00 remember as a child some of the kids in the street said, "We're going to the pictures," as we call them the movies, and it used to cost sixpence to get in, five cents, and my Mum would say to me "I just don't have 5 cents" so you didn't go. And as a child you didn't understand. I used to huff and puff and slam doors but she just didn't have it. It was a fairly frugal life.

**What was your**

04:30 **favourite sweet?**

Anything sweet. I didn't like liquorice allsorts; I wouldn't eat those, but anything else yes. We didn't have many of them. One of the treats on Sunday might be to get an ice cream cone. We'd go down one of the Italian ice cream shops and buy them for threepence a cone. Friday night was fish and chip night. Even though we weren't Catholics we ate fish on a Friday.

05:00 All these sort of things were instilled in you. In those days the religious thing was still to the fore. And whether you were Catholic or Protestant, it was a crazy situation and it's still going on today unfortunately the religious side of it between the Catholics and especially the Irish with the Protestant Irish and the Catholic Irish. I remember my mother telling me

05:30 once when she first introduced my father to her father. She said, "This is Bill Kelly. I'm going out with him". He wouldn't allow him in the house. Because his name was Kelly he had to be Catholic and it took her I don't know how long to get my grandfather to allow my father to come into the house, because they were Protestant and if his name was Kelly he had to be Catholic and he's not coming in this house. It was

06:00 incredible. As children I remember maybe 4 or 5 or us, just kids, would be walking along the local streets and we'd walk past the chapel, the Catholic chapel, and all the Protestant kids used to spit on the ground. When I think of it now, I think, "How ridiculous". It must have been instilled into the kids that

06:30 these are Catholics and we don't mix with them and these are Protestants we don't mix with them. I never remember anyone being Jewish or Islamic, it was just Protestant and Catholic. It was the same with the schools; it was Catholic Schools and Protestant Schools and you didn't send your children to one or the other unless you were that faith. It was drummed into the kids at an early age and today I don't know

07:00 why or what it proved or what it helped.

**How often did you see that tension at school?**

All the kids in my school were Protestants and there were never any mixed religions. As I said it was either the Protestant School or the Catholic School and you sent your kids to the appropriate school. So we didn't see that in school too much.

07:30 **I am interested to hear how you responded to your mother, I guess dating again?**

I really didn't notice it. When she married her second husband I used to go to live with my grandmother, Grandmother Kelly, on a weekend. I'd spend Saturday and Sunday night with my

08:00 grandmother and obviously my Mum went out and met this fellow she eventually married and I just remember someone saying, “Your mum got married the other day”. All of a sudden there was this fellow there called Dicky Drummond. He was there and I didn’t sort of get involved with him. I don’t ever remember him taking us out anywhere or doing anything or

08:30 trying to ingratiate himself with me in any way. He was just there. He worked in the local factory and I think he might have been a welder or something of that nature but he was a compulsive gambler. And I remember my Mum crying a few times during the marriage. I really don’t know if it was one year or two years or whatever.

09:00 He’d gambled all his wages and there was no money coming into the house and this type of thing. She ended up divorcing him and once again that’s about all I know about them.

**How old were you when this was going on?**

I must have been about 9 or 10 or thereabouts. I really can’t remember what age I was. I might even have been younger. I think

09:30 during that time, my aunt and cousin were still living with us so there were now 3 adults and 2 children in the house. And in those days I lived in this, when I say lived, slept in this darkie as I called it. Mum managed to get a single bed put in there. There was enough room for a single bed and a chair I think and that was it. There were no windows in this room and when you shut the door it was completely dark. As I say I

10:00 think it was built as a storeroom when the houses were first designed and developed but there was enough room to get a single bed in and that’s where I slept. And my Aunt and my cousin Alan slept in the bedroom. And in the kitchen as we called it, there was an alcove which held a double bed and then there was a living area probably about as big as this. And then there was a window and underneath the window was the kitchen sink and that was

10:30 it.

**And how scared were you to sleep in a completely dark room like that?**

I suppose I was scared to a certain degree. I was more scared or I was more frightened when I woke up one night and there was no one home. I

11:00 think it must have been before my mother remarried because I think what had happened was she’d gone out. She’d put me to bed and she’d gone out dancing thinking I’d have slept through all night. I remember waking and I cried and cried. I cried out loud and the lady upstairs heard me and she came down and got me. That was the main fear I

11:30 remember having been left alone. Because of the confines of the house you could still hear people talking and moving around so I probably wasn’t all that frightened as such but when I woke up and there was no one there as a kid I was really scared.

**Living in a very busy high-rise tenement how noisy was it?**

It could be very noisy. For

12:00 instance you could hear the people upstairs if they banged anything or stomped their feet. It was a fairly solid building. It wasn’t built out of bricks, as we know them today, it was large stone. It was stone rather than brick. Everything was solid. The front doors for instance were two or three inches thick and everything was solid wood because in those days there were no prefabricated

12:30 building materials; everything was made from natural resources I suppose. It wasn’t terribly bad. You’d get the odd neighbour and she and her husband were having a fight and you’d hear them out on the landing sort of punching lumps out of each other but “so what” it was nothing to do with us.

**And where could you go to get some privacy?**

Nowhere. I never ever thought of privacy as such.

13:00 I don’t know what my aunt or my mother ever did for privacy. I really don’t know. Once again you just really accepted it for what it was. I wouldn’t enter your head to think, “I’ll go down the river, it’s nice and quiet down there and I’ll sit down there and have a think”. You just never thought about it. You were sort of enveloped in your own little confines within your own street, within your own tenement, within your own house and that was your

13:30 world. I remember going to other suburbs in Edinburgh and thinking, “You must be tops you live in this place”. Really they were other tenements but they looked better than ours and possibly they might have had bigger rooms in them. But once you got out of your confines of Wardlaw Street, everything looked more impressive. You

14:00 thought you were the worst off. That’s not true, worst is not the word you should use, you just imagined other things were better and anybody that lived in a semi-detached or a bungalow, “Incredible, they must be millionaires”. After the war, I remember they started to develop new housing areas in

Edinburgh and they had what they called prefabs, prefabricated houses,

14:30 and I may be wrong but I got the feeling they were made of asbestos. They were just sheeting. And it was at the start of the boom after the Second World War but because they were on a little block of land and they had a garden, oh, to get one of those you were up in the world. And they had two or three bedrooms and if you had more than two bedrooms you were really something.

**Was the**

15:00 **tenement block that you lived in Housing Commission?**

No they were privately owned I believe the tenements because I remember my mother saying you have to go to the factor and pay the rent. Now don't ask me why they used the word factor rather than agent. It was ten shillings a week, the rent, so they were all privately owned because we would go to one

15:30 factor and the next tenement would go to another factor. We just paid rent for them. I never knew anyone who owned a house. In fact I think, apart from one of my uncles, Uncle Andrew Kelly who I was named after, I'm the only one in my family to ever own a house. My Aunt Effie who is still alive, the one who used to live with us, she's still in the same house she's been

16:00 renting for 50 years. And I believe all her family are renting. I might be wrong but I know she's still in the same house and still paying rent.

**What sort of lease did your mother have on the flat?**

I really don't know. I never sort of paid any attention to that side of it. Mum gave me the ten shillings and I walked the 2 or 3 miles to the factor's office, paid it and walked back again.

16:30 I never paid any attention really. But as I say I never knew anyone that owned a house.

**We do need to move on unfortunately. You left school at a young age but just tell us what your schooling was like?**

I went to Gorgy School and in those days and I

17:00 didn't realise it of course I was slightly deaf then. I found out later on that I had a perforated eardrum and because of this I was very slow at school. I had some other health problems and they sent me to a special school. This special school was for physically and intellectually handicapped

17:30 and I was in this school until I was 12. At age 12, I went off to secondary school and at age 15 I left and went to work. The secondary school in those days used to have commercial courses and technical courses and I went into the commercial side of it simply because of my physical…I was very small

18:00 and whether my Mum had any say in it I'm not sure. On the technical side you did woodwork and you did metalwork and that type of thing. Whoever made the decision thought I wouldn't be strong enough to do this, so I went into the commercial side and you did bookkeeping and you did French and English and History and there was no physical side to it. That was schooling for me from

18:30 twelve until I was fifteen, three years. I never excelled at school; I was just an average student. I didn't particularly like school. Of course in those days they were still allowed to give you the strap and I used to get it quite often for talking in class. That was the

19:00 main problem.

**What did you do when you left?**

When I left school my stepfather, my Mum's third husband who she married when I was 14, and he and I got on very well and I like to think that I model myself after him to a certain degree. I used to watch him with my Mum. Because I was older I paid more attention to life in

19:30 general, so I like to think I modelled myself after him. He was a good fellow.

**So this is your…**

Third stepfather, or my second stepfather. Anyway, back to school, what was the question?

**Actually I would like to ask you about your second stepfather. Why did you respond to him?**

He took an interest in me.

20:00 He was a very gentle man. His name was Robert McLeod. He was a Glaswegian, he came from Glasgow, and he worked as a lagger. Laggers are those people who cover boilers with asbestos and covering and because of that job he travelled all over Scotland, and he'd be away for weeks at a time or he'd be back in the local shipyard

20:30 working or whatever. But he was good to my Mum and he was good to us as a family. We started to get more desirable things in life. I remember he bought us a radiogram for instance and he bought the first

television in the whole tenement. We thought we were something great in those days. So life became easier and obviously

21:00 money was more available although Mum still worked. She was cleaning in those days and used to go off at 4 or 5 in the morning and clean offices and come home at 10 in the morning and he went off to work. I was in high school in those days and life was a lot easier than it was when I was younger. He was a hell of a nice fellow and I got on

21:30 very well with him. Mind you I wasn't around all that long when I consider it now. He married my Mum when I was 14 and I got married for my first marriage when I was 20, so I was only there 6 years. He was one of those fellows who would get up and wash the dishes after tea, things that I never saw any other man do, even

22:00 fellows that were happily married and all the rest of it. To him nothing seemed a trouble. I remember as a 14 or 15 year old, I was in the Boys' Brigade and he had been involved in the Boys' Brigade as a young man and we went off to Ireland for a camp. I thought this was great, a son and dad thing, and off we went. It was something that I'd never had in my life. That's probably why he

22:30 affected me so much.

**And what changes in yourself did you notice?**

I really don't know. I couldn't sort of comment on that because I didn't do any self-analysis.

**What job were you able to get after you left school?**

When I left school, my stepfather then, Bob, said,

23:00 "What do you want to do?" And I said, "I don't know". He said, "Do you want to go into printing or do you want to be a carpenter?" It was the usual thing in those days; you went off and did a five-year apprenticeship. I know I didn't want to sit behind a desk, which was where the commercial course at school would lead. So I said, "The Forestry Commission". Of course in those days as a 15 year old I could see myself in a

23:30 forest with a big staff with a collie dog at my heels looking at trees. What a dream. But I went off and worked in a plant nursery and it was a three-year apprenticeship and I studied horticulture. I went to night school and that's what I did. Once I'd done my 3 years at this Dixon's Nursery as they called it, I then went to the

24:00 Edinburgh Council and worked in the Parks and Gardens there in a suburb called Castorfen which wasn't far from where we lived. That's what I did for a living up until I came to Australia.

**What was the social life like during those teenage years for you?**

Once I left school I used to go dancing every

24:30 Friday night. And I was a bit of a Teddy Boy [1950s trendsetter] as they called them in those days with the long side burns and the duck's wave at the back of the hair and the Tony Curtis haircut and the big crepe-soled shoes. I had my sort of close friends in those days and we went dancing to the local dance hall together. That was the main social part of my life.

25:00 I played soccer for local teams. The Boys' Brigade I sort of drifted away from that when I became a workingman. That was the main social side of my life.

**What music was being played at the dance hall?**

Bill Haley and all this sort of thing, Rock Around The Clock. Fess Parker [American actor] was the big

25:30 hero of the day being Daniel Boone [television series about American frontiersman]. As I said my stepfather bought us this radiogram and every Saturday I'd go down to the local record shop with my seven and sixpence, 75 cents or whatever it was, and buy a record, Bill Haley and the Comets, and Elvis Presley. He had just started. It was all rock and roll and I remember my mother and stepfather sort of shaking their

26:00 heads saying, "This will never take off". And I've caught myself saying the same about today's music.

**What sort of clothes were you wearing?**

Jeans were just becoming fashionable but in those days you used to turn the bottoms up so you had the light side showing and you made a bit of a cuff. If you could afford it you had a suit made at a

26:30 twenty shilling tailors. If you got a tailor-made suit, you were something. They were very basic clothes, the corduroy-type trousers and hardwearing stuff. It's got to be hardwearing because it has got to last you. I never had a lot of clothes as a young fellow. I had

27:00 one suit made and I thought, "I'm the bee's knees with this." I remember before I went dancing on a Friday night or a Saturday night pressing the trousers and getting the crease down the front.

**What colour was the suit?**

It was terrible. It was a light grey with a fleck in it. It was a shocker when I think of it now and I got these wide lapels put on it and it was down to about here, the jacket. And the bottom of the pants were

27:30 about that tight and these great crepe-soled shoes. I thought I was just it and when I think of it now I shake my head in disgust but it was the done thing.

**And girls, what about girls?**

There were girls around. One of the other areas, now that I think of it, I used to do a lot of ice skating and I met girls and fellows at the local ice rink. I played ice hockey.

28:00 And the girl in the close across the street, Helen McFail, I knew her and local girls in the close up the street, Christine McDonald. I wasn't involved with a lot of girls. They were friends, friends as such, part of the group but not a personal attachment until I met my first wife.

28:30 **I was just wondering when you'd got your suit and you thought you were it and a bit, who were you impressing?**

Every girl in the dance hall I hoped. I remember once going to The Palais and I had my new suit on and Brill Cream [popular brand of hair product] in my hair and a little kiss curl in the front. I went up to this girl and I said, "Do you want to dance". She stood back and looked at me and she said, "Where have you left your

29:00 stagecoach". That deflated me and I never danced with her.

**How did the other boys respond to you in your suit?**

We were all of the same ilk and the same character and they all got their suits made as well. It was the in-thing. I remember one fellow, Donald Forbes, said to

29:30 me when I got it on he said, "I'm not going out with you with your new suit" because he didn't have one. But it was the driving force. You had to get a suit tailor-made. It was incredible.

**We do need to move on. You married. Can you tell us a little bit about that marriage?**

30:00 My mother worked as a cleaner as I said and her office that she worked at was having a dance or a Christmas party or something of that nature. She said to me, "Do you want to come along?" I said, "Yes, I'll come along". I put my suit on and I had my best friend with me, Alex Campbell, and we went to the

30:30 dance and my mother introduced me to this young girl who worked in the same place as she did and I started going out with her. She fell pregnant and we had to get married in those days. It was the done thing. You didn't walk away from your responsibilities. We got married and I had a daughter, Eleanor, and twelve months later I had a

31:00 son. We immigrated to Australia and we lived in Sydney.

**Why did you immigrate to Australia?**

I actually wanted to immigrate to New Zealand but in those days you had to have a sponsor in New Zealand and I didn't know anyone. I got offers from friends who had immigrated to Canada to go there and I said "No, I'm not going to Canada, it's too bloody

31:30 cold". And then somebody said to me one day, "Why not Australia?" And I said, "Yes, that's close to New Zealand". I applied for Australia and I got accepted and I sent my twenty pounds, which was ten pounds for me and ten pounds for my wife, and we came to Australia and I went to Newcastle in New South Wales.

**How did you travel out here?**

By ship. We had two children and we were on the ship for approximately

32:00 six weeks. We left from Tilbury docks in England and docked at Woolloomooloo in Sydney. It was a great trip, it really was.

**You say you had a twenty-pound fare. I'm wondering was that assisted?**

It was an assisted passage whichever government paid the rest of it but we had to front up with ten pounds each. You often hear the cliché of the 'ten pound tourist' and

32:30 the only thing you had to do was stay in the country for two years. You couldn't go home. If you did, you had to pay back the fare but you had to stay for two years. I think when we decided to come out here, I said to Eleanor my wife then, "Well if we don't like it, we'll go home in two years". It never happened. I went to Newcastle in New South Wales and lived in the migrant centre there and then we moved to Sydney.

33:00 **How strange was it on your first arrival as a migrant, how strange was it in this new country?**

It's hard to define. I don't think I felt it was strange. I think the thing that sticks in my memory is the multiculturalism. There were so many different nationalities. That's the main thing that sticks in my mind.

33:30 In Scotland, in Edinburgh in Gorgy Road or Wardlaw everyone was Scots. I don't ever remember meeting another nationality that lived in that street. And here I am in a migrant centre and there were Polish people and Czechoslovakian and Greek and English and Scottish and Irish. That was the thing that sticks in my mind; just how many other people are in the world and

34:00 doing exactly the same as I was doing. Of course I was young and I was 10 foot tall and bullet-proof. Nothing was going to faze me. I was going to take on the world and show them what I was made of.

**How did you get on in that migrant centre?**

We got on fairly well. What I did notice and it's not just the Scottish people, it was all nationalities, you stuck to your own little group with other Scottish people or English,

34:30 I think mainly because of the language barrier unfortunately. I felt sorry for the other migrants who didn't speak English as their first language. Life must have been terribly difficult for them. But you tended to stick to your own and they did too of course. We were only there for 3 or 4 months and then I moved to

35:00 Sydney and the family moved down with me after I got a job and somewhere to stay.

**What was the job?**

I was a bus conductor. It was quite funny. I got to Sydney and I said to my wife then, "I've got to go to Sydney. That is where all the work is and I'll get a better job and better pay and we'll do this and that". When I got to Sydney there were stickers on the buses, "Conductors Wanted".

35:30 It's something you never see these days. So I applied and they said, "Yes, you can be a bus conductor". So I had to do a 3 or 4 day course on how to run the tickets and count your money and that sort of thing and then I went out to Randwick Bus Depot; that was where my headquarters was. And I was doing the Bondi to City run and that type of thing. I remember my first

36:00 day on my own. The first couple of days you went out with another conductor and that was fine. And my first day on my own I was on the bus, it was a double-decker and I was standing on the back platform, and this woman said to me, "I've got to find such and such a street. Can you tell me where to get off?" I didn't even know the names of the main streets, never mind the secondary ones. I rushed up the front and asked the driver and he said, "I'll beep the horn when we get there" and that's how I got the lady off. But after a

36:30 while I got so many requests I used to say to people, "Yours is next" and I wouldn't know where I was. And they'd get off and I'd not have a clue if they got off at the right stop or not and I'm on this bus and I didn't know where I was. It was incredible.

**Bus conductors are a thing of the past?**

Yes. I never quite got to the dizzy heights of being a driver.

37:00 **Where was the family living?**

We had a room and that's all it was, a room in like a boarding house in Paddington. It consisted of two single beds, which we stuck together and the four of us slept in there. We had a shared kitchen and a shared

37:30 toilet, and there were 3 other families and 3 single fellows who lived in this boarding house. The 3 single fellows were all Maltese and the actual building itself was owned by a Maltese fellow. There was another family, I can't think of the names at the moment, who had one son who was about the same age as my son, Stuart, and

38:00 there was another fellow and his son in another room. And that's where we were until my marriage broke down.

**Without going into the actual specifics of why that marriage broke down, what do you think it was that made it not last?**

38:30 Her (UNCLEAR) I moved to Brisbane once the marriage broke down and I went to work as a tyre fitter, fitting tyres on car wheels. That's where I worked and I lived in a boarding house in New Farm up there on my own.

**What was the attraction of Brisbane?**

I had always wanted to go to Brisbane. When we came

39:00 out from Scotland, I wanted to go to Brisbane because I thought it would be warmer. Obviously I wasn't

aware of the climatic situations in Sydney and Melbourne and I thought it's further north and anything nearer the equator must be warmer. Anything to get away from cold Scotland, you see. So I went to Brisbane and that's where I was when I joined the army.

39:30 **How much contact did you have with your children?**

Very little. At one stage, my wife then separated the children. She took the boy and left me with the girl and that was when I was in Sydney. Then she took the girl back and I went to Brisbane.

40:00 From there as I say, I was in Brisbane. I was only in Brisbane 6 months, maybe 8 months, before I joined the army and I didn't see the children during that period of time. It's not that I didn't want to, it was just that finances didn't allow what with the fares backwards and forwards etcetera.

# Tape 3

00:30 **What were your first impressions of Brisbane when you came up from Sydney?**

I liked Brisbane but it wasn't as busy as Sydney and probably still isn't today in comparison. I like the lifestyle. It seemed more laid back than Sydney. I got the impression in Sydney everybody was racing around wanting to make a dollar here and a

01:00 dollar there whereas Brisbane was more laid back. I didn't have any family or friends in Brisbane at that stage. I can't remember anyone that I could go and visit or meet but I liked the city itself. My wife and I often say that if we hadn't settled in Adelaide, we would have settled in Brisbane.

**How did you react to the**

01:30 **weather?**

I thought it was great, anything to get away from that cold. I didn't notice it so much then as I do now the humidity side of it, whether it's because living in this dry climate here in South Australia you tend to notice the humidity more. I didn't really pay much attention to it or notice it in those days.

02:00 **It was now two years of being in Australia, had you had any thought of going back to Scotland?**

No. I'd obviously thought about it but I thought, "No, there's no way in the world I'll go back to live in Scotland". Not back to the tenements and the drab, dreary, grey existence. I hoped for more in my life than that.

02:30 At that stage with my two children to support and the marriage break-up, finance was one of the main things in life to try and get on. It doesn't matter how good your life is, you can't live without the money and you have to go and get it.

**And what contact were you having with your mother?**

Just the odd letter now and again.

03:00 Up until I met my wife now, Glenys, I was probably very remiss. I very rarely wrote to my mother. She never had a telephone up until, I can't remember, but in those she didn't have a telephone and I didn't have a telephone and it would never enter my head to try and ring her. So it was just the odd letter now and again to tell her that I was still

03:30 alive and what I was doing.

**What news was she sending you from back home?**

Just the very basics: who was well and wasn't well and who she'd seen. There was never any, "Would you consider coming home" or "I want you to come home" or "That's a terrible place, come back here". There was never any of that sort of thing.

**You were in Brisbane for a few months before you**

04:00 **joined the army.**

Yes.

**I'd just like to know why you chose the army?**

Well I was working as a tyre fitter and I decided one day to take a sickie off work. I went down to the local pub and had a few drinks and looked in the newspaper and there was an ad [advertisement] in the newspaper saying, "Join the Army". I just had enough beer in

04:30 me to say, "I'll try that". So I went along to Mary Street to the Recruiting Centre and I said to this fellow, "I want to join the army". He said, "Come back on Tuesday and you can have a medical". I said,

"Right". So I then went back to the pub and got pretty drunk. I woke up the next morning and I thought, "Oh hell what have I done?" I thought, "I'll go and have the medical. I won't pass the medical". So I went along on the Tuesday

05:00 and had a medical and said I'd join the army and got sworn in and that night I was in Enoggera camp. There was no driving force to join the army, the air force or the navy. I just did it on the spur of the moment. That was it. There was no one more amazed than me that I'd passed the medical because as I say as a child I'd had a

05:30 perforated eardrum. Evidently what had happened is that the eardrum had healed. There was a scar on it but I passed the hearing test and I passed everything and I was amazed, I really as.

**What citizenship did you hold at this stage?**

Just the British passport. I didn't have a passport in those days; I was just a British citizen. In those days they weren't as strict

06:00 then that you had to become an Australian citizen at any time because you were a British subject and this was still a British colony etc. etc. so there was no necessity to become an Australian citizen.

**What year was this?**

1963.

**So the Vietnam War was actually starting to be discussed?**

Yes.

**What was**

06:30 **your opinion of the war?**

I never heard anything about it in 1963. I didn't know it was going on and I wasn't politically interested in anything. In fact I was quite amazed; the first indication I had that there was a war in Vietnam was probably in 1964 or

07:00 1965 when National Service started. I just didn't pay any attention to it.

**So conscription was about to be introduced at that stage. What was your opinion of that?**

In those days I thought it was a great thing. I was now military oriented and I thought the army was the bee's knees and it wouldn't do anyone any harm.

07:30 It was good for the morale and good for the youth so, yes, I thought National Service was a good thing, and probably because I was a regular army soldier I could see prospects for myself in promotion etcetera.

**So when you joined up, where were you first posted?**

I went down to Kapooka at Wagga

08:00 Wagga and from there to the Infantry Centre at Ingleburn and I'd topped the course at Ingleburn as the best student and because I was in that category, I was given the choice of which corps I wanted to go to: signals, artillery, armoured corps, whichever, but I opted for

08:30 infantry. And the reason I did that was because all my mates were going to infantry. That's where I went and from there I got posted to the 2nd Battalion [The Royal Australian Regiment] up in Enoggera in Brisbane.

**Just touching briefly on Wagga Wagga what was your training there?**

It was just basic soldiering. You know, the shun and unshun and the left, right, left, right and how to look after your weapons, various weapons and

09:00 field craft, how to live in the field and how to navigate. There was a lot of emphasis on physical training and a lot of emphasis on basic living skills. When I hark back to it now, a lot of the fellows who were with me, and same as today, they were lads and I was probably the oldest in the group at 23 or 24 or whatever I was.

09:30 The average age was about 19 and they'd never been away from home. They'd never been away from mum and wouldn't know how to iron a shirt or organise themselves, so there was a lot of emphasis on living skills: how to make a bed and how to wash your clothes and how to iron them and how to clean your boots. A lot of these lads had never had to do it. Mum did it or there was no need for it.

10:00 And because I was one of the older ones, I was elected by our group to run the platoon funds, which we gathered for a whiz-bang party at the end of the course. I was probably looked on as the patriarch of the group.

**How did you feel about that role?**

I thought it was a bit of a pat on the back for me.

10:30 All the lads sort of trusted me and of course with me being in that situation, I became more aware of the instructors, the corporals and the sergeants that we had in charge of us, because I had to approach them and say, “The lads would like this for the party or that for the party and how do we go about getting it?” So I was on a sort of social level there,

11:00 which the others weren’t because they just yelled and we just jumped.

**What were the corporals and sergeants like?**

They were great. In fact, there’s one and I see him now every couple of months and he was one of my instructors, a fellow called Noel Smith and we used to call him Mad Dog Smith. They were great and

11:30 having gone through that phase of my military career as well, being an instructor, I can understand now why they did what they did and all the yelling and shouting and shunning and unshunning. I can see the reasoning behind it. When it’s happening to you, you think, “This is bull. I don’t need this”. A few of the fellows pulled the pin because they couldn’t handle the discipline side of it and

12:00 when you’re subject to that sort of discipline and you don’t understand why, you do pull the pin and say, “No I’m not having this”. But when you get into a shooting war or a conflict, you realise why that discipline has to be instilled because in a shooting war you don’t have time to ask questions. “Why have I got to do that? I’m not going to do this. You can’t tell me to take my hands out of my pockets”. When that corporal or that sergeant or that officer says,

12:30 “I want the gun over there” you go. You don’t answer, “I don’t think that’s a nice spot and I can’t lie down there, it’s muddy”. You realise the need for the instant reaction to discipline.

**What was Mad Dog’s army experience?**

Up to that stage as far as I know he’d been to Malaya and he’d been to Borneo and he was a professional soldier.

13:00 He was another fellow that had done about 25 years when he eventually got out.

**What did he teach the rookies about the army?**

What each corporal had was that he had his own little group each day, his own platoon or his own squad, and he took them out and he taught them from the beginning of the drill manual to the end of the drill manual and from the beginning of the weapons manual to the end of the weapons manual so he covered everything,

13:30 the navigation and the living in the field. Sometimes you had other fellows come in and teach you different things. You even had a padre [military chaplain] for a week giving you social instruction and this type of thing.

**What did social instruction consist of?**

We used to speak about life in general and the human race and the human factor and why people do things they do

14:00 and a little bit of religion. There was a church service every Sunday. They never enforced it; if you wanted to go you’d go and if you didn’t you didn’t. Mind you, if you didn’t go they got you a job. You couldn’t just go and sit in your hut, so most fellows went.

**Did you go?**

I think I did from memory. During my childhood I had a

14:30 period when I was in the Boys’ Brigade where I used to attend church and Sunday school and bible class. At one stage I think I was going to three different things on a Sunday. You know, bible class in the morning with the Boys’ Brigade and church straight after that and then church again that evening. I went through that phase of religion but it’s never done anything for me.

**From there, you went to the**

15:00 **School of Infantry and who were you posted with?**

It was just the School of Infantry and there they just gave you an upgrade on your training, not so much the drill side of it, the shunning and unshunning. You did more if you want to call it specialised work and more on navigation and more on

15:30 weapons, different types of weapons, and more on field craft and more on that type of thing.

**What was your preferred weapon?**

You only had the one and that was the SLR [Self Loading Rifle 7.62mm] rifle. We were exposed to a sub-machine gun, which was the Owen Gun [Owen machine carbine 9mm], which is no longer used, and the

GPMG [General Purpose Machine Gun 7.62mm], which was the machine gun, which had just been brought into the Australian Army. You got to know

16:00 them but your own personal weapon was always the self-loading rifle, the SLR. I don't like guns. I would never have one in the house. You get a lot of fellows, not just military blokes, who have weapons in the house. I would never have one in the house.

**What was your opinion of guns when you were in the School of Infantry?**

They were a necessity and that was it.

16:30 I wasn't overawed by them. Some fellows used to go out and buy magazines on guns and that type of thing and tanks and armour. It was just part of the equipment and I used it and that was it.

**I just want to clarify this; did you choose the School of Infantry?**

No, once I'd chosen the corps that is where you went. If you went to artillery, you went to the School of Artillery for twelve weeks and if it was signals, you went to the School of Signals for twelve

17:00 weeks. It gives you your corps training as they call it, whereas Kapooka was just the basic training: the shunning and unshunning and hanging your clothes the right way and all that nonsense.

**I find it interesting that you didn't really like weapons or guns and you chose the corps?**

As I said, I chose the corps mainly because most all my mates were going to it. It wasn't that I was interested in guns or killing

17:30 people. Also I think deep down somewhere, I probably realised that going to one of the bigger corps such as armour or artillery or infantry, which are the field arms, there was more scope for promotion. They were larger so therefore there was more requirement for promotion.

**What were your hopes and aspirations in the army at this stage?**

At this stage, I just wanted to go to work each

18:00 day and I really couldn't see myself climbing the ladder of promotion. I just took it a day at a time and as it happened it happened. Once it did start to happen then I sort of chased it to a certain degree.

**How did it feel being in that uniform?**

I was quite proud of it. I was proud of the uniform in as much as I always liked to look

18:30 smart in it and I took personal care in its detail and cleanliness and spit polished the boots and all that nonsense. I think even then I was a bit, hurt is not the word, that there wasn't more exposure to the civilian populace. You very rarely saw a soldier in the street in

19:00 full uniform so therefore you were never sort of recognised. You weren't encouraged to go out in uniform. You'd get your weekend leave from the School of Infantry, so what you did was hung your soldier suit up for the weekend and put your civilian clothes on and went down the local pub or club or surfing or whatever you did. You weren't encouraged to sort of

19:30 say, "Well, I'm a soldier". Certainly it wasn't as bad as it was during the Vietnam moratorium stage of my life, but no one sort of went out in uniform. I remember in Scotland for instance, you saw a lot of soldiers in full dress uniform and you'd always have a second look. They were very smart especially the Scottish Regiments in the kilts.

20:00 You were never encouraged in the Australian Army to go out in uniform.

**How did you feel about that, considering you were so proud to wear it and then when you actually left the barracks?**

I really didn't give it any thought. I think because we all did it, we all got into our civilian clothes and off we went. You didn't really pay much attention to it; it was the done thing.

**And who were your mates?**

I had one very good mate, a fellow called

20:30 Mick Martin. Mick and I were very close during the initial six months. Mick and I went through Kapooka together and we went through the School of Infantry together and we both got posted to 2 RAR together into the same company up there. Mick was a married man as well. In those days, he had either two or three children I can't remember. But

21:00 during our stint in the infantry centre, it came over a Christmas period. He said to me, "What are you doing for Christmas, Jock?" because he knew my domestic situation. I said, "I don't know" and he said, "Come home to Brisbane with me". The infantry centre was down in Sydney. I said, "Yeah, righto". And in those days you could buy your air ticket and pay it off.

21:30 Money wasn't too readily available so I did that. It was the first time I'd ever been on an aeroplane. So I

flew from Sydney to Brisbane and I spent Christmas with Mick and his family. We were very close and unfortunately I believe Mick is dead now. I lost contact.

**After 2 RAR you were posted to which company?**

I went from 2 RAR to

22:00 4 RAR here in Woodside in 1964. One of my main reasons for applying to come to 4 RAR was that it was the next battalion to go to Malaya. They did a rotation and in those days the battalions used to do two years in Malaya. I thought, "Oh great, an overseas posting, something different". 4 RAR in those days was a brand new battalion and the

22:30 fellows were coming from 1 RAR, 2 RAR and 3 RAR and I thought, "I'll apply for it" and I got it and moved down. I was up in Woodside for two years. In those days I went to what they called Support Company. Support Company carries the elements of the mortar platoon, which is like a mini artillery unit, the [assault] pioneer platoon was like a mini

23:00 engineering platoon and there was signals platoon, which I went to. And I learned to use the radios and do Morse code and that type of thing.

**What was the equipment you were using in signals?**

Well there was what they called the 10 Set, which was very high frequency [VHF], which was very good. Then they had an HF [high frequency] set, the 105 I think it was

23:30 called, but I may be wrong with that. That was a very large cumbersome radio and you had it on two massive pouches if you had to carry it, hung off your belt and by the end of the day the belt ended up around your bloody knees. Of course, being HF as soon as it became dark it as useless. You could get through on Morse code but you couldn't communicate on it other

24:00 than that and the 10 Set, which was very high frequency, you could. That was the type of stuff we were using and later on in the two years that I was with them, there was vehicle-mounted radios that we used as well.

**How big was the signal?**

I think the 105 Set

24:30 consisted of a receiver and a transmitter and they were probably about, weight-wise they were probably about 25 or 30 pounds and in dimensions I really couldn't tell you.

**Was there any training in which you had to move with the equipment?**

Not so much move but using them. Once again, I went back to the School of Infantry where the whole signals platoon,

25:00 because it was a brand new battalion, the whole of the signals platoon - although some of them had already done some training in signals from other battalions - we went off to the School of Infantry and got taught how to use these various radios.

**How did you find Morse code?**

I found it very difficult and I was never very good at it I might add. It was one of those things that if you could

25:30 imagine sitting in a classroom for eight hours just hearing this bip bip bip bip, it would drive you crazy. It was one of the few times in my army career where you could physically get up and walk out without asking someone's permission. The instructors used to say, "If this is getting too much just go for a walk or have a cigarette or have a cup of coffee and then come back in when you're ready". And we did

26:00 I think 14 days of the course. It was crazy.

**How did you spend your leave in Adelaide?**

Because we were in Woodside, the majority of the fellows up there in signals platoon were married and the married quarters were down at Apple Park, which is one of the suburbs here in Adelaide. And the

26:30 battalion put on a bus for the marrieds which picked them up and took them home to the married quarters at Apple Park and then bring them back the next day. Very few of the single fellows living in the barracks, which I was one of, had cars so we spent our whole life in Woodside Camp. I think I was in Woodside for 6 or 8 weeks before I came to Adelaide because I had no way of getting down here.

27:00 Public transport was almost non-existent from Woodside itself and the buses that did run backwards and forwards were few and far between. You couldn't walk out and stand there for 20 minutes and hope to catch a bus. It came at either 2 in the afternoon or 5 o'clock at night or 7 o'clock at night. We didn't have that convenience.

**How did you spend your time in Woodside Camp?**

27:30 One of the lads bought a TV and that was a novelty, having a TV in the hut, and we all sat around that and watched it. We had our own boozer [soldiers' club, canteen] as they called it and we went up and had a few beers and a bit of a laugh and a giggle. Sometimes there was a bit of sport and reading. What you've got to remember is although the married fellows caught the bus at 5 in the afternoon and went off, you still had

28:00 your domestic chores to do, your cleaning and ironing and cleaning your kit for the next day and letter writing and that type of thing, so you were kept fairly busy. I can never, ever say I was bored. A lot of signals fellows lived in the barracks in those days so there were always plenty of people around. I think there were 16 of us that lived in one hut and it consisted of a single

28:30 bed, a single steel locker and a table and chair and that was your life. Everybody was the same. You'd wander into someone else's hut and sit and have a chinwag [talk] or you'd play 500 at cards and that type of thing.

**When you did finally get into Adelaide, was that the first time you'd seen Adelaide?**

Yes, the first time.

29:00 Of course I think one of the things in those days especially being a single man was it was straight to the nearest pub. I'm just trying to think of the pub we used to go to. It was on the corner of King William Street and North Terrace. That was our pub in those days and we used to go there but it was six o'clock closing. Once again you wouldn't think of coming down during the

29:30 week because you wouldn't make it in time so it was only Saturdays and Sundays; only Saturdays because by the time you got back to Woodside on a Sunday, it was six o clock closing.

**Did you wear your uniform when you were in Adelaide?**

No, once again we were never encouraged to wear it so no one wore a uniform in Adelaide.

**What year was it that you were in Adelaide?**

1964/1965.

30:00 **So you were seeing some of the conscripted men come in?**

No. Conscription started in '66 I think, I'm not terribly sure. I knew conscription was coming in because once again 4 RAR was getting ready to go to Malaya in 1965 and I was to go on the advance

30:30 party with the signals equipment. By this time, I'd been promoted to lance corporal, one step up the ladder. Then all of a sudden, it came out that conscription was coming in and I got the word, "Jock you're not going to Singapore," that's where we were heading for, Singapore, "You're going to Singleton".

31:00 They said, "At least you don't have to write Sing on your box again just put Singleton/Singapore". Anyhow I got sent off to 3TB [3rd Training Battalion] and prior to that I went back to the infantry centre to do an instructors' course. I did my instructors' course, which believe it or not I deliberately failed because I wanted to go to Malaya. I knew if I passed this

31:30 course, I wouldn't get to Malaya I'd go to a training establishment so I deliberately failed the course. The army in its wisdom still sent me to the training battalion so I didn't get my trip to Malaya.

**Can I just ask you talking about preparation for Malaya, what preparation were you undergoing in 4 RAR for Malaya?**

Really I think it was just the physical side mainly.

32:00 We were all trained up as far as signals platoon was concerned. We all knew our jobs. I was the Commanding Officer's personal sig [signalman]. Everywhere the CO [Commanding Officer] went, I went with him with the radio on my back and away we went. We went to Canungra to the Jungle Training Centre for a course and that was mainly navigation and that type of thing and living in the jungle. In fact, I went to Canungra two or three times during that period

32:30 of time simply because, being the CO's sig, as each company went through the CO went to visit them and of course I had to go with him. So I hated Canungra. But that was really the only extra training we did.

**What appealed to you about Malaya?**

I think it was just the overseas posting and different culture and different people and a different part of the

33:00 world. I didn't weigh up the pros and cons of the military side of it. You know, "Is it going to be dangerous and is someone going to get hurt and am I going to have to do this as a soldier or do that?" I never thought of it along those lines. I was more interested in going to have a look at the country and

meet new people.

**So when you failed your instructors' course but were still**

33:30 **posted, how did you feel?**

Well I was shattered because I wanted to go to Malaya so badly. Once again with the Malaya thing, being mercenary, you got more pay. I got sent to Singleton but I got promoted from lance corporal to corporal, so the financial side was a little better. When I got to Singleton, they were

34:00 just building the new camp ready for national service so we lived in the old camp, which was very basic. We were virtually just preparing everything as far as the camp was concerned. I got into the enthusiasm of it and I thought, "This won't be so bad after all. I'm going to be a corporal". I remember my corporal instructors at Kapooka

34:30 when I went through and thinking, "I'm going to be one of them. God, I'll be able to yell at these fellows". I was very fortunate because that's where I met my wife.

**Did you at any stage think that you could be going to Vietnam?**

No. That never entered my head. I do remember that when we

35:00 heard that Vietnam was escalating and 1 RAR was to be sent to Vietnam, and we were in 4 RAR at that stage at Woodside, I thought, "That would be great". Once again it was just to see a different culture and a different nationality, not because it was a war. I didn't think of it along those lines. It was something exciting. I thought, "Yes, that would be all right".

35:30 I think it even crossed my mind that I'd apply to go to 1 RAR but I thought, "No I'll go to Malaya instead". And even when I went to Singleton as an instructor, I never thought about myself going to Vietnam, no.

**You mentioned that that was where you met your wife?**

Yes it was quite funny. Before the actual national service started, there was only the instructional staff on the

36:00 ground and this brand new camp with five company areas which is fairly large and could hold about 2,000 men all up when it's full, but there were only about two or three hundred of us. Anyhow it was a Saturday evening and I was walking through the camp because I didn't have a car in those days. I was going to go down to Singleton itself, the local

36:30 township, and go to the local pub and have a few beers. And this fellow came driving towards me and he said, "Hi Jock, where are you going?" And I said, "Just into town". This was a fellow called Max Pope. He said, "Come with me to Muswellbrook" which was further up from Singleton, another little country town. He said, "I know a family up there and I'll introduce you". I said "OK". I found out

37:00 later Max's plot was to introduce me to this Narelle Poole. He thought she and I might hit it off. I met Narelle and we went swimming to the local baths in Muswellbrook and I met my wife. She was there with her two children. Lo and behold, Narelle and Glenys are sisters. To cut a long story short, Max married

37:30 Narelle and I married Glenys. We're still obviously in touch. They now live up in the New England Ranges and have a farm and two boys. So that's how I met my wife.

**You had something to do now when you went on leave?**

Yes I used to hitchhike from Singleton to Muswellbrook on a regular basis at all hours of the day and night I might add. My wife used to sing

38:00 professionally up in the RSL [Returned and Services League] in those days. And every Saturday night there was a little group of us, all instructors, in those days a fellow called Billy Ship and Billy had a car, and Jock Isaacs and myself and Red Rider and a few others would all get into Bill's car and chip in and give him petrol money and he'd drive us to the Muswellbrook RSL and my wife used to sing until

38:30 about 1 in the morning. Then we'd go all the way back to Singleton. That was life.

**Just going back to your work at Singleton, what type of training were you instructing?**

**Well they tried sort of two phases when we were there. They tried the old system where you were given a section of men, ten blokes, and you taught them**

39:00 **everything from A to Z – drill, weapons, navigation, field craft and that type of thing. Then the powers that be decided, 'We'll get 4 or 5 instructors to teach drill and 4 or 5 instructors to teach weapons and 4 or 5 instructors to teach field craft and navigation. So I really don't know which the best system was but that was the way it was run.**

39:30 **We'll go back; the first way you were busy 12 hours a day because not only did you do your instruction but you went back of a night to help the new recruits ironing or how to do it and**

**this type of thing. You made yourself available to sort of counsel them if they were having a hard time or worried.**

40:00 **You were like a father confessor so therefore you were busy 12 hours a day and then you had to go back to your lines, where you lived, and do your kit for the next day. You were expected to be up at reveille at 6 o clock in the morning so it was a fairly busy life. Strangely enough, I never heard anyone**

40:30 **complain and I'm talking about the instructors. They put in a long day but there were no complaints. That was that way of doing things and then they went to the group side of it where various taught one type of lesson. You had a lot of time on your hands because the syllabus might be laid out that we'd do drill for a week and we'd do field craft for a**

41:00 **week and we'd do weapons for a week and then we'd do navigation for a week. So if you were on the navigation side, you did nothing for the first 4 weeks and you just sat around. Mind you, when you did your week or 10 days or whatever it was of instruction, you were very busy. As far as the instruction side of it, it wasn't good. You didn't just teach navigation you were still involved in the personal side of**

41:30 **life with the recruits and various things around the company. You didn't just sit in a hut and wait until you were called out in five weeks time but it wasn't as busy as the first way we did it.**

**We've got a tape change now.**

# Tape 4

00:30 **I just wanted to ask you how you got the nickname, Jock?**

In the military system, all Irishmen are Paddy, all Welshmen are Taffy and all Scotsmen are Jock. When I first came to Australia I said to myself, "I'm not going to be known as Jock" because it's quite a common thing even in civilian life they sort of associate Jock with being Scots. But in the

01:00 army, it just sort of came naturally and I accepted it. In fact I would say without fear orf contradiction that there are a lot of fellows who've known me for 20, 30 or 40 years who don't know my first name and that's the reasoning behind it.

**That's an interesting point that you've raised. How did you feel as a Scottish migrant in the Australian Army?**

Well there are a lot of UK [United Kingdom] personnel in the Australian

01:30 Army. At one stage I think around about 1959/1960, there was an influx of British ex-servicemen and British boys and men who enlisted in Australia House in London and came out to the Australian Army. In fact one of them who is my daughter's godfather, Jock Isaacs, he was a national serviceman in the

02:00 British Army and he joined the Australian Army straight after he left the British Army and there were quite a few of them. In fact in Signals Platoon in Woodside, there were two Jocks, two Paddys and one Taff. So it was quite a common thing to see UK personnel in the Australian military.

**And how did the Australian men react to the UK personnel?**

02:30 I think they just accepted it. Once again I think there weren't any problems, apart from the accent, there weren't any communication difficulties you would have with people who had joined where English isn't the first language. That would have been very difficult on both sides.

**Were there any men at that time from other migrant nationalities?**

03:00 Not that I know of. That's not true; I did meet a German fellow but his English was impeccable and apart from an accent he didn't have any trouble communicating or understanding. But there were very, very few. I can only remember one German chap. If English wasn't your first language, the military wasn't your scene.

03:30 **Back at Singleton the fellows you were training were actually in on National Service. How would you describe them as a group?**

I found that they accepted the military system readily. Whether they were indoctrinated by their father or friends who had been in the military at one stage in their life,

04:00 they accepted the yelling and shouting and the swearing and the shunning and unshunning. When I look back at it in hindsight, they accepted it very well. I never had any great difficulty with the groups that I had. During my period, there a couple of things come to mind. I had one chap who wanted to commit suicide. He just could not

04:30 handle the military side at all. I was the Orderly Corporal and I got word from one of the soldiers came running in and said, “There’s a fellow sitting up on the rafters with towels tied around his neck and he’s going to jump”. So I went over to the toilet block where this fellow was sitting. And he was on the rafters and I think it was more sheets than towels that he had wrapped around his neck and they were tied to the post. I spoke to him and said, “What’s wrong?” And he was crying and he

05:00 was obviously upset. I tried to talk him down and he wasn’t having any of this so I said, “For God’s sake, jump and let’s get the mess cleaned up” and he just climbed down. Whether that had a reverse psychology “We’re not going to baby you any more. Come down for God’s sake”. I just said, “Jump and let’s get the mess cleaned up” and he came down. All this soft talking,

05:30 “Don’t be silly. You’ll be all right and we’ll look after you” none of that was getting through to him. But when he saw he wasn’t getting any sympathy any more he came down.

**What happened when he came down?**

He went and saw the psychologist and they discharged him from the army. The same with another chap; he used to put his bayonet – we used to keep bayonets in the lines with us and lock them in lockers - but he kept his under his mattress

06:00 and before he went to bed each night he’d lift his mattress up and poke the springs of his bed with his bayonet to see there were no booby traps and this type of thing.

**So back to the gentleman with the bayonet?**

Yes he was poking the springs and he had problems, psychological problems. Even his conduct during the day, during the

06:30 training, was erratic. So we had him psyched and he was discharged. A lot of fellows sort of query how the hell he got through the system in the first place but who knows? Another fellow, it’s quite funny now I look at it. I had this chap and he was a great big chap 6ft 3 in height and

07:00 a good solid body weight but he was very badly coordinated. He couldn’t shun and unshun. So we used to take him out to do extra drill and I was doing the drill at this stage, “Shoulder arms, order arms, shoulder arms”. When you shoulder arms, you bring the rifle up and you carry it. When you order arms, you put it down and the butt is on the ground. So one of the orders

07:30 “Order arms” and he put the butt on the ground and the butt stuck to the ground and the piston spring flew out of the rifle. Well, I went up to this fellow and I’m looking up at him and I said, “You’re in trouble now. That’s going to cost you $350 for a new rifle. Look what you’ve done to it, you silly bugger” and he started to cry. He thought I was fair dinkum [serious]

08:00 and the tears were running down his face and I said, “ For God’s sake, take him off the drill square”. And that’s just the way it affected him. Now whether it was me yelling at him or not I really don’t know but he thought he was going to have to pay the $350 to get a new rifle. All you had to do was put the piston spring back in. There was no damage done.

**It was quite an interesting time when you were working with these enlisted men just outside of the army like**

08:30 **politically it was a very turbulent time. What social changes were you becoming aware of whilst you were in the army?**

At that stage I wasn’t aware of any of the social changes because my life was such that I worked during the day and because of the hours we worked, there was very little socialising during the week.

09:00 At the weekends I went to the club with Glenys singing and on Sundays you relaxed at camp. It was the only day you got off sort of thing and sometimes you were working on Sundays so you weren’t aware of any social changes. My world was very cloistered. I worked and I socialised in the club, I knew what was going on there, and I went back to the barracks and that was it. You were aware to a degree of what you heard on the

09:30 radio, you know, “Save our sons” from mums down at the recruiting centres and that type of thing but it didn’t affect us up in Singleton. We didn’t have any banner waving up there. We didn’t have people coming to the front gate of the camp. There was none of that.

**What did you think of the “Save our sons” campaign?**

At that stage of my life I didn’t think anything of it.

10:00 It was a political decision made by the government of the day and voted for by the people of the country so that was it. Somewhere back in my memory, military personnel were encouraged not to say anything. You weren’t stifled and if you wanted to say something you said it, but the sort of cliché of the day was “Just say no comment”.

10:30 If you were ever approached by someone from a newspaper or media and “You’re a soldier in uniform and what do you think?” It was “No comment”. You weren’t sort of gagged in any way.

**What did you think of the media and what they were saying about Vietnam?**

The thing that crossed my

11:00 mind was that the government had made the decision and the people had put the government in there and there was really not a lot that could be done about it at that stage. As far as how it affected the personnel being conscripted, I never really gave any thought to it at

11:30 that stage. I did later on in life but not then. To me they were a number who I had to do something with. The thing that I felt the most was I was instructing these fellows and some of them went off to Vietnam before I did. And I

12:00 thought, “Well, how can I instruct them on how to stay alive in a battlefield when I’ve never been there myself”. I felt a bit of a hypocrite. I was saying to them, “You should do this and you should do that” and I really hadn’t been exposed to it myself. I suppose the ultimate aim for every regular soldier is to go to battle. How do you

12:30 know if all the training is worth it unless you’re exposed to a war or a battle or a conflict whatever you want to call it. Of course I hadn’t been. A lot of the other instructors had been to Malaya and had been to Borneo and they had been exposed to it somewhere along the line. Some of the ex-British national servicemen and ex-British regular soldiers who were now in the regular army

13:00 had been to Cyprus and had been to Suez and that sort of thing. And here was I sort of pounding the desk saying “This is the way to stay alive” and I really hadn’t exposed myself to it. I found that a little frustrating.

**What advice were they giving the men that was different to what you were actually instructed to tell them?**

13:30 I don’t think it ever sort of happened. No one was telling them anything different from what we were telling them. There was no sort of glorifying the war or that type of thing. There was nothing of that nature.

**And the instructor officers, did they share with you their experiences of being in the battlefield or being at war?**

Strangely not.

14:00 Then and even now, you will find that soldiers even with other soldiers very rarely discuss it. They’ll tell you the funny side of life or maybe the tail end of the horrific part of life but they very rarely go into the detail of it all. You’ll get more funny stories than anything.

14:30 “I was in Malaya and we pinched a rickshaw and went racing”, that type of thing. Soldiers very rarely talk about it and whether it is a defence mechanism built into a soldier I don’t know. I’ve been told over the years that I very rarely speak about it. I have over the years because of my exposure to psychiatry.

**How would you describe yourself**

15:00 **as an instructor?**

That’s a hard question to answer. If I say I was a good instructor I’ll be an egotist. I enjoyed it, put it that way. I enjoyed the instruction, I enjoyed the job and I felt I had achieved something at the end of a ten-week stint when these fellows marched in until they marched out. I could see a difference in

15:30 them, in the individual. You know, he’d come in as a longhaired lout and went out as a soldier. The only other thing I can say in my favour as an instructor is that over the years I’ve run into some of these chaps and they’ve always said, “You were a good instructor and we enjoyed it” and that type of thing. That’s about all I can say on that matter.

**I just want to pick you up on calling the ‘longhaired**

16:00 **lout’. It was a very interesting time in the way of fashion and music, which was quite different to when you first joined the army. What was your opinion of the changes that were happening?**

I must admit I used to cringe a bit when I saw fellows with long hair especially down to the shoulders and more, so if I saw someone walking down the street or wherever with long hair and I said

16:30 “Is that a bloke or is that a girl?” You know, some fellows and girls it is hard to tell by the physical stature. That side of it; at least you can see I’m a bloke I’ve got my hair cut. Apart from that, I used to think back to when I was 17 or 18 and I had my Tony Curtis haircut and my long jacket and that as my right and this was theirs. I didn’t really give it a lot of thought.

17:00 **What did you think of the fashion that was coming out?**

Fashions come and go. I thought I remember when we went from drainpipe pants to flares, “This will come and go”. Even today the young fellow has got the crutch of his trousers down here somewhere and no bum in his pants. They’ll come and go.

**The music was quite different to what you were listening to at their age.**

17:30 **What were you listening to now?**

We were into the protest songs. You know, I've even got some of them on tape. The music was getting into that sort of personal side of it. We've got to get out of this place and all that type of stuff. Me personally I still bought my long play

18:00 records and that type of thing. And of course with Glenys singing, we still kept to the mundane type of music.

**What did the younger men think of your taste of music?**

They thought I was old-fashioned. Strangely enough some of the lads, the young fellows when they came in to do their 12 week national service training for the first 5 or 6 weeks I think it was, I

18:30 can't remember exactly, they were not allowed out of camp. Then after the five weeks or whatever, they were allowed weekend leave and a few of them used to come up to the RSL where Glenys used to work and socialise a little bit. But they never got personal in as much that they never called me Jock. It was always Corporal or Sergeant or whatever rank I was. They would have a beer with you or buy a beer

19:00 for you or vice versa. Some of them used to lace the drinks. Glenys is a non-drinker for instance and she'd have an orange juice and she'd be up on the stage singing and come down and have a drink of orange juice. And one night, I was up on the dance floor with her mother dancing and my mother-in-law said, "Can you see Glenys". And I looked up on the

19:30 stage and I said, "No, but I can hear her singing" and she'd slipped down the wall. They'd been lacing her drink with vodka but she never missed a beat in singing. She never got one foot out of step. They used to do that sort of thing with me as well. They'd put vodka in my beer and that type of thing. They thought it was great and so did I sometimes.

**Did you find out who had laced her drink?**

No and it wasn't done with any

20:00 malice. There was no malice attached to it. They just thought it was a bit of a trick, a bit of a joke, and that was it.

**Do you think that the young men were actually taking national service seriously?**

Yes. That is the impression they gave me but whether it's true or not I really don't know. I never heard anyone mocking the system and I never heard anyone

20:30 decrying it in any way. You know "We shouldn't be here. This is all bull". There was none of that. They took it very seriously and especially after about the second or third intake where the news was coming back that national servicemen were now in Vietnam and national servicemen were being killed. Oh, it was a fact.

21:00 They knew it was a fact now so, no, they took it very seriously.

**So what difference did you see between the first intake and say the third intake?**

That was the main difference I saw. The first intake it was sort of glory "Yeah, we're here for two years and we're going to Vietnam and this will be great". No one had seen anyone hurt.

21:30 No one had ever been exposed to the horrors of war. But by the third intake, the message was coming back that "Yes, fellows are getting killed. Yes, people are getting maimed and you're one of those people who are going to be here soon". And I think they were accepting it in that light.

**Did you see any of the men protesting once they got into national service?**

22:00 No, never ever. As I said earlier, I never heard anyone protest or anyone decry the system. No, never. The only ones I saw were occasionally staff members would go down to recruiting centres in Sydney to pick them up, the national servicemen, and bus them back to Singleton to start their training. And that was the

22:30 only exposure we ever had to protestors, the mums and the placard-waving types. I never physically got abused by anyone, verbally or physically.

**What was going through your mind when you saw especially the mothers?**

I must admit I really didn't give it a lot of thought in those days. I was a

23:00 soldier and I thought it was a great thing to be a soldier and I thought these young men should be proud. I must admit that later on in life, my sympathies went out to the national servicemen who were exposed to Vietnam, simply because I was a regular soldier, that was my job, I signed that dotted line to go to war, not necessarily Vietnam but war, whereas the national servicemen had no say in the matter

23:30 and I do think it's wrong.

**The men were with you, the national servicemen were with you for 10 to 12 weeks, where did they go from there?**

They went to the various corps training depots – infantry, School of Infantry, School of Artillery, School of Signals, the RAEME [Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers] Centre or whichever one they got allocated to. The allocation of the personnel

24:00 was done by Army Headquarters in Canberra. "We need 200 to go to infantry, we need 50 to go to artillery" and it was then selected. We would get asked as instructors, "What do you think of this fellow? What do you think of that fellow? Do you think he'd be capable here?" and that sort of thing.

**How did you assess the men?**

Just by their ability and how they handled mainly the pressure

24:30 areas that we exposed them to. Some lads might be great stripping down a machine gun but put them out in the boondocks [field, bush] with a compass and a map and they'd get lost. You'd say, "Geez, he's good with his hands". So you'd send him to RAEME where he would become a mechanic or work on machinery or vice versa. The fellow that stumbles and carries on

25:00 with the mechanical side but he's great in the field, his field craft is terrific and his navigation is terrific, "We'll send him to infantry" or "We'll send him to artillery". Well those things are needed and highlighted. That was how we assessed a person. There were some who came across as, a terrible phrase, "Mummy's boys". He can't handle pressure. He hates getting wet and dark and dirty.

25:30 And I'm not being derogatory when I say this but we'd send them to the catering corps, where they'd become cooks or stewards or something of that nature where their temperament would fit in. And once again the individual wouldn't feel like a fish out of water. I'm sure there is nothing worse than being forced to do something you're not capable of.

**What mental capabilities were you looking for in the men?**

26:00 That's a hard one to answer. I'm not a psychologist. I really don't know. I think just mainly that they become self-sufficient both mentally and physically. The bottom line in any sort of conflict is that

26:30 you've got to look after yourself. You've got to be capable of looking after yourself and if you can't do that then someone else has got to do it for you, which then weakens the chain. I think that's what you look for, someone who is self-sufficient.

**And what would you do with the men who weren't self-sufficient?**

**You would get them reassessed and discharged if necessary, not,**

27:00 **well because they're not self sufficient, but because they would become the weak link in the chain. Someone else would have to look after him so if he's looking after him he's not looking after himself.**

**You said earlier that you had a role of father confessor. With the change in attitudes of the men that were coming through, how did that role as father confessor change?**

27:30 With the national servicemen I think the main thing that came up, especially if he was a married man with children, and there weren't a lot of them, they worried about their families. One may have got a disturbing letter from his wife or girlfriend and he wanted to know what he could do about it. He hadn't got leave or he hadn't got money and that type of thing.

28:00 We'd go out of our way to try and get the system to help. You'd grant them leave for the weekend. He might be in that 5-week period where he's not due any leave but he's got to get home because he's got a problem. It was that type of thing. It never got any sort of deeper than that. I can never remember someone sitting on the side of his bed saying, "I'm worried in case I get killed or

28:30 maimed and what will I do if I lose a leg?" No one ever sort of brought any of that up during those periods. I don't doubt it went through the individual's mind but he kept it to himself. It was more the domestic side of life: "Mum's sick" or "Dad's sick" or "My wife is ill" or the kids or whatever.

**What preparation were you giving the men for Vietnam?**

Only on our

29:00 instructional ability. Once again until about 1966/1967 none of the instructors had been to Vietnam because the first battalion went up in 1965 and came back in 1966. So that group of men or instructors who were at Singleton in 1965 had never been to Vietnam so there was very little that we could tell them that they couldn't read themselves in the local

29:30 newspapers. But as the soldiers came back from Vietnam, they could then probably answer the questions in more detail, which was something I couldn't do at that stage.

**What questions were you being asked?**

We were being asked mainly questions on the social side of Vietnam. Australians are very social people.

30:00 "What are the boozers like?" "What sort of beer do they drink?" That type of thing. There were a few interested in the family side of life in Vietnam. "How do they live?" "What sort of living conditions are they in?" "What is the motor transport to get around the area?" Those are the sorts of things that I could glean the answers to by just

30:30 reading because I couldn't give them any personal views. I didn't have any.

**What was your resource that you were using for information?**

What I could read in the barracks library, they had a library there, but there wasn't a hell of a lot in there I might add. Later on of course what I learned from the fellows who'd been there and come back but there wasn't a lot I could tell them.

31:00 **The fellows that had been there and come back, what were they telling you about Vietnam?**

They told me it was a terrible place to be. The climate was shocking and the area was shocking. They were in those days confined to a place called Vung Tau which is down in southern Vietnam and is very steamy and very hot and

31:30 there were lots of paddy fields. Life was very uncomfortable. As far as the enemy was concerned they were very sporadic. At that stage there hadn't been any large conflicts that the Australians had been involved in. I found out later on of course like most wars, sort of 80% of it was very boring. You were walking around for days and you'd never see a

32:00 soul. It's amazing how many people have a picture of war where you jump off an aircraft and start shooting your rifle and twelve months later you stop shooting your rifle and get back on a plane. No, a lot of it is very boring.

**What wild stories did they come back with?**

The wild stories that all soldiers come back with; wild animals encountered, snakes

32:30 and that type of thing, the local populous, the odd grenade being thrown by someone. A lot of it you take with a pinch of salt.

**How were you feeling about going to Vietnam at this stage?**

At that stage I mainly felt cheated that I hadn't been to Vietnam

33:00 and as I said earlier, I'm trying to teach these fellows how to live. My opportunity came when the Australian Army Training Team gave me a chance to go on their course up in Canungra. I thought, "I'll apply for this and hopefully I'll get a trip to Vietnam".

**How did Glenys feel about this?**

My wife has been behind me 100% in

33:30 everything I've done in the army. I was a soldier and really I suppose I was a soldier first and a father and husband second, because you spend so much time away from home. Even in those days in Singleton although we lived at Muswellbrook, which was only 30 kilometres up the road, I spent most of the time in camp anyway.

34:00 We went off for ten-day exercises so you were away for 10 days at a time. I would say life was sort of built up of six months at home and six months away, not all in one go of course. I went to Vietnam and my brother-in-law had been to Vietnam already with one of the battalions; that was Max Poole who introduced me to Glenys. He'd been wounded and sent home so we were sort of exposed to that

34:30 side of it; one of the family had been hurt and had been to Vietnam. It was my job and I wanted to go. As I said earlier, the culmination of all your training is a conflict. They keep saying to you, "Do this when you're in the jungle. Do that when you're in the jungle". How do you know if it works unless you try it? And you can train and train and repeat the same exercises for years

35:00 and never know if it's going to work unless you're in a conflict.

**So when the AATTV came up and you went to Canungra?**

Yes the thing about AATTV, the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, was that the lowest rank in those days was a Warrant Officer Class 2

35:30 and an officer. Anything below that did not go on the training team. The training team were military advisers and we worked directly with the South Vietnamese Army. The first group of training team members went into Vietnam in 1962

36:00 and the last group of training team members came out in 1972. So therefore it is the longest war that Australia has ever been involved in. Because the rank had to be a Warrant Officer, I was promoted as such from Sergeant to Warrant Officer after I'd passed my course at Canungra. The course at Canungra exposed you or taught you

36:30 the various weapons that were being used in Vietnam and a bit about the culture of the Vietnamese people and the army and the other nations that were involved in Vietnam and a bit of upgrading of military skills. A lot of fellows failed the course for whatever reason.

37:00 That was it as far as getting into AATTV was concerned. The other thing was that AATTV did not exist here in Australia. There was no unit in Australia called AATTV. It was only when you arrived in Saigon and you went to the headquarters building in Saigon and you were then officially a member of AATTV.

**What did they tell you about the Vietnamese culture?**

37:30 A lot of the fellows who were going into AATTV, because they were older soldiers and believe you me some of them had been Second World War and Korea and Malaya and Borneo, especially those who had been to Malaya and Borneo, they knew quite a deal about the Asian cultures. They did tell you things like, "You'll find that they are very shy people

38:00 especially the women of families don't mix in male company. You'll find that they're very friendly" and that type of thing, "and religious beliefs are many whether it is Buddhism or Mohammedism or Sikhism" whatever you want to call it, they said they were many and varied, Christianity, Catholicism.

38:30 That was about it. We did a colloquial language course. I can hardly speak English let alone Vietnamese and I didn't do well at that at all. Of course the other silly thing that happened to me was I went off and did a colloquial language course in Vietnamese and they posted me with a company of Montagnards [indigenous people of Vietnam] who don't speak Vietnamese. The Montagnards have

39:00 hundreds of tribes in the mountains of Vietnam and they all have their own dialect. Some of them can't even speak to each other. It was very difficult.

**So what weapons were they now preparing you for?**

It was still the SLR and we were now using the M16 [M16 5.56mm rifle], which was a lighter weapon, an American type thing: we used to call it the 'placky gun'; it had plastic

39:30 handles. It was still the weapons that we had been using before. Some of the American weapons if you could get a hold of them you could use them but we didn't get any instruction on them. If you managed to pick up an American weapon in Vietnam, you taught yourself how to use it. I wasn't interested; the M16 was…

40:00 I didn't go looking for any others. I was quite satisfied with what I had.

**The climate and environment; what were they telling you about that?**

The climate was very similar to North Queensland. It was very steamy but I must admit that I was probably lucky that when I went up to Pleiku with the Montagnards, I was in the highlands and we were quite high up and it was quite pleasant. It wasn't as humid.

40:30 They were dry days and cool nights. It was very nice and beautiful country.

**So what were they preparing you for at Canungra?**

What they were really preparing us for was how you would advise a company of indigenous soldiers into defensive positions and skirmish positions and ambushes how you carried them out.

41:00 We tried to upgrade them in jungle warfare, which I believe the Australian Army is held in very high esteem for being jungle fighters, because, and I don't know so much about the South Vietnamese battalions, but the Montagnard battalions had very little training in any of these aspects. You've got to remember that some of these Montagnard

41:30 lads were 14 and 15 years of age.

**I'm going to have to stop you there because we've got to change tapes.**

# Tape 5

00:30 **Jock, I'd like to spend a bit of time just before we move on talking about 1968. Where did you spend your 30th birthday if you remember?**

That's a good question. Where did I spend it? Here in Australia with my family up in Muswellbrook. I was

01:00 thirty in November and I didn't go to Vietnam until the February and I was wounded in May and I was back in Australia again in June or July. No, I spent it here in a civilised manner. Well, I don't know about civilised; I was drunk probably.

**1968 was a significant time in the Vietnam War. The Tet Offensive happened.**

01:30 In '67, the Tet Offensive [February 1968].

**What knowledge of that had filtered through to you?**

The sort of feedback we were getting was that the North Vietnamese had made a great build-up ready for a move into South Vietnam, which was stifled by the allied forces. A lot of our fellows, the training

02:00 team members, were involved mainly up around Hue, which is up in the northern part of Vietnam. Apart from that we didn't get a lot of information down this way as to the political side of you. That's about all I can say on that matter.

**What did you understand was the communist threat to Australia?**

02:30 I think it was the old cliché, "The yellow hordes are coming down". The story is the same as with Malaya and with Korea that if they took over the southern part of the countries, the next step is Australia. Geographically it was virtually the next step as far as Vietnam was concerned. Whether that would have ever happened I don't know. Greater minds than

03:00 me can figure that one out. In hindsight I think to myself, "Yes, there could have been a threat simply because if they do get that far they'll think to themselves 'why not, we've got nothing to lose by attacking Australia'". Today when I think about it, I think they were just a nation wanting to unite their country.

03:30 Believe it or not I often think along those same lines with England and Scotland. Geographically it is the same situation really although Scotland is recognised as a country and England is recognised as a separate country whereas North Vietnam and South Vietnam are just Vietnam. But when you look at it geographically what's the difference? It's one land

04:00 mass. Scotland wanted to be separate from England and at one stage I'm sure in history England wanted to unite the whole place. It never happened. So really there wasn't a lot of difference. It was mainly that the North Vietnamese people, the communists as they called them, wanted to unite the country, which they've done. That's the way I see it today

04:30 but back in 1968, no. The political side of life did not interest me I must admit. I was there to do a job militarily and that was it.

**Nevertheless as a soldier what type of training or preparation or indeed I guess propaganda about the perceived enemy was there**

05:00 **before you left Australia?**

Very little. There was very little propaganda about them. There were two types of enemy. There was the NVA, which was the North Vietnamese Army, the regular army who were soldiers like ourselves and trained, and dedicated, whatever cliché you'd like to use.

05:30 The other soldiers were the indigenous people, the farmers or whatever you want to call them, the fishermen, who'd go out at night and for want of a better cliché become a nuisance. They'd shoot someone and then run away. Really that was it. We heard about what they called the

06:00 Chieu Hoi project [amnesty program], which was to help and indoctrinate the South Vietnamese people to back South Vietnamese, you know "We'll help you and we'll build villages and schools and hospitals and you back Vietnam, South Vietnam". It obviously didn't work. That's about all the

06:30 indoctrination we got. There was no sort of political hammering, you know, the red hordes or none of this nonsense. I've never ever struck that in any phase of my military career, political indoctrination.

**In what way did you feel and indeed your colleagues feel it was Australia's war?**

07:00 I didn't feel it was Australia's war but I think for myself and other regular army soldiers it was a job. The government of the day said go and you went. I didn't sit down and query it within myself. If the boss said, "Go" I'd go. I didn't sit down and analyse it and say,

07:30 "This is right or this is wrong". And I think as a regular soldier if you do that sort of thing you're only going to create confusion within yourself because we're all different and we've all got reasons for what we do and I'm sure it's the same with nations and we'll never all agree. So therefore all you're going to do is confuse yourself. Your beliefs aren't necessarily the same as mine and

08:00 who is to say who is right and who's wrong. As a soldier I don't think you should – it's not the done thing. Once again you do confuse yourself.

**What was the perception of America before you left the country?**

08:30 **You enlisted in 1963 and you didn't leave to go to Vietnam until 1969 so that was six years. It was quite a long time and America had been very heavily involved in Vietnam and I guess some of their involvement would have been filtering back to you?**

Yes. I think that once again we didn't analyse America's

09:00 manner of running the war or conducting it. I think at our level we wanted to know how the individuals reacted or the squad reacted or the platoon reacted because that's the level we worked at. We were also aware of America's might, their firepower,

09:30 and they didn't have the restrictions that the Australian Army would have had financially. With the Australian Army, you empty the magazine on your rifle for instance and you take the magazine off and you put it in your pouch so you can use it again whereas the American just throws it away because he can go and get another one. That is just giving you some idea.

10:00 The old Australian was still counting the dollar and while he is counting the dollar it is costing lives. That's my interpretation. From other fellows who had worked with the Americans, or been exposed to them, they were not as well trained as us and not as disciplined as we were. They would do things while on operations

10:30 that we would never do for reasons of security. I became more aware of it when I actually went to Vietnam myself.

**You mentioned that you turned 30 in November?**

Yes.

11:00 **What sort of pre-embarkation leave did you have?**

I had a very nice pre-embarkation leave. Glenys and I weren't married in those days but we were living together. My mother-in-law took the children and Glenys and I went to Sydney and had a week off and did sightseeing tours and took harbour rides and went out to dinner at night

11:30 and all that type of thing. We went and saw a friend whose husband was actually leaving with me on the training team and we stayed with them for a while. It was very nice and very personal.

**How difficult was it to say goodbye?**

Believe it or not for me it wasn't. I was excited and I was keen to

12:00 go. I wanted to get into it. I think Glenys was probably more emotional about it all than I was. I suppose once I went, it was back to the drudgery of life in general whereas I was going off to war and it was a new country and new people and new sights and new

12:30 smells. It was all very exciting. As I said earlier, I was 10 feet tall and bullet proof and nothing was going to happen to me. You wouldn't want to think any other way either or you wouldn't go.

**What happened? What was the procedure?**

I was documented to leave Singleton, 3TB, down to the personnel

13:00 depot at Watson's Bay in Sydney. I was housed there and waiting on embarkation, which came in the February, and we flew out from Mascot. There was a planeload of reinforcements and some advisory personnel. I've got to get this right. We flew from Sydney to Darwin

13:30 and we got off the plane at Darwin and we took our uniforms off and put civilian clothes on. And then we flew to Tan Son Nhut, which is in Saigon, and I think, I'm not sure, we put the uniforms back on and went to our various headquarters, various units. Once again that was a political thing. Whichever air space we had to

14:00 fly over didn't want soldiers flying over their air space. So if you took your uniform off, you weren't a soldier. It was ridiculous but still that's the way it was done.

**I have heard that. I'm wondering what sort of baggage did you take with you?**

You only took your military equipment. There was no need to take anything else. I didn't take any personal clothing not that I can remember. Now that I think of it I don't know

14:30 why but I didn't.

**Well where did you get the civilian clothes from?**

We must have taken those. That's right we carried them on a hanger, just a shirt and a pair of trousers. You didn't worry about shoes or anything you kept your army shoes on. It was just a shirt and a pair of trousers and that was it. I can't remember taking any other clothes because there was no need to ever be in

15:00 civilian clothes. Everywhere you went, even when you were on a sort of break, you were in uniform. And it wasn't the dress uniform, it was jungle greens or the camouflage equipment. I can't ever remember wearing civilian clothes in Vietnam.

**Can you describe the uniform? How had it changed from earlier?**

It hadn't. The Australian Army in those days was still wearing jungle

15:30 green which I think was introduced during the Malayan campaign and prior to that it was khaki during the Second World War and Korea. The jungle green was obviously because of the camouflage appearance it gave you in the jungle. The Australian forces in Vietnam all wore jungle greens. We had jungle greens and I'm sure we travelled up in them. When we got to Pleiku

16:00 and we were attached to the American units, they all wore camouflage uniforms and we could get any of the American equipment we wanted. And I wore camouflage equipment simply because if I'd stayed in jungle greens I'd have been the only one in the whole company. All the Montagnards wore camouflage and I was probably lucky because of my stature and height

16:30 I fitted in with the Montagnards. They are small people in height and stature and build whereas the American medic I had was a Negro and he was 6' 6" and he stuck out like a sore thumb. Not me, I mixed in well. I wasn't a good aiming mark.

**What was the company that travelled with you over on that flight?**

17:00 It was a make up of reinforcements, national servicemen and regular soldiers going over to join units in Vietnam, and fellows coming back off leave. They'd had 10 days R&R [Rest and Recreation] as they called it and they were going back to finish their stint in Vietnam. There were military advisors and I don't doubt, I didn't really pay much attention but I don't doubt there were some

17:30 media personnel on board. But it was purely a military flight. There were no tourists or holidaymakers on board even though we stopped at Singapore where we could have offloaded people for that purpose but, no, it was all military personnel.

**What was the aircraft?**

I really can't remember. It was a big one.

**I'm just wondering in what**

18:00 **way did it feel like you were travelling to a war zone?**

I don't know about anyone else but I was all excited. On board you could get a beer and relax and that type of thing. There were no restrictions and the cabin staff were exactly the same as they would have been on a commercial flight. There were the hostesses and the hosts and, "Would you like a drink, a soft drink or sandwiches?" It was all very civilised.

**I say that because it's an interesting image compared to the sort of**

18:30 **stories that I've heard of troops travelling to World War II and earlier campaigns?**

I think one of the things that seems odd about the Vietnam War was how readily the media got hold of all the stories and a lot of it is on camera because of technology and whatnot, whereas in Korea and the Second World War they didn't have that

19:00 expertise or equipment to do that. It could happen today and it's on television tomorrow whereas in the Second World War you didn't hear about it for about 3 or 4 months after the event had happened.

**You mentioned that you were a warrant officer by this stage?**

Yes I was a temporary warrant officer. What happens in the military is you have to go off and do your

19:30 courses for various promotions and of course I hadn't qualified as a warrant officer but I had the rank simply to do the job, which I retained anyway when I came back. I stayed a temporary warrant officer for another 4 or 5 years and I then got qualified. That was it.

**What responsibilities came with that warrant officer position?**

20:00 Immediately my main responsibility was on the advisory role. I wasn't exposed to the military system that we have here in Australia with Australian troops as a warrant officer. That came later when I got back on my feet after hospital and started to work again with the Australian troops.

**When you arrived in Vietnam what**

20:30 **was that arrival like?**

Exciting. I was absolutely amazed at the conglomeration of aircraft and vehicles and personnel in Tan Son Nhut Airport. I really don't know how the hell anyone knew what was going on. There were thousands of people around. You go into a civilian

21:00 airport or commercial airport and it's all very staid. The aircraft come in and there are only 3 of them on the tarmac at one time and there are no people on the tarmac, but you saw Tan Son Nhut and it was absolutely chaotic. You'd wonder why an aircraft wouldn't run over somebody but once again that's war. And it was all a new ball game to me. I was amazed. We moved from

21:30 there up to Saigon itself to the headquarters where we were met by our Commanding Officer who was a Colonel, Russ Lloyd [Colonel R. D. F. Lloyd]. He gave us a briefing of where we were going because at that stage we didn't actually know which units we were going to be working with. He said, "Gill, Kelly you are going to Pleiku with the Montagnards and so and so you're going with the ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam]" which is the army of South Vietnam

22:00 and that type of thing. He just gave you a very quick briefing on what to expect. And then we did a bit of socialising and the next day we were on an aircraft out of Saigon and going up to wherever we were going and I went to Pleiku, which is north of Saigon.

**And that socialising before you left for Pleiku?**

That was just a drink in a bar

22:30 and speaking to fellows who'd been there a year or so and talking to them and catching up with old friends. That's all it was. When I say socialising that was really the extent of it. We didn't get around Saigon or anything of that nature. We didn't go sightseeing.

**How did you react when you found out you were posted to the Montagnards?**

23:00 I was quite surprised simply because I had assessed my own ability and I thought, "If I get sent with the ARVN out of the two groups there, they are probably the better trained". I thought, "Well, I haven't been exposed to any conflict or war so I'm really green and if they

23:30 send me with semi-trained troops," if you want to use that, "I can hone my skills whereas the Montagnards are very poorly trained". I thought it was like the blind leading the blind. I knew nothing about war and they knew nothing about soldiering. They said, "You're going with the Montagnards" and I said, "That's fine. I'll do what I can and I'll my best". That's the way I looked at it but whether I was right or not I

24:00 really don't know. I've heard points for and against the South Vietnamese Army and points for and against the Montagnards.

**How many other Australians were being posted to the Montagnards?**

When we went over, there were 3 of us that went up to Pleiku – no 4, 4 of us went up to Pleiku on that flight, the one that left Mascot. There was myself and a fellow called

24:30 Mick Gill [WO2 M. W. T. Gill, KIA May 1968], Mick got killed unfortunately, Bob Cameron who lives in Sydney and Keith Payne [Warrant Officer K. Payne, VC] who won the Victoria Cross. And we all went up together, up to Pleiku. And when we got up there, we got allocated different Montagnard companies. I was with the 231 Company, myself and Gill.

25:00 **Tell us about 231?**

Well I don't know if you know the make up of a company. It is approximately 112 soldiers. The Montagnard company had its own infrastructure. They had their own platoon commanders and section commanders and a company commander

25:30 and basically what we were supposed to do was to advise. We'd say to the company commander, "Don't do this because or do that because. This is available for you and we can get that for you. What about this and what about that". That's it in a nutshell but it was never that easy because I found that the

26:00 Montagnard company commander virtually gave us commands. We made the decisions and we ordered the troops to do whatever was required and we did it through him. He very rarely made a decision on any military activity.

26:30 We did it all. We controlled the soldiers. And this was all done via an interpreter. We had the problem. I was lucky I had a very good interpreter but some of the interpreters didn't speak enough of the dialects to get through to all the soldiers, which created problems. And even with mine,

27:00 and you just never knew, you hoped that that interpreter was telling the company commander or telling the soldiers exactly what you told them. You just didn't know if he was. As you know from life's experiences, you can tell somebody something and he'll interpret it entirely different to you. So therefore he'll change it to suit his interpretation. And in a battlefield it can cause

27:30 great havoc because soldiers are not doing what you were expecting them to do even though you've told them. So we had that problem. I got on very well with the few Montagnards that I was personally close to, such as my interpreter and my radio man and my Montagnard company commander.

28:00 I got on very well with them. I tried very hard not to look down on them. These were boys as I call them. My interpreter was 18. These fellows had been at war all their life. They had never known peace in all

their life because Vietnam had been at war through the French campaign and through the American campaign so these kids were

28:30 born into war and were still fighting it. They'd had had more exposure to war than I had and I tried to keep that in mind when I communicated with them. I would have hated to have made them feel inferior in any way; well I wouldn't like that with anyone never mind the

29:00 Montagnards.

**You say there were two Australians?**

Our company was made up of two Australians and one American advisor when I first started. When we first started, there was myself and a fellow called Brian Walsh. He came from

29:30 Denman in New South Wales. And there was an American lieutenant. It was one of these things with the Americans, and I suppose it happens in the Australian Army as well, this fellow's expertise was supply as the American's called it, stores, making sure that everything gets to where it is supposed to go. But this fellow wanted badly to get a

30:00 combat badge, an infantry combat badge, and the only way you could get that was to do 28 days in the field with a forward unit, not in his storeroom. And he was the boss. He was a lieutenant and we were only warrant officers so technically he was the boss although we commanded our own companies.

30:30 Anyway thank God he didn't have to make any radical decisions. Whether he was capable of doing that or not I don't know. He did his 28 days and he disappeared. I don't know where he went. It was probably back to the storeroom because he'd got his combat badge and he could wear it with pride. That left Walsh and I, so there were only the two Australians and there were 112 Montagnards

31:00 and we operated with them. Walshie and I would take it in turns to be the commander simply because when you moved through the jungle on an operational thing, it was like an arrow and the forward platoon were your early warning system. So we had one advisor travel with that forward platoon so he had control

31:30 and then the other fellow moved in the centre where he could control everyone else. That is the way we did it. One day I would be up front and the next day Walshie would be up front. When we stopped at night and we put in defensive position, he would go clockwise and I would go anti-clockwise and we'd check all the gun pits and all the mines and all the general routine for a night harbour and

32:00 that was it. So we worked very closely together, Walshie and I.

**I'd just like to talk a little bit about the term or the role of advisor and how that sat or came into conflict I suppose basically in your role as commander?**

Well the advisory team when they

32:30 first went up in 1962, the first group of men, or advisors, were not supposed to carry weapons because Australia wasn't involved in the war; they were only advising. So what was actually supposed to happen, very briefly, is the advisors would get on the ground with their soldiers whether they were South Vietnamese or Montagnards or whatever and teach them the

33:00 military skills of the Australian Army because we were supposed to be the best at it: the harbours, the ambushes and that type of thing. And then that group of indigenous soldiers would go out on operations and we'd hope that they would carry out these drills that we'd taught them. That was it basically. But of course the Australian advisor being the Australian advisor thought, "I'm teaching these blokes; how do I know if they are putting it into

33:30 practice?" So they used to go out on operations with them but were not supposed to carry weapons. Well, that's fair enough but the bad guys out there don't know you're not carrying a weapon. So our fellows I believe they used to obtain weapons and take them with them but technically they were not in the war. Australia had not been involved and America had not asked them to get involved in the

34:00 war. We had sent an advisory team. So that's where the name came from the Australian Army Training Team. Of course training was basically what they did initially. They trained these indigenous soldiers but of course it escalated from there. And in my situation because the round-eyes as they called us,

34:30 the American and the Australian advisors, were leading the push for want of a better word consequently you just sort of fell into the position of being the commander of the unit. I had never heard of any sort of Montagnard commander saying to the Australian or American advisor, "Hey, it's my company, I'll make the decisions". I don't think that ever happened. The

35:00 decision that the Australian or American advisor made was the one they went by. What the Montagnard commander did was looked after the troops. He made sure they went and did it. He went out with the section and made sure the gun was where it was supposed to be and we did too, we went round and re-checked. Believe it or not the motto for the Army Training Team was "persevere" and that's what we did. We

35:30 persevered and we checked, checked and re-checked what they'd done because these soldiers were not trained to our level. The discipline wasn't there. With the Australian soldiers if you said, "I want a gun there and I want a gun there and I want a Claymore there". You could bet on your life the next day you'd come around there'd be a gun there and there and a Claymore. With a Montagnard you could not guarantee that was going to happen and you had to

36:00 check and you just hoped it did happen so you just persevered.

**How aware was the Australian Army of this sort of anomaly?**

They were very aware. I'm quite sure that the commanding officers of the training team would be tearing their hair out at times simply because it was very difficult for the individual

36:30 if not for anything else but communication. You could not speak to your soldiers. We were aware that the Montagnard and the South Vietnamese soldiers had their own way of doing things and I don't know whether some of the things might have been for political beliefs or religious.

37:00 They'd do things and you'd just wonder why the hell they'd done them. Common sense would tell you not do such things but they did them anyway and whether it was for a political belief or a religious belief who knows. It was very frustrating.

**Before you go on, was it a case of the Australian Army turning a blind eye to the fact that you were supposed to be advisors but in actual fact…?**

No they didn't

37:30 turn a blind eye to it. They knew it was happening and they condoned it obviously and it was probably more beneficial to the individual such as myself and Gill and Walsh that we were in charge because we were in control of our own destiny. That's the way I see it anyway.

38:00 **It is very interesting because there are quite a lot of issues there. Your own personal protection is at stake as much as the Montagnards carrying out the orders that you want them to. I think it is quite a complex situation.**

It certainly is. And the commanding officers of the training team knew this but it was one of those stumbling blocks that was there and there was nothing that we could do about it. We

38:30 couldn't overnight become fluent in Montagnard dialect and we couldn't overnight train these people so that they automatically did the things that Australian soldiers would do and it was very frustrating. At one stage my interpreter and my radioman and my company commander, Montagnard types, all knew me as 'Jock

39:00 Jesus Christ' simply because they made so many mistakes and I used to say, "Oh, Jesus Christ". And I remember my interpreter saying, "They know you as Jock Jesus Christ". They made so many mistakes so it was "Jesus Christ". It didn't matter how many times I'd tell them, they'd still do it.

**Well,**

39:30 **Jesus Christ, I think it's time for lunch.**

# Tape 6

00:30 **I want to talk to you a bit about the Montagnard Battalion that you worked with. I'm intrigued by their culture. How would you define where the Montagnards' background comes from?**

I think from what I can understand the Montagnards are akin to the Malays and the Dyaks I think of Borneo.

01:00 To look at them they are a lot darker and a lot more swarthy than the Vietnamese for example who lean towards the Chinese nation. They still live in their tribal communities, the Rhades and a few others, and they all have their different dialects and different cultures and different beliefs. Up until I went to Vietnam I'd never

01:30 heard of them and I'm led to believe that the Vietnamese treated the Montagnards like the white American used to treat the black American, as inferior. They would take the taxes and everything off them as usual but wouldn't do anything for them. So really the Montagnard had no real loyalty to either North or South Vietnamese. They were mercenaries and they fought for

02:00 money and of course the Americans had the biggest purse strings and they could control the majority. I really don't know if and how many Montagnards fought for North Vietnam. I'm not aware of that but there was no loyalty, it was just money.

**Were you a part of recruiting the Montagnards?**

No; that was all done by the American Special Forces. We had one warrant officer in Pleiku

02:30 who assisted in training the Montagnards they were recruiting from the villages and then take them on a 10-day course. You wouldn't learn much in 10 days and also in those 10 days they did parachuting and they were absolutely terrified. They got $20 a month extra if they were parachute trained so they took the parachute training. And they were so

03:00 small and light it took them ages to get to the ground.

**How would you describe where they lived?**

They lived in the village context. They had the village chief. I never actually went out to any of the villages. I only visited a Montagnard house in the city of Pleiku itself and it was just a little shanty. It was a one-room house and the fire was outside. And I would assume that the villages would be similar if not

03:30 worse as we would call it.

**And what furniture did they have in this one room that you saw?**

They only had furnishings that looked to me like they'd picked it up somewhere. They had the odd chair and the odd table and nothing matched. They had a bed, a big double bed, and I think two or three of them slept in that. There were no bedrooms especially in the house I went to and there were children and the mother and father

04:00 in that sort of context.

**How many people lived in the house?**

I think about 5 at that stage. Once again I think the Montagnard are very similar to the Aboriginal. They are family-oriented in as much as you're expected to help each other or they do help each other. It is similar to our Aborigines where the family are the pivot everyone works around and I think the Montagnards are of the same ilk.

04:30 **And how would you go about training the Montagnards?**

I didn't do that much training with them and as I said the course was only for about 10 days or two weeks or something of that nature. They got the very, very basics in weapon handling and not even navigation because the navigation was left to the older soldiers,

05:00 living in the field and rationing. That was about it. There wasn't a lot of military training involved because there just wasn't time. You've got to remember too that some of these fellows were only 14 or 15 years of age.

**Was that legal to actually have men that young in the army?**

I think so. I don't know what the legalities of it were but they were all very young. We had the

05:30 odd one or two in there that had been with the French but they were obviously the senior NCOs [non-commissioned officers], the sergeants and the warrant officers within the structure, but the majority were very young.

**You noted that they were mercenary and they didn't really have any loyalty. How did you stop them from creating conflict with the South Vietnamese?**

Well strangely enough

06:00 within the structure of the group we had, the Montagnards and the advisors, we also had Vietnamese Special Forces who travelled with us and they had their own name 'Duc Long Bec' or something; I don't speak good Vietnamese. But we used to call it "Look Long Duck Back". The Montagnards didn't like

06:30 them and they didn't like the Montagnards. They tolerated each other because as I said earlier we were basically in charge so therefore was no sort of conflict. And the South Vietnamese fellows that travelled with me I can hardly remember seeing them most of them time. I don't know where they went and I wasn't terribly interested either. There was no love lost between either group.

07:00 **How did that change your role with the Montagnards?**

It didn't change it in any way. The Montagnards accepted us for what we were and for our expertise and anything that the South Vietnamese soldiers said I don't think bothered them in any way. They just ignored it. They probably said, "Yes, yes, yes" and then went away and did what we said or what they said. But there was absolutely no love lost between them.

07:30 **If you were to describe them as an army, how would you describe them?**

With more training, more intensive training in the basics of soldiering, I think they would make a very, very good soldier for a couple of reasons. One, the majority of Montagnards even up until today have spent all their life in

08:00 conflict, and two, they are natural hunters. They still do their hunting in the jungle for food etcetera so they have that natural ability to live off the land and to travel across the land whereas the European or the white man or whatever you want to call them really has to work hard at it. It is something we have lost over the

08:30 ages that ability to live off the land and live with the land. In that environment, they would make a very good soldier. You wouldn't want to take them as an army and put them in the middle of Germany somewhere or some European city because they'd be absolutely lost. In a lot of ways they are still babies as far as wars and conflicts are concerned, whereas the European has been exposed to the war in the jungles, in the cities and in the

09:00 deserts and on the sea.

**How did they handle the equipment?**

They were very good. The thing I noticed with them, the food we gave them whilst on operations was dried rice and dried fish and things of that nature which they just added water to

09:30 but although it was filling and it served its purpose, there was not a lot of nutrition in it. After about a week or 10 days out in the field, you would physically see them slowing down and getting tired. That once again was a lack of good nutrition and I think it affected us in much the same way because I ate the same rations as they did. Even though I had access to American rations,

10:00 I ate the same as the Montagnards. A couple of times we had been on patrol and all of a sudden the word would come back that a buffalo had been found, and I'd go forward and say, "You'd better not touch the buffalo because it belongs to the farmer down the road". "No, no, VC [Viet Cong] buffalo" which meant they could kill it. So they killed it, they slaughtered it and cut it up and jerkied the beef and

10:30 ate it. And you could see the physical change in them. Within the next 48 hours, they'd picked their act up and they were a bit quicker and that type of thing. So it was physically very strenuous and of course they are only small people in stature and you stick 60 or 70 pounds on somebody's back for days at a time and not feed them well, they do it hard. We were probably the

11:00 same.

**What did the buffalo taste like?**

To me like shoe leather because they had no condiments or anything to mix it with. They used to slice it very thin and just lay it out in the sun to dry. That's how they jerkied the beef. It used to amaze me. You'd think in that situation the flies would swarm. There were very few flies in Vietnam compared with here in Australia for instance.

11:30 The other one they used to do which helped a bit was in the jungle there was a rather large ant. It made its nest in the trees and it ended up like a big ball. The Montagnards would see it and get a big stick and knock it out of the tree and of course this thing was full of these ants. And these ants could bite I can tell you. Anyway it would hit the ground and they would jump on it and crush all the

12:00 leaves and crush all the ants or as many as they could. And then they'd get down to the heart of it and it was like a cabbage inside. They would get rid of the ants and chop it up very fine and put it in the food. And it gave the food a sort of tangerine flavour and it was very nice. I tried it. The other thing that they did when they slaughtered the buffalo was they would cut its jugular and catch the blood and drink it, and of

12:30 course me being the boss it was, "There you go, boss" and you didn't say no because you'd lose face. I had a couple of mouthfuls, "Yuck!" Once again they drank it and it didn't do them any harm and it didn't do me any harm either mind you but I wasn't terribly keen on it.

**When you found out you were going to the Montagnards,**

13:00 **how did they describe the Montagnards to you?**

All Colonel Lloyd said was, "You're going up to the 231 Battalion in Pleiku. It's a battalion of Montagnards and these are the indigenous mountain people of Vietnam. They are mercenaries and by all accounts they are good soldiers". That's basically all he said. He said, "You will probably find communication difficult because of the different

13:30 dialects" he said, "They all don't speak the same language" and "Good Luck" and that was it.

**When you say they were mercenaries, who were their enemy, who were they attacking?**

They were attacking the side that wasn't paying them. That's the only way I can describe it. The Americans paid them so they knew that the North Vietnamese were the bad guys. I don't doubt, I can't prove it of course,

14:00 but when we came back in from operations, we used to say to the fellows, "You can go on leave for a couple of weeks. The next operation is in a fortnight" or whatever the case may be. I don't doubt that

some of them went and fought for the North Vietnamese and picked up a double pay packet just like someone does here who works in the local bank but does office cleaning in the mornings or something. I don't doubt they did that just to pick up the extra cash because the

14:30 loyalties weren't there and why the hell should they care. All they wanted to do was look after the family and that's what they did.

**I understand that the Montagnards are nomadic by nature. When you would say to them "OK you've got two weeks leave", how many came back?**

We found out early in the piece. We'd come in off operations and we'd resupply them all with weapons and ammunition and whatever they needed and we'd say,

15:00 "Righto, the next operation is on the 29th of March". And of course the first question they asked was "Where?" "I don't know yet," we'd tell them. We'd know where we were going because if it didn't suit the individual he wouldn't come back. Whether it didn't suit him because it was his local area, his village was in that area or for whatever reason but if you said to him, "The next operation is at

15:30 Ban Me Thuot" all the lads from Ban Me Thuot they just wouldn't come back and you were short X amount of soldiers. So you used to just say "We're not sure yet, we'll know when you come back".

**How did you work out that it was best not to tell them?**

Just from fellows with previous experience. They'd say, "Make sure you never tell them because they won't come back". You didn't have the

16:00 military discipline to charge these people. If an Australian soldier doesn't come back to work, you charge him and you can fine him so much and confine him to barracks for 14 days or whatever but you can't do that to these people because they'd just take the soldier suit off and leave if they want and there's nothing you can do about it. They haven't physically signed any document to say "You belong to us for six years".

16:30 You belong to us for as long as you want to stay and that's it.

**Well how did you teach them discipline?**

I never tried to teach them discipline. I left that to the Montagnard company commander. Him and the company 2IC [Second in Command] and some of the older soldiers ran the discipline. For instance when we came back off operations, it was part of my job to go down to the cash office in

17:00 Pleiku and get a suitcase full of money and come back to the headquarters in Pleiku and sit down at a table and dish this money out to them. The Montagnard company commander and the 2IC stood there and told me how much each soldier got. He would get it and make his mark on a piece of paper, and if he'd done something, and I knew nothing about it, on operations the company commander would

17:30 take $50 or $20 off him and that was his fine for a misdemeanour while he was in the field. I never argued with it, that was their business. And I'm led to believe that the Montagnards had a political infrastructure called Fulro in which any monies like that went to Fulro which was to help the

18:00 Montagnard community. I never questioned what they did with it. That was their thing. I was just there to advise on the military side of the issue.

**If you were to train them in a certain technique how would you do that?**

I used to do it - the very few times I did - I used to do it

18:30 via blackboard. I'd just get the blackboard and draw lines on it. "If we get attacked from the front, I want you to take the high ground" and my interpreter would tell them that and I would show them and draw a little knoll on the blackboard and "Up here, up here and the enemy is there and you're firing that way and that way" and that's how we controlled it and that's virtually all you could do. And if you had time and you had the

19:00 area to do it, you would go out and practice but it was very basic and sometimes they just couldn't understand. They couldn't get the concept together as to why you would do that, even though you'd explained it all and shown them. It was just something you had to hope happened.

**I'm just thinking of "Jock Jesus Christ". When those moments**

19:30 **occurred when they weren't grasping something, what did you do and how did you overcome those hurdles?**

Well what usually happened was when it got to the stage where I said, "Oh, Jesus Christ", it was too late to do anything. If we had the time and the facilities we would go through it again more slowly. I'd talk them through each phase if it was necessary but that was all you could do. You couldn't sort of

20:00 threaten them and say, "If you don't get it right this time, you're going to be washing dishes for the next fortnight". You just didn't have that hold on them. You just hoped that the message would get through. As I said when we started, I didn't have to do a lot of training. We just didn't have the time.

**Being an indigenous group, I believe they would have had a very strong understanding of their environment. What was their relationship to the**

20:30 **jungle like?**

Very good. They were excellent as far as navigation was concerned. There were times that they amazed me. I was the person with the map and the compass and I was supposed to know where we were going – you'll notice I say supposed – but they seemed to instinctively know where they were going. I'd come out into a clearing, maybe coming out of an operation and there'd be a clearing in the jungle where I was to

21:00 meet the helicopters. And I'd come out into the clearing and think, "Gee I made it" and I'm amazed at myself. And when I sat down and analysed it, it wasn't me that made it, it was the Montagnards because they knew where they were going. They were very, very good and very quiet. They were very stealthy if you want to use that word in the jungle. I didn't have any trouble with them as far as noise or camouflage or anything of that nature. They were very good.

21:30 Once again I think it was because it was their natural environment and that's how they hunt for their food.

**What could they see or hear that you would have missed?**

I think just the natural noises of the jungle. They would interpret a noise, which was probably unusual, which may indicate there were other people around. Or if it was quiet

22:00 where it should be noisy, they just instinctively knew that something was amiss. They weren't always right but it did happen and they were very good in that respect. That's why I said earlier about how they would perform as an army within the confines of a jungle situation very good but it would be a different ball game in the city or in the desert.

**Can you give me an**

22:30 **example of something that they spotted or heard that you would have missed?**

Yes. Actually it had nothing to do with the war. We had been on patrol for about a week I suppose, we'd been patrolling this area and around 4 o clock in the morning I used to give the signal for harbour up. All round defence and dig weapon pits and then have tucker and get weapons ready for the

23:00 night's activities. And I pulled up and I gave the signal and they wouldn't move. And I got the company commander and of course he didn't speak English and I'm giving the signal to him. So I got my interpreter and I said "What's wrong? Why won't they move?" He said, "Come with me, Jock" and we walked down the track about 50 or 60 yards I suppose, and there was this tree and all the bark had been pulled off. And I said,

23:30 "So?" He said "Elephant". He said, "If you harbour here, elephants have a habit of coming back on the same trail and they'll just stand on you". So we had to move away. I'd have seen the bark off the tree maybe and thought, "Oh, yes, that's happened." But that's what it was and they wouldn't harbour there because they knew the elephants had the habit of coming back on the same trail and they would

24:00 smell you there I suppose but they would still stand on you.

**Have you got another example?**

Not really. I can't think of one.

**I noticed then when you were telling that story you used a bit of sign language. What other signs did you use to immediately communicate with the Montagnards?**

A lot of the sign language

24:30 which came from the Australian fieldcraft. There was the harbour area, the arrowhead formation, the enemy. It's that long ago since I was in the army that I can't think of them now. There was the extended line. You could virtually go through a whole day and not say a word and still get the communication across. It all became

25:00 second nature. There was "Come to me" and "We're going to have an O Group [Orders Group]" and "We're going to speak to you about something", that type of thing. I can't remember any of the others.

**Was there any dissent at any stage between yourself and the Montagnards?**

No, never. I got on very, very well with them. In fact I think once again, not patting myself on the back, but when I got

25:30 invited down to Pleiku to the fellow's house, and I think it was my radio man's family from memory, that was a bit of a feather in my cap because a lot of the fellows never got invited. They obviously trusted me or had faith in me or liked me, or whatever you like to call it, but I got the invite and I thought it was great. We were down there and of course the lads went out and bought some beer and they bought it

from a Vietnamese

26:00 seller. It was three large bottles of beer and we all had one each or how ever many it was. I took the top off mine and I thought, “Oh Jesus, this is terrible beer” but I didn’t say anything because I didn’t want to embarrass them. After about an hour, the others had finished their beer and I still had about three quarters of mine left. And my interpreter who was there realised there was something

26:30 wrong and he asked me for my beer and he took a mouthful of it and he spat it out. They had a quick chat amongst themselves and they went charging down the street and they were going to kill this Vietnamese fellow because he’d watered the beer down in that one bottle for whatever reason. He didn’t know I was going to get it; it was just something he’d done. They were horrified and they had lost face as far as they were concerned because I had got the wrong bottle of

27:00 beer. It was terrible.

**What habits did they have that you found amusing?**

One of the things I did notice and believe it or not, often when we were out on patrols and we’d come across a river and we knew it was safe, we’d still put our early warning systems out but we would take the

27:30 advantage of having a bath. And of course the European guys, the Aussies or Americans, we’d just strip naked and dive straight into the river. Every Montagnard soldier never took his underpants off, never, they were too embarrassed. That was terrible and they would not do it. Soldiers amongst soldiers you don’t worry about a thing like that but they were very modest. I could not get over it.

28:00 When I say underpants, they looked like swimming trunks to me that they wore and every one of them had them. It was just one of the quirks I suppose and one of the things I noticed. I just can’t think of any more at the moment.

**That part about the clothing is interesting because I’m trying to get an image of the Montagnards in my head.**

28:30 **In their indigenous groups, how would they dress traditionally?**

A lot of the older ones just wore the lap lap and something very similar to a cloak or a shawl over their shoulders and bare feet. They certainly didn’t dress for the occasion. It was very, very basic. The ones who lived around the towns and cities became Americanised almost

29:00 overnight with the jeans and the shirts and shoes etc. The traditional dress was very basic and we’d be out on patrol and we’d come across a clearing in the jungle and there would be papa san [father] sitting in the shade smoking his pipe with about four or five wives tilling the fields and planting the crops, and he’d just be sitting there smoking. I remember a bricklayer came into the team

29:30 house one day. We were getting the bar fixed or built or whatever. And he was a bricklayer and he had three women working for him. And all he did was he squatted down like the Asians are able to do for hours at a time and just laid bricks. But these three women they mixed the cement and carried the water and carried the bricks to him and he just laid them. So life was very good.

**What was the role of the woman in their culture?**

From

30:00 what I could see, she did all the work. Like a lot of the indigenous people from that part of the world, the man is supreme and the women did the hard yakka [work]. They carried the big loads and they carried everything and the man just walked along the road and he had three or four wives following him. It was a great idea.

**And where did the woman socially like in the social structure of the group?**

30:30 I really don’t know but let me say that the little I had to do with them socially, there were never any women there. They didn’t sort of join in or I can’t even remember seeing them sitting in the background. When I went to the house that day and we had the bad beer for instance, I remember meeting the lady of the house and I remember saying goodbye to her but I don’t remember her being in the house while we were all sitting talking and having a

31:00 beer and I think that was the way it was right the way across the board.

**From what you can see would any women have picked up arms?**

I never saw any Montagnard women pick up arms for our side but we did capture a woman on operations and she was

31:30 definitely armed and was travelling with another squad of soldiers.

**Can you tell me about that?**

From what I remember we captured them in an ambush and she was wounded and I really don’t

remember what happened to her after that. I really don't.

**How was she wounded?**

A gunshot

32:00 wound. We sprang the ambush and I think there were two or three of her compatriots killed. When I say I don't know what happened to her, she may have been Montagnard and she may have had friends who were working for us and they got her out and smuggled her away, I don't know, but I never saw or heard any more of her. We interrogated her as much as we could but that was about the end of it.

**That's an**

32:30 **interesting point how she looked like a Montagnard. How would you describe the features?**

Well the features as I said earlier were a lot darker than the Vietnamese. They were a lot more swarthy in build and even the women are a bit heavier built than the Vietnamese women. But she was in almost a new uniform from memory and she had

33:00 good boots on her feet. I'd say she'd been with a regular unit at some stage or may have been part of a regular unit and she'd not long come into the field because she had plenty of meat on her bones. She hadn't been in the jungle for a week or two or three weeks at a time because you can see the skeletal difference of them. If they are carrying body weight, they've just come into the field and if they've lost it it's obvious. That's really all I can say about it.

33:30 **Just going back to the Montagnards' traditional form of dress, how did they take going into uniform?**

I think they took it as a sign of manliness being in uniform. The Montagnards it was a gift to them because the uniform gave them something to

34:00 wear. I don't think they put it on and strutted around because it was a uniform; it was just something to wear and they were recognised as soldiers. But then again when you consider that 95% of people wandering around the streets in Vietnam at that stage all had a uniform on except the women. Nearly every second bloke you saw had a uniform on of some description so it

34:30 wasn't anything unusual. It's not as if you'd turn around in the crowd and there was just one fellow out of one hundred in a uniform. It was the other way around.

**Just going back to the knowledge of their culture, what knowledge of the jungle did the AATTV pick up from the Montagnards?**

I think the advisors

35:00 just…it's hard to say because all our training, up to that stage anyway, was done in the jungle anyway because our conflicts up until that time, up until Somalia, had all been in the jungle. So all our training was jungle oriented. So really we didn't pick up a lot if anything. We knew the

35:30 jungle environments and we knew what to expect as far as the climate was concerned. You know, your wet season and your dry season and that type of thing. And even the jungle, especially where we were up in the highlands, a lot of it was primary jungle, which was very clear underneath. There wasn't dense undergrowth. We didn't pick up a lot.

**You mentioned before the operations. What type of operations would you**

36:00 **undergo with the Montagnards?**

Mainly patrolling. The intelligence would come through that the North Vietnamese were sending supplies or troops down along what they used to call the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which ran into Cambodia and then back into South Vietnam. The Cambodian trail actually came back into South Vietnam up near Pleiku and we'd get the intelligence

36:30 reports that there was movement in that area. They'd give us an area to cover and we'd go in by helicopter and land in a clearing and spread out and then for the next 3 weeks walk through that area. If you found tracks, of which there were quite a number of them in the jungle, and it looked as if it had been used, you would maybe sit on it for a couple of days with an ambush. Sometimes someone came along and sometimes they didn't. As I say a lot of it was

37:00 boredom. You didn't just jump off the helicopter and start shooting and not stop shooting for two weeks and get back on the helicopter; a lot of it was very boring. You never saw a bad guy for weeks at a time.

**How would you retain the concentration of the Montagnards?**

It was very difficult and not only the Montagnards but yourself. After a while I think it is just human

37:30 nature to become lax or lazy and when that first round goes off, you're utterly startled. It's something you can't explain. You've got to do something immediately but you've been in dreamland for the last two days or three days. It's quite a shock to the system and by George it gets the old adrenalin running I can

tell you.

38:00 It's difficult to keep people on their toes after 2 or 3 days especially if they have been in the field for an extended period of time and the food is not getting any better, or any worse, but not getting any better. It becomes very monotonous and very boring and it's hard to retain it even within yourself.

**There'd be a very high**

38:30 **risk involved in that?**

Yes and unfortunately there's not a lot you can do about it. You hear tales, and I say they are only tales, of soldiers popping pills to help them overcome this problem but I didn't encounter any of it. I only myself once ever experienced it. We had been out on operations for about 3 weeks I

39:00 think and we had one contact and we had another second contact, and I could feel myself physically becoming very tired. And my medic, who was an American Negro, gave me one of these pills. Don't ask me what it was, I wouldn't have a clue, but within half an hour I was going to take on the world, you know "Just let me at them". That was the only time and he gave it to me and he said, "This is a pick-up to help

39:30 keep you going" because we knew there was going to be a further contact. That was the only time I ever experienced anything like that.

**Did any of the Australian medics carry those types of drugs?**

No, not that I knew of. They carried morphine but that was for an obvious reason if somebody got shot or hurt. I never encountered any and as I say it was just that once with Freddie Duggan, our medic, and he didn't sort of

40:00 force the issue it was just, "Here, try this, it will help you over the next day" or whatever it was but it certainly had the affect, it was great.

**I wonder how you contain yourself in that situation when you're obviously in a very quiet state and you've taken this pill which has brought you quite high and on edge?**

I wouldn't say I was on edge, it was just that everything was very clear.

40:30 Instead of sitting there saying, "Maybe we should go this way or maybe we should go this way" or I might look at the map and say, "It looks a bit easier that way but…" After I'd taken the pill I would say, "That way". I knew exactly what I had to do and how I had to do it. It was as clear as a bell. I wasn't edgy or anything of that nature. I didn't feel tired I just felt,

41:00 "I'm in control and I'm all right" but prior to that I really did feel physically exhausted.

**We've got a tape change at the moment.**

# Tape 7

00:30 **Jock, you were just about to tell us a story there?**

As I was saying earlier about popping pills and marijuana and all that, I never saw any of that but on the other hand I did notice that – and it might be an Americanism – we had the team house and it had its bar and its beer and all the

01:00 spirits the world could produce, and the Yanks [Americans] themselves were big spirit drinkers whereas the Aussie was a typical beer man. The only thing that the Aussie complained about was that the American beer wasn't as good as the Australian beer was. In fact any time when you got the chance to go down to Vung Tau where the Australian troops were, we used to come home with bags of beer. The Yanks loved it as well. That was probably

01:30 a drug if beer is a drug; that was the only thing I ever saw exposed to our fellows. We would come in off operations and the blokes who were back in the headquarters in Pleiku would get a barbecue ready and we'd have cold beer and we'd all end up drunk as lords that night and wake up in the morning with a terrible hangover but that was it. There was nothing else, nothing stronger than that.

02:00 As I say, the Yanks were big spirit drinkers but I think that's an Americanism. I don't think they are renowned as beer drinkers as such as are the Australians.

**We are talking about that very sort of iconic image, particularly the American image of pot smoking, drug-taking kind of American soldier in Vietnam and I'm wondering whether that came across your path at all?**

02:30 No not at all. I certainly didn't see it and of all the Americans I worked with up there I never even heard

any of them mention it. You know “Would you like a joint? Would you like a reefer?” I never, ever heard it. Certainly a lot of it is in movies and I tend to think it is only a selling point as far as the movies are concerned but I have heard tales from other

03:00 advisors who were in other areas of Vietnam and they were exposed to it. They knew blokes who were actually high on operations and that type of thing but I certainly didn’t see it.

**You mentioned that you did get down to Vung Tau on the odd occasion?**

Yes. One of the things that we did have in our favour was that as advisors we could go down to the local airport, and certainly it was all military aircraft, and we

03:30 get on an aircraft without a booking or without saying, “I want to go to Vung Tau. What time does this plane leave?” You went down and you said, “I want to go to Vung Tau”. And they said, “That plane is going” and you just got on and it was all free. Even though I’m a Scotsman, I wanted to get away from the American slang twang or whatever you want to call it. And we’d go down to

04:00 Vung Tau to the Australian headquarters down there and just to hear an Australian accent was great. And we’d go around the various battalions that were down there at that stage and run into old mates and have a few beers and get any equipment that you could that you might need, not that I ever saw anybody overdoing it. One of the strange things I do remember is

04:30 sweat rags. We used to wear sweat rags around our neck and they were a dark green colour and they were just for wiping the sweat off your brow. For some reason we couldn’t get any in Pleiku from the American system so we got some from the Aussie system. We’d go up to the quartermaster-sergeants and said, “Are there any spare sweat rags around?” And he’d say, “Yes, there are half a dozen”. I never saw anyone hoarding it or taking it back and selling it, which I believe did

05:00 happen in some of the American camps. Our living quarters were quite good in Pleiku. You had your own room and you had a maid that came and did your washing and ironing for you and you had your own air conditioning system. Everything was quite pleasant when you were in Pleiku itself.

**I might come back to the**

05:30 **camp because I am interested in getting a description of the camp but just before we come back to the camp, just to get a better image of Vung Tau and one of the other images of Vietnam War which has become quite iconic is the image of soldiers in nightclubs and going to bars and the girls. I’m wondering what you might have to tell us?**

I only went to

06:00 Vung Tau about twice I think in my tour. I just stayed around the battalion areas. I think we went to Saigon once and when we were in Saigon, we had two floors in a hotel in the Cholon area of Saigon, which is the Chinese side of town, and that was specifically for advisors. We could go there and sleep the night and once again it didn’t cost you

06:30 anything. I think I went sightseeing during the day and had a few beers in the bar that night in the hotel. I went down to Vung Tau and I went down to the swimming pool that the Aussies had built there and I went visiting old mates in other battalions and then back to Pleiku, so I really didn’t get exposed to the other side of it. I’ve heard stories like everyone else, yes.

07:00 **Going back then to your camp, can you just describe what the camp looked like?**

It was rows of Nissenhuts [prefabricated wood and iron huts], which are just long empty huts, but they had sectioned them off. Rather than just being a hut they had sectioned them off and each individual advisor had a room in which you could have anything you wanted. Of course

07:30 fellows used to buy TVs [television] and Hi-fis [high fidelity radio receiver/record player] and anything that took their fancy. You could buy all this stuff from the PX [Post Exchange, American canteen store], which was the American answer to our canteens. You could have rows and rows of booze if you wanted it in your room. There were no strict rules that they have here in Australia where you can’t take booze into your lines. And of course you’ve got to

08:00 remember that these are men in responsible jobs and they are responsible. It was there and I never saw anyone abuse it. If a mate came to visit you, you could give him a drink. You could buy a fridge and everything was laid on for you if you wanted it.

**You called them Nissen Huts, what were they made out of?**

They were a wooden structure inside with like corrugated iron on the outside. There were still some

08:30 Nissen Huts up in Woodside up until about 4 or 5 years ago I think. But the Montagnards, from memory our Montagnards used to sleep in large tents, what we’d call 11 x 11, which would hold about 4 beds, 4 stretchers. And any that didn’t travel back to their local village when they were on leave had these stretchers there. We had a dining room for our eating

habits and a bar, a team room, for drinks and that had a TV in it. Every now and again we'd have concert parties come around and put on a concert for us. That was about it.

**This is a static camp?**

Yes, a static camp. It was right on the end of the Pleiku Airport and it was the headquarters of the Special Forces Group in that area.

That was where all their administration was done from and we virtually called it home. We were in there for a week or two at a time and then we were back in the field. You didn't spend a great deal of time in Pleiku. I only went to Pleiku City itself once. I didn't get the chance to go down there and I wasn't interested because believe it or not there was always the,

not the fear so much, but always the problem that you might be eye-balled by one of the bad guys and they'd kill you. That was always probable. There was always the odd assassination or killing in the streets whether it was through the military or whether it was a pay-back for some gang you just never knew, but there was always that problem so I just never bothered going into Pleiku itself.

**You mentioned that one of the reasons you wanted to get away from HQ [headquarters] was to meet up with some Aussies, how many Americans were at HQ then?**

I think there were about 12 Aussies and there would have been around about 50 or 60 Americans. You've got to remember they weren't all advisors. There were

storemen and there were mechanics and there were medics, all the administration staff for instance and it was basically an American set-up. We were the intruders if you want to use that word. It was an American set up so obviously there were more of them than there were of us.

**So when you were spending time at HQ off operations, would 231**

**Company, the Montagnards, come with you to HQ?**

Yes we'd go in there. As I said the living conditions were inside this compound and their tents were in that compound as well. The majority, almost 100%, would go off to their local villages. You would see them after you'd paid them and resupplied them ready for the next operation, they would gather in their village groups and they all had mopeds or

motorbikes. And they would ride out on these motorbikes with the pillion passenger sitting his back against the back of the driver so he could look back. And he always carried a weapon in case they were ambushed on the way back to the village. They'd go off 20 or 30 of them at a time in a convoy-type move off to the village.

They always went armed and they looked after each other.

**You've talked a little bit about what the Montagnards thought about the South Vietnamese, but what did they think about the NVA and the VC?**

I don't think they really thought anything of them. They were Vietnamese whether they were north or south and they weren't doing them, the Montagnards, any favours.

They didn't see the North Vietnamese winning and their life becoming any better or vice versa with the South Vietnamese winning; their life would still be just the same. I really don't know where they are at today for instance, you never hear anything of them. Whether Furlo got off its backside and did anything politically or not, I really don't know.

**This is I guess a**

**hindsight question, but do you think in what way they might have either respected or not respected the Americans compared to the Australians.**

It's very hard to say because there was more exposure to the American than there was to the Australian, so it's very difficult to answer that. I can only say from my personal side that I got on well with them

and I feel that they worked well under my command. Whether they would have done that with an American commander I don't know. It's difficult to say.

**You've talked a lot today about your ability to fit in and identify with the Montagnards. How did your American Negro medic manage?**

Freddie Duggan. He was about

6'8" and black as the ace of spades and he was a terrific guy. Freddie had been in Vietnam for about three trips and he was a professional soldier. He had a family back there in America, I don't know where, and he had bought a bar in whichever town he lived in and his wife used to run this while he was away. It was called Duggan's Dugout.

Anyway, Freddie was a terrific guy. And I remember one night we were in the team house having a few

drinks and Mick Gill, who unfortunately got killed, and Mick was a rather outspoken guy when he had a few beers in him, and he said, “Hey, you big black bastard”. Of course you and I know that that’s an Australianism but you don’t call an American Negro a “big black bastard”. And Mick said it and then he went

15:30 “Oh” and Duggan was looking at him and Freddie just broke out laughing. He said, “I couldn’t take offence at that” and it is something that just sticks in my mind because I could see skin and bone going everywhere if this big fellow got a hold of Mick Gill. But he fitted in well with the Montagnards and his job. I think once again because of the number of times he’d been

16:00 with them, he related well to them. They were to a certain degree scared of him but I think it was his height, the size of the man; he was such a big fellow. All he wanted to do when he was in Vietnam – he was a medic and a very good medic and he could carry out minor surgery in the field which all the

16:30 special forces medics were trained to do – but what he wanted to do on one of his tours of Vietnam was to go on to what they called the Medcap [medical assistance] teams which flew into the villages and looked after the women and kids and that type of thing. I heard after I came home that he’d got his wish. He was on the Medcap team and he was flying around the northern part of South Vietnam visiting the

17:00 kids. And lo and behold, he got out of the helicopter and got his medical kit over his shoulder and a little child came forward and shot him and killed him. That is the story of Freddie Duggan. You just would not read about it. Years and years in the jungle fighting the bad guys and a little kiddie

17:30 he went to help and it was the little kiddie that killed him. I never heard any more of the fallout about it, I just heard that he was killed and that was life.

**That’s a very sad story. You mentioned that you were very**

18:00 **green going into Vietnam?**

As I say I had done all the training and I keep harping on that; you are in the military and you train and you train and you train and you repeat it and repeat it. But you never know if it is going to work until you get into that fighting war when the bullets are flying around. Up until that time I had never been exposed to a war.

18:30 I had never seen an angry man with a rifle in his hand for instance. So, yes, I was very green and I felt very green. I was in awe, if you want to use that word, of the men who had already seen service, like Len Opie and a few of the others who had been in Borneo and been in Malaya and Korea. Here was me trying to do the same as them and I really

19:00 wasn’t in their league. That’s the way I saw it. All I could do was put all my training into practice and hope it worked.

**You’ve described some of your operations with the Montagnards but I guess I’m wondering when you felt like you were really at war and you were no longer**

19:30 **green?**

I really couldn’t tell you. Simply because the reason I say that and it may be something that every soldier who was wounded feels – I feel it – that I failed. Did I fail because some of the training didn’t get through or I didn’t put it into practice? Why did I get wounded?

20:00 It’s an impossible question to answer but as a professional soldier you think along those lines. You know, what did I do wrong? If I had done it differently, how many of these fellows wouldn’t have been killed because you’ve got people’s lives in your hands. But unfortunately in a war you only get one chance at it.

20:30 You can never say, “Stop, re-take”; it just doesn’t happen that way. And there are times over the last 30-odd years that I think I failed; I didn’t complete my job. Over the years it has worried me sometimes.

**We might come back and talk a little bit more about that a little bit**

21:00 **later but just to go back to your operations. What was a typical patrol with 231 Company?**

Well if we were travelling as a company, 100 odd blokes for want of a better figure, there’d be one platoon on one side, another platoon on the other side and one up the front with the headquarter group travelling in the

21:30 centre with either me or Brian Walsh. And there’d be the other bloke up the front with his radio man and his interpreter. You would take the compass bearing with your map and say, “The next obvious feature is a big knoll over here and we’ll head for that”, you’d shoot a bearing. Mind you, you might not be able to see it because of the jungle, you’d probably see 20 or 30 yards in front of you

22:00 in some cases and then you would just slowly move. Keeping in mind that prior to actually going on operation the intelligence had said, “There is a known enemy force in this area. They are about section

strength, company strength, battalion strength" or whatever the case may be. So you'd then have to allow yourself accordingly as to what formations you are going to use and what you're going to do if you do

22:30 bump into the enemy. What your job is, at the end of your briefing with the intelligence people, they'd say, "Righto. We want you to cover grid squares 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and7 and it is a free fire zone" which means anything in there is game, you can kill it. Or they'd say, "Righto we want you to cover 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 but we want you to find out which

23:00 way they are moving and what they're carrying" so they just want the intelligence out of it and not necessarily for you to kill anyone. It all depended what your task was. Those are really the sorts of restrictions that were put on you when you went out on operations. And as I said earlier, you could go into an operation and cover those 6 or 7 grid squares and never see a soul. And you were there for 3 weeks or a fortnight or whatever the case may be and

23:30 you were lifted out by helicopter and that was it. So as I said before, it could be very boring at times.

**Leading up to the day that you were wounded, how much contact or how often had you had contact?**

We flew in from Pleiku to a village called Ben Het and this was an old

24:00 French fortress. It had been built on an access route into Cambodia during the French domination of Vietnam when it was called South East Asia I think. Anyhow the intelligence report was that there was a lot of movement in the area. It was felt that the North Vietnamese were ready for a build-up because of the access from the Ho Chi Minh Trail from Cambodia into South Vietnam.

24:30 Our task was a battalion strength, which was 3 companies. There were 231, 232 and 233 Company. Walsh and I had one company. Ray Simpson [Warrant Officer R. Simpson, VC DCM] and Mick Gill had the other company, and the third company was run by two Americans. Our battalion commander was an American captain. So that was the amount of Europeans that were there. We went into

25:00 Ben Het and we then moved out into the jungle and the leading company was Ray Simpson and Mick Gill. They hit a contact with the enemy on the 6th of May. They were probably a kilometre in front of us. We were on a ridgeline and we were there for the night. We stayed and Gill and Simmo and their Montagnards were in contact with the enemy. Word came

25:30 back that Gill had been wounded and they tried to get a helicopter in to get him out but the helicopter couldn't get in because there was small arms fire. Also in that area we were led to believe that there were anti-aircraft guns, which are not quite a big artillery piece, but they are big enough to shoot helicopters out of the sky. So the helicopter couldn't get in to try and get Gill out and unfortunately Mick died that

26:00 night. So the next day, which was the 7th of May, we got word that our colonel was coming in, Colonel Lloyd, and Major Peter Rothwell. Major Peter Rothwell had one week left of his tour in Vietnam but he was coming in with the CO. He was going to travel with him as his bodyguard or whatever.

26:30 The helicopter was to come in and I was to meet it and guide them to where we were situated. We got the word that we had to move, my company had to move, 231, and we had to move through Simmo's company. When we got to Simmo's company, I moved forward and got Mick Gill's body and brought it back to where it could be picked up. And I took off some of his personal belongings off him,

27:00 his wedding ring and his watch. He kept his dog tags [identification discs] on obviously for identification. I went through his pockets and later on this ring and the watch were sent home to his wife. Then Walsh and I moved forward and we patrolled and we set up a secure area for a couple of days and we patrolled the area around it.

27:30 There were no more bad guys. We couldn't find anyone but we did find some fresh graves. So we had to dig these graves or I ordered them to dig the graves up. I wanted to see what was in them or who was in them and I wanted to see what the body was like for intelligence purposes. Once again as I said earlier if the body was well covered he had only been in the field

28:00 maybe a week and if his uniform was in good condition he'd been in the field about a week, which meant they were there to fight, they weren't ready to pull out and go home and get resupplied. So the Montagnards dug the graves but they wouldn't pull the body out for whatever reason religious or whatever. So I had to pull it out and as I pulled him up this

28:30 fellow had been shot through the head and there was just a small hole in his temple but that part of his skull was missing and it was alive with maggots. It was alive with maggots. He was well fed and his uniform was in good condition. He had been wrapped up in a poncho - we used them as

29:00 shelters – and then there was a military-type belt holding the poncho around the body. So I had a look at this and noted it all and then I just went up the track and made myself a cup of tea and sat down in the bush and had lunch. Why I'm telling you this is that I won't go and see a dead body here in Australia, no way. I've had friends who have died and Glenys has said to me, "We should go and

29:30 see George, he's dying and he hasn't got long to go" And I'll say, "No way". As I've often said to my psychiatrist "the fellow that was in Vietnam in 1969 is not the Jock Kelly that is here today". I said, "I did and said things then that I would never even contemplate now". Anyway, that was that, we got that intelligence and we moved on

30:00 patrol again because we couldn't locate any enemy. We'd been on the move probably about 4 or 5 hours and mind you we were moving very slowly simply because we knew the enemy were in the area somewhere. And we were going down this hill; this was on the 11th of May at about 2 or 3 o clock in the afternoon. I got another

30:30 call that they'd found another grave, these were the forward elements. I was the forward controller that day and Walshie was in the middle. I started to move forward to get to this grave once again to check it and all hell broke loose. As I was moving forward, I fell and I thought, "I've fallen over a stump of a tree". And I went to get up and my leg wouldn't hold me and it had torn all the

31:00 flesh right off the bone on my leg, so I was stuck, and the Montagnard forward element saw me go down and they turned around and ran away and left me there. There was one Montagnard left about 10 or 15 metres from me and I was yelling to him and he wasn't answering. So I thought,

31:30 "Bugger you" And I lay there for a little while and they were still taking pot shots at me. To this day I believe that they couldn't see me but they knew I was in this area. Nothing was happening so I lay there for I don't know about an hour I suppose with no one around, just me. And then this Captain Green the American officer commanding the company he came through with about 10

32:00 Montagnards and he was about 20 or 30 yards away from me and he had them all lined up. He said, "What happened, Jock?" I said, "I've been hit in the leg but mind you the bad guys are down here". He said, "Hang on I'll come across". I said, "No, no, don't come across here" but he stood up and he started to walk towards me. As he was walking towards me, he got within about I don't know 3 or 4 paces from me and a

32:30 machine gun opened up and hit him through the side and as he spun around I saw the rounds going into his back and he was dead when he hit the ground. In the same burst, I took another two rounds in the back of the leg and his 10 Montagnards ran away. So that was that. I thought, "Jesus, what am I going to do now?" And I couldn't get hold of Walsh because my little radio man had run away and he had the radio.

33:00 So I thought, "I'd better get out of here" because they were still taking the odd pot shot into the area and I started to crawl back up the hill where we'd come in and I found my radio. Obviously the radio man couldn't run fast enough with it on his back and he had dropped it. So I got onto Ray Simpson who was back about 2 kilometres with Colonel Lloyd. I told Simmo what had happened and I couldn't raise

33:30 Walshie and I didn't know where he was. I had to explain to him the area we'd come through and what features we'd cleared and that sort of thing. And typical Simmo he said, "We're coming in" And I said, "Christ, hurry up". Anyhow, Simmo said he was coming in and that was fine and there was nothing else I could do about it. While I was lying there, I could hear someone coming through the scrub

34:00 and it was Walshie and he'd been looking for me. So he got down behind the big tree and he said, "Jock, give me your hands and I'll pull you behind the tree". And I was lying on my stomach at this stage looking back up the hill. And he put his hands out and I consequently did the same and this almighty burst of fire went right between us. It didn't hit him but they got me through the backside. As you know the backside is that

34:30 shape and the round went in the bottom of the backside and out the top and it just opened like a ripe pineapple and missed my spine by about that much. That hurt worse than the leg. It lifted me about ten feet in the bloody air it did. Of course I had used the only field dressings I had on my legs so I just took my hat off and stuffed it in my backside because I was bleeding like a stuffed pig.

35:00 Anyhow, Walshie got me behind this bush, this tree rather, and there he and I stayed. I said, "Simmo is supposed to be coming in" and every now and again Simmo would get on the radio and say, "Yeah, we're at such and such". And after about another hour I suppose, I could hear them coming down the hill and I yelled out and Walshie said, "Shh. They'll know you're here". I said, "They know you're here anyway for God's sake".

35:30 So I was there and Simmo came forward and he brought about 4 or 5 Montagnards with him. I found out later that he had difficulty getting them to move forward. They didn't want to come down. He came down and he passed me and Walshie and went down the bottom about another 10 or 15 yards I suppose and he saw down on the ground and took up the sitting position.

36:00 He had also brought in another American medic with us because by this time we didn't have Freddie Duggan with us. This fellow was Peter Homburg. Peter was a medic and he came forward with them and he administered morphine. Simmo said, "Righto, is he ready to move?" And Walshie and Peter said, "Yes". And the Montagnards were very loath to even

36:30 help lift me. So Simmo started to return fire and he said, "Righto, start moving now". And they picked me up and took me back up the hill. Just how far back I can't remember but there was a bit of a clearing

in the jungle and this Peter Rothwell, the Major, was there and he'd started to cut a bit of a clearing in the jungle for the helicopter to come in and get me. So

37:00 by this time the morphine had taken affect on me and I was fine, beautiful. I remember the helicopter coming in and because the hole in the canopy wasn't big enough for it to land, it was hovering and Peter Rothwell wanted to give me a lift up into the helicopter. He got a couple of these Montagnards to help him and the only way he got them to do that was he

37:30 pointed his rifle at them and in no uncertain terms let them know that if they didn't help him, he was going to use it. Whether he would have or not, I don't know. Anyway, they got me up and I was sort of half in and half out of the helicopter when the crew member of the helicopter got shot and the helicopter fell away and I fell out and I landed in a big heap on top of Peter

38:00 Rothwell. So the next thing to do was to get me back to where Colonel Lloyd was, which was about a kilometre back. So they made a makeshift stretcher for me and they managed to get the Montagnards to help carry it and they took me back the way we'd come. It was very hilly country and very thick jungle. And we got into this ravine and we had to get back up to the top of this hill where Lloyd was and there was a helicopter

38:30 pad up there. Because it was so steep there was no way that they could carry me in this stretcher, so they got me out of the stretcher and they put me with my back facing up the hill and one fellow under this arm and one fellow under this arm, and these are advisors – I think it was Peter Rothwell and Brian Walsh - and they sort of frog marched me up the hill until w got up to the top where Lloyd was. And

39:00 he said, "There's a helicopter due to come in to get you out". And for some unknown reason it sticks in my mind he said, "Would you like a hot brew, Jock". I said "I'd love one" And I had a cup of cocoa for God's sake in the middle of the jungle. I remember that to this day. The helicopter came in and by this time it was about 8 o'clock at night so I'd been lying around for about 5 hours.

39:30 Of course what the Montagnards had done was bring a lot of their wounded and dead back up the hill with them and when the helicopter came in, they just threw them in and of course they just threw me in with it. As it took off and got out of the danger zone, the medic on board was checking the bodies. And he got to me and I said, "No, I'm not dead yet".

40:00 And he said, "Thank God for that". So they got me back to an aid station where they just cut my uniform off me and started giving me drips and all that nonsense. Then they got me back to Pleiku and they sewed my backside up and did what they could for my legs. The next morning I woke up in this hospital bed with a set of pyjamas on and a big

40:30 tag on my pyjamas "Warrant Officer A.M. Kelly, destination Japan, amputee".

**I'm going to have to stop you there. Just remember where you are in the story because our tape is about to run out.**

# Tape 8

00:30 Well, it was "Destination Japan, amputee" I said, "Hang on a moment, first off I'm not an American soldier" because this is an American hospital. I said, "I want to see the senior advisor here in Pleiku" who was a Major Bill Brydon. They got Bill down and he came in and he said, "Don't worry Jock, we'll get you back to Vung Tau. We'll get you fixed up there and we'll make a decision then".

01:00 I said, "That's fine". When I was lying there later on that same day or the next day I can't even remember what it was, this American colonel came around with an American sergeant with a big tray of Purple Heart Medals and they were giving them to all the wounded soldiers. So I got one even though I wasn't an American, but it was a souvenir. Anyway I was in the

01:30 hospital and dysentery set in. It couldn't be any worse to be shot through the backside and you've got dysentery. They said, "Righto, we'll try to stabilise you and we're going to get you back to Vung Tau. There are aircraft coming in tomorrow and you'll be in Vung Tau tomorrow afternoon". That's fine. They got me onto the aircraft and I was so crook that they had to offload me at a place called

02:00 Cam Ranh Bay, which is on the course but halfway between Pleiku and Vung Tau, and they put me into this other hospital and it was the dysentery which was the problem. I'll never forget that hospital for as long as I live. Every bed was full of a wounded servicemen and it was a big hospital. Every staff member that I saw was flat out doing something. And I was in

02:30 this bed and I said to the medic, "I've got to go to the toilet. I've got to go to the toilet". And he said, "Righto" and he gave me a set of crutches. I was tired and I was so sore and I looked around and I thought, "There are a lot worse than me here". I managed to get to the toilet and that was that but it was so bad that night I was in there, the first night. There was an

03:00 American Negro in one of the beds who had been burned with white phosphorous from the waist to the

top of his head and he was absolutely delirious, and he kept talking about his dog back in America, this dog of his and what they used to do and what they were going to do. He rambled on all night and he died the next morning. There was a Mexican fellow in the bed next to me who had a dose of the

03:30 deliriums as well and he kept pulling his dressings off and he'd been gut-shot, and he kept poking the holes in his stomach with his fingers. That was the sort of state it was in. It wasn't the medics' fault; it wasn't anybody's fault. They were just absolutely snowed under. And I thought, "Jock, shut your mouth, there's nothing wrong with you", you know, when I saw some of these fellows. I think I was there two days,

04:00 48 hours, or something of that nature. And they loaded me back onto an aircraft and they got me down to Vung Tau. I got offloaded there and there were a few of the fellows there to meet me who were on break from operations or whatever and they'd heard I was coming in so they were all there. "Hi, Jock, where did you get it?" Typical Australians, you know. "Where did you get hit, Jock?" I said, "In the legs". And then someone said, "Yeah and in the arse as well".

04:30 Anyhow they got me into the hospital and I'll never forget it. Once again there was the dysentery. I said to these two medics, "I've got to go to the toilet, fellows, I've got to go to the toilet. They said, "Hang on, we'll get you a bed pan," I said, "I can't sit on a bed pan". He said, "We'll get you a bed pan, hang on". I'll never forget it, it's rather crude I suppose. The only way I could sit on this bed pan was with these two medics I had my arms round their necks and I hung there. This

05:00 fellow had obviously been in the country a while and he was OK, but this poor fellow had only been in the country two or three days and he was heaving and I was busy apologising to him. It's a terrible thing. You lose all your dignity but unfortunately that's war. I don't remember exactly how long I spent in Vung Tau hospital. There was no more immediate talk about amputation,

05:30 they had then started talking about getting me back to Australia. The next thing I remember was getting loaded onto a Hercules aircraft [Boeing C130 transport aircraft], which is a military aircraft. It's not a Boeing and not a jet and there were none of the comforts of home and this aircraft was full of wounded servicemen. Some of them were walking wounded and some of them were on a stretcher.

06:00 I was on a stretcher. So they would sort of hang you one above the other. The fellow below me had both legs off below the knee and because the aircraft is not pressurised, on take-off all the blood in his legs would go to the stumps and on landing draw away from the stumps and he was

06:30 screaming in absolute agony. And later on in life I thought, "You could find civilian aircraft to get the VIPs [Very Important Person] out of Saigon but you couldn't find them to take wounded servicemen home". It always niggled me. Anyhow we were on this aircraft and it was very slow and very lumbering and noisy and a very smelly trip it was. Once again I was that

07:00 crook that they offloaded me in Butterworth in Malaya and I think I was there for another 48 hours while they stabilised me. From there we landed at Richmond Airport just out of Sydney. Once again one of the strange things in life, we were lying there and we were all wounded servicemen but

07:30 customs officers still had to come through the plane. Mind you, I will say from memory he just walked up one aisle and down the other. I thought, "You know, wounded servicemen are not going to have anything on them. They're not going to go and smuggle anything in. They're all too bloody crook, for God's sake" but they had to do it. They got me to

08:00 2 Military Hospital at Ingleburn and that's where they started to work on me. I remember the specialist looking at my leg and it was a couple of days and he came back and he said, "We're going to try and save it rather than amputate it but it's going to be a long, slow process". And that was around about June sometime and

08:30 before they actually started work, I told them I wanted to get married. So they let me out of hospital for the weekend. I went up on the Saturday and we got married on the Saturday and I went back to hospital on the Sunday.

**Jock, before we go too much further into your recovery, do you mind if I actually take you back to what you went through and ask you a few questions? You said that you were on your own for an hour or so?**

Before Walshie found me, yes.

09:00 **What was going through your mind at that time?**

Strangely enough one of the things I thought of, I said to myself, "What a hell of a place to die". I had been in the jungle for about 3 weeks and I hadn't had a shave or a wash. It was a strange thing to go through your mind. I thought, "What a hell of a place to die". I also thought,

09:30 "Here we go again". And why I say that is my grandfather was killed in the First World War and my father was killed in the Second World War and they were both the eldest male of the line. I'm the eldest male of the line and I thought, "Well, here we go again". At one stage I didn't think I was going to get out. The other strange feeling I recall and it amazes me is that I wasn't frightened. You imagine yourself

being in these

10:00 situations and being terrified to the shaking and quivering stage. That didn't arise. It didn't happen. I didn't feel it. It was a rather strange situation to be in. But that's how I felt and that's how I remember it today.

**It was quite an operation to get you out. How were you feeling at this time?**

Well, as you can

10:30 imagine at the exact time it was all happening, I was just glad to see somebody even Walshie when he came and there were just the two of us for a while. And then when I saw Simmo and Peter Rothwell I knew things were going to work out OK and I was going to get out. The sort of vague parts I remember and it comes back to me

11:00 now and again is that poor guy in the helicopter. I believe he was killed. And once again it's that feeling of failure. If I hadn't have done what I did, maybe he wouldn't have got killed. Who knows? You think of those things at times and over the years they niggle at you and you tend to blame yourself

11:30 because you've got time to sit and analyse different situations and you come up with different answers. You say, "I could have done this and I could have done that". At the time I did that because that's the way I thought it should be done. I think the other thing that it brought to the fore was the Montagnards running away. I don't blame them. I don't feel any animosity or any hatred towards them. I think it is an

12:00 inbuilt thing with the indigenous people from that area that if the head of the dragon goes down, the rest of the body is no good and I was the head of the dragon. Whether it is a myth or just a belief that the ancient people have got; even the Montagnard company commander didn't take over. He didn't take my place and do what he should have done.

12:30 He didn't do it. Maybe they relied on us too much, I'll never know.

**What did you think you had done wrong to get yourself into that situation?**

At the time I didn't think I'd done anything wrong. I'd did what I did simply because I thought it was the right thing at the

13:00 time. The thing you've always got to remember in that situation is you don't have a lot of time to sit down and analyse what you should do, the maybes and ifs and buts. You've got to do something immediately. Later on when you do have time to go over it in your mind, you think, "Well maybe I shouldn't have done this and maybe I should have done that". One of

13:30 them was, "Maybe I shouldn't have got up and moved forward to try and get control when the firing broke out and to see that grave" and then they wouldn't have been able to shoot me. I should have just stopped where I was and tried to get the information back to me from the forward elements. You think along those lines. If I'd stayed where I was, then I'd have still been in command and the Montagnards wouldn't have run away and I wouldn't have been

14:00 wounded and Simpson wouldn't have had to come in and all those people wouldn't have been exposed to danger. That's alright in hindsight but it just doesn't work like that during a shooting war. I did what I did at the time because I thought it was the right thing.

**The Montagnards took quite a battering in that operation as well?**

Yes. In that operation I believe, I honestly cannot quote the figures directly, but I think there were about

14:30 13 or 14 of them killed on that same day. In fact that little body I was talking about earlier off to the right, he'd been killed and he was just lying there. I thought he was taking up a firing position but he was dead. They really took a pounding that day and of course with the loss of Gill and a number of Montagnards on the 6th of May, the

15:00 battalion was getting quite depleted really as far as manpower was concerned.

**When you got to the chopper and you actually saw all those dead Montagnards what were you thinking?**

I really wasn't thinking about them. I was thinking about me and that's why I find it quite ironic when the medic was checking us all and I said, "No, I'm still alive". I didn't really think a lot about it and I think probably the morphine had something to do with that side of

15:30 it. I felt quite comfortable believe it or not. There wasn't any excruciating pain or discomfort. So I just accepted it for what happened. They threw the bodies on top of me. Occasionally I've told people about this and they've gone, "Oh no, imagine lying under a dead body". You just don't think anything about it. Once again that's the Jock Kelly there in Vietnam, not the Jock Kelly here in Australia.

16:00 I couldn't see myself doing it here for instance but I was sort of squirming.

**I can't imagine what it would have been like to see your mates go down in front of you like**

**that?**

You can never explain to anyone what it is like for two reasons: one, it is a very emotional thing and, two, we're all different. You can look at it in one light and I can look at it

16:30 in another. Some people you may call hard because they don't show emotion and other people you call soft because they break down and cry. It is very difficult to try and explain to someone what it feels like. I think the only people who do understand have been in that situation. I don't know if you

17:00 heard about John Beasley's accident a couple of weeks ago. He was in a car smash in a rally over in Tasmania and his co-driver got killed. I know John personally because he was out here quoting us to get some work done on my swimming pool. On the day it happened, I went into the shop to see them about something and I asked how he was and one of the girls said, "He's really upset about losing his mate" and I

17:30 thought to myself but I didn't say it, "I know exactly how he feels". They are the only people who can feel that way I think; someone who's been exposed to it. You can explain and try to explain for as long as you like but you just cannot instil the feeling within a person who's never been exposed to it.

**When those Purple Hearts came around in the hospital how did you feel?**

18:00 I was quite chuffed because even today Australian soldiers are not allowed to wear foreign decorations but I had this medal and I took it and I was quite proud of it, and I've got it on my medal bar now. Because I'm out of the army I can wear it. Everyone worldwide says

18:30 "Purple Heart, I've heard of that, you get it for being wounded". Wounded servicemen in Australia are not recognised in any way whereas the Americans are.

**You did say before that you felt a sense of failure for being wounded. How did you make peace with yourself over that?**

You never, ever make peace with yourself

19:00 in that sort of context. When I came back from Vietnam and I got my hospitalisation out of the way and I was back at work, I was still a young man and I was still 10 ft tall and bullet proof. All these feelings were pushed back.

19:30 I occasionally had a bit of a think and a cry but not often. I found in life as you get older, you tend to think more deeply on all aspects of life not just the military side of it. It led to a breakdown and I was hospitalised for 7 weeks in the Adelaide Clinic.

**If it's**

20:00 **OK we'd like to talk about that later after you've been through your recovery. There was mention of Ray Simpson as well and a bit of the legend that was?**

Yes. He's a real character, Ray. Ray was a typical Australian, "G'day, mate" and "You old bastard" and the usual Australianisms. He was married to a

20:30 Japanese lady, whose mum was still alive. Ray was a Korean veteran so he was a good age. I was 30 and Ray would have been 45 in those days, I assume, I don't know. Anyhow, he was married to this Japanese lady and she wouldn't leave Japan because her old mum was still

21:00 alive. So therefore, Ray, when he got out of the army, wanted to get back to Japan. We eventually got him a position in the Australian Embassy in Tokyo where he was a jack-of-all-trades I think but at least he was in Japan. One of the things I'd say about Simmo was that when he got awarded his VC [Victoria Cross] the

21:30 Queen came out from England and she was presenting it along with other decorations for people. Anyway they got up to Government House in Sydney and Sir Roden Cutler was the Governor. Simmo was getting a briefing, you know, "You'll sit here Mr Simpson and when you are called forward you will bow and call the Queen 'Ma'am'" and all this. And Simmo said, "Where's my

22:00 wife sitting?" And this fellow who was doing the briefing said, "Your wife will be sitting up the back because she's not an Australian citizen". And Simmo said, "Well post the thing to me. He said, "If she's not sitting next to me, post it to me". She sat next to him for the service. That was Simmo. And they went out after all the procedures were over and there was a garden party on. They went to the

22:30 garden party and the next day in the local newspaper there's a photo of Simmo at the garden party with Sir Roden Cutler, Lady Cutler and another couple of dignitaries and they've all got champagne glasses and Simmo's got a stubby. That's our Simmo. That's the sort of bloke he was. He didn't put on airs and graces for anybody. And not only did he win the VC, he won the DCM [Distinguished Service Medal] as well which is the

23:00 second highest award you can win for bravery. And he won that I think on one of his tours of Vietnam. He did about 4 or 5 tours of Vietnam. In fact on his last tour he flew himself from Japan direct to Saigon

and joined up then. He didn't come back to Australia and go through all the red tape and procedures here, he went straight to Vietnam and he was accepted on the spot.

**So when you knew Simmo was coming to**

23:30 **save you how did you feel?**

I felt good. I knew I could rely on Simmo. I felt good because I knew I could rely on Simmo. I'm not saying I couldn't rely on anyone else but he was such an

24:00 experienced soldier and he had that air of confidence in everything he did. It was great and when I saw the craggy old bugger I thought, "This is great". He should have won two VCs I think.

**How many VCs were there?**

There were four VCs won in Vietnam all from the Training Team. There was Dasher Wheatley [Warrant Officer K.A. Wheatley, VC (posthumous)]; there was Peter

24:30 Badcoe [Major P. J. Badcoe, VC (posthumous)], Ray Simpson and Keith Payne.

**So on the way back when you were having to go through this very long journey to come home and you were talking about the walking wounded and the other wounded soldiers, what kind of wounds were you seeing?**

There were all sorts of wounds from broken legs through falling in holes to gunshot wounds.

25:00 There were burns from white phosphorous and that type of thing. There were various things not necessarily caused through gunfire, you know. A RAEME fellow had broke his arm severely while working on machinery back at the base and that type of thing. Fellows who had got malaria were

25:30 being sent home. It wasn't all war-caused injuries, it was all sorts of things.

**What was their attitude to going home?**

Great. I think it was the old cliché there that they used to say, "Only 442 and a wakie" and "66 and a wakie before I go" and you always thought about the day you were going home. I think that was just a war idiosyncrasy that everybody gets whether it was the

26:00 Vietnam War or the First World War, you just didn't want to be there. Mind you, on the other hand there was nothing more exciting. Once again it's one of those things that you can never explain to anyone. The feeling of adrenalin when you are fighting for your life is an incredible feeling.

**When you saw the tag saying 'amputee'?**

26:30 Yes. I was horrified because I didn't think my leg was that bad but later on it was sort of said to me that the American system, if you like to call it that, was that if they cut your limb off they can have you back up on your feet in a couple of months on a prosthesis whereas when I look at how long it took my

27:00 leg to heal and get back to how it is today, I was in that hospital for 18 months. There were points for and against I suppose and once again I think the main thinking behind it was just how bad the injury was. I was lucky that I hadn't broken any bones because the doctor did say that if the bone had been shattered there would have been an amputation but all I'd done was take the flesh and sinew and muscle away from the leg.

**When you**

27:30 **finally got home and you finally landed on Australian soil again, what was that feeling like?**

That's just how we all felt. It was relief that now you are home and nothing can ever affect you ever again in your life than what you've gone through since you were

28:00 wounded. It was a tremendous feeling; a great feeling of relief. And then you sort of switch off war and you switch on healing. Let's get on with it. Let's get it fixed up and get it back to work. I think some of that comes from the discipline side of it, you know, you've still got a job to do and you've still got to get out there and

28:30 do it.

**What about Glenys? How did Glenys get the news?**

She got a telegram to say I'd been wounded. From what I can understand the telegrams were of different colours and if it was a red one it was to say you were dead and if it was some other colour you were just wounded. Anyhow Glenys got the telegram that I'd been wounded. We lived in Muswellbrook at that time, which was north of

29:00 Singleton, but she had gone to Sydney to visit friends of ours who were also in the army who had been to Vietnam. And she was with these friends of ours and the system tracked here down. She was at Holsworthy, which is one of the army camps just out of Sydney there in the married quarters living with

these friends of ours. So they sent along a deputation of a

29:30 captain and a padre and a female soldier I think to see her and to tell her what had happened to me. These three consequently arrived at our friends' house and Glenys wasn't there, she was out with my son shopping or whatever. So when she came back to the house, the next-door neighbour said to her, "Glenys, the military fellows were down here looking for you". And Glenys

30:00 said, "Was there a padre with them?" This girl said, "Yes, I think so". I had said to Glenys before I left for Vietnam, "They'll probably send somebody to see you if something happens to me and if there's a padre with them, you'll know I'm dead". However, this padre had come along. So anyway, this lady said to Glenys, "You can go up to the barracks and you'll find them up there at Family Liaison" or whatever they called them.

30:30 So Glenys jumped in the car with my son, went up there and they duly told her what had happened and showed her on the map where I had been and where I was and what was happening to me, and then they eventually told her I was being sent home. The telegram she'd got which was the wrong colour said I had taken shrapnel wounds to the legs but was being sent back out into the field, which was wrong information.

31:00 It was later explained to her that I had been more seriously wounded and that I was coming home and that was it.

**What was it like when you first saw Glenys?**

I was in the military hospital at Ingleburn and I was in a ward and once again army style, it was just beds in a row. Glenys had arrived and she said to the nursing sister, "I'm here to see Warrant Officer Kelly". And she said,

31:30 "He's down there". And she walked down and she walked back up again and she said, "I can't find him" and I had lost so much weight she didn't recognise me. She'd walked past me. I'd been lying there with my eyes closed and I didn't see her walk past. Of course, I was lying there and I had a big cage over my leg. But I had lost so much weight that she didn't recognise me.

32:00 It was quite a reunion. I was still a bit sore and sorry for myself of course.

**Then there was a very quick marriage after that?**

Yes we had decided to get married and it was all arranged. My sister-in-laws jumped in and my mother-in-law and everyone sort of rallied around and we got married at Maitland and we had the

32:30 reception at my sister-in-law's house. Old friends came down and I think there were only about 20 at the wedding. That was on a Saturday and on the Sunday I had to go back to the hospital, so it was very quick.

**In the midst of all of this treatment, why did you decide to get married?**

We just wanted to. It was just one of those things. You do spur of the moment things when your life has sort of

33:00 flashed in front of you in case you don't have time to do them later. That's the only answer I can give you really.

**And how did you propose?**

I had proposed before I left. I can't remember. I think I proposed in the club when she was singing.

**What kind of treatment did you undergo in those 28 months?**

**What happened was because of all the sinew and muscle that was**

33:30 **torn from the leg, they removed a certain amount of sinew, I don't know what they call it, it's a very fine strip of muscle or something from my ankle. They put it in my leg, here, and it obviously stretched. That was to help alleviate 'foot drop' as they call it. Foot drop is when you don't have this muscle or tissue or sinew, your foot will just sort of hang**

34:00 **loose so when you walk you have to flop it, otherwise you'll fall over. That was done for me and of course what they did was – as I say I was 18 months getting back to work – they would do a little job and send me home to recuperate and then I'd go back in and have some more done and go back home to recuperate. That was one of the jobs that was done. I'll never forget the day they took the plaster off my leg to see if this**

34:30 **foot drop was or wasn't working or whatever and they took the plaster off and the foot just went clunk and I thought, "Oh no, I went through all that for nothing". And the surgeon said, "No, that's fine. You've got to get physio [physiotherapy] on it because all the muscles in your leg have deteriorated obviously. We'll work on it. As it is, it is fine".**

**I'm just curious as to what treatment you had on your butt cheek?**

35:00 That was quite funny. Because it was a flesh wound and there was no bone it was virtually that they just sewed it up. And one of the operations they did on my leg was a skin graft and of course there was a little bit of skin left on my butt so they took that and put that on my leg. And I often say to people “Do you want to see my butt?” One of the

35:30 quite funny things if you think of it was one of the problems I had during these recuperation periods was that every time I sat down, this wound used to bleed. I said to the surgeon one time I got back after one of my leaves, “This is the problem. Every time I sit down it leaks and there is blood and it gets quite embarrassing at times”. And his answer was, “Don’t sit down”. I said, “What if I’m going to

36:00 visit someone?” He said, “Lie on the floor” and that was his answer. So that’s what I had to do.

**How long did the butt cheek take to heal?**

Probably about 6 months I suppose. You can appreciate where it is situated and when you’re doing a lot of bending it used to tear open. I’m sure they’d stitched me up with piano wire because I’m quite sure it’s not the

36:30 prettiest thing you’ve ever seen.

**During this time of recuperation were you doing any work at all?**

No. I was just in the hospital, operated on and sent home and then weekly or fortnightly there were checks on the wound to make sure everything was OK and then it was back into hospital for more operations and sent home etc. etc. and it went on like that.

**Whilst you were in hospital in Ingleburn,**

37:00 **what other casualties were you seeing from Vietnam?**

There was one fellow, Dougie Hazel. Dougie was a young national serviceman and had had both legs blown off. Initially they had been amputated from below the knee but he kept getting infections in the stumps so they cut them off above the knee. It was quite funny – once again

37:30 Australian humour – Dougie used to get around in his wheelchair with these two little stumps sticking up in the air. We used to say, “For God’s sake Dougie, you look like a Dixie Fried Chicken”. He had two little stumps sticking up in the air. He was a great guy. One of the things he used to do for us was take us over to…it was a suburb where

38:00 Kelvin used to live in Sydney. However, it was a swimming pool and the wounded servicemen were taken over there as part of their physio to use the pool. We were all in the ambulance this day and of course Dougie, because he had no legs, he sat in the front with the driver. And for some reason the driver pulled up on the main street of Liverpool and Dougie was there and the driver got out to go into the shop

38:30 to do whatever he was going to do. And this military policeman came along and Dougie didn’t have his hat on or his beret. And one of the things of the Australian Army is if you’re in your uniform, you always wear your hat, indoors or outdoors, you always wear it. Dougie didn’t have his on and this military policeman, very officious, said, “Get out of the car”. Dougie said, “You want me to get out?” He said, “Yes, get out. You haven’t got your beret on.

39:00 Come on, I’m ordering you to get out”. Dougie said, “Fair enough” and he opened the door and stuck his two stumps out. And this fellow you could just see him shrinking, he was so embarrassed. He’d embarrassed himself and Dougie thought it was hilarious.

**How did the national servicemen who were injured take to coming back home?**

I really don’t know. In those days I

39:30 accepted it as part and parcel of the situation but today I often think, “It should never have happened”. These were fellows who didn’t ask to go to war and didn’t ask to be maimed and mutilated and hurt. The regular army soldier, he signed on the dotted line and he agreed to do it and that was his job. They weren’t going to take me out of the army and make me

40:00 a welder or a plumber or a gasfitter, so why take the gasfitter and make him a soldier. That’s the way I look at it today but then I just accepted it. And I think the national servicemen, I don’t doubt there were some of them who were very bitter towards the system and rightly so. But certainly from what I

40:30 believe and what I understand is that the repatriation system in Australia is probably the best in the world but it’s still no compensation to some of the fellows. Some of them were badly mutilated.

**We’ve got a tape change now.**

## Tape 9

00:30 **Just before we come back to Australia, just a bit more on Vietnam and I'd like to hear your experience of killing an enemy?**

My first kill, if you want to call it that, was in an ambush. It had been sprung by these Montagnards who were lying in an ambush position and I wasn't physically part of

01:00 the killing group. I was further back. Anyhow when the ambush was sprung and the firing started, I moved forward once again so I could control the whole thing if need be. And while I was there, I was lying on my stomach and I saw this fellow hiding behind a little bush from memory, and I knew he was one of the bad guys so I

01:30 shot him. And he had a grenade in his hand and it went off after I shot him and it blew his hand off. Later on when we were checking the bodies, I went over and personally looked at this fellow and I went through his pockets and everything. Then, that day it happened, he was just the enemy. It was either him or me and that was the way I looked at it. He had a photo of his family in his pocket and I take it it was either his

02:00 wife or his mum and sisters and brothers. And he had other personal things, papers and letters. And that was that. He was dead and I had killed him. Later on I sat down and thought about it and I thought, "Why? He's done nothing to me personally". But you tend to push it into the

02:30 background. You have to otherwise you wouldn't do it again. But later on in life, I've often thought about it and I've often thought to myself, "I never want to kill another human being". I don't see the reason for it. I just do not understand the world today. Why? For all the wars we have been in we are still doing it

03:00 and it just doesn't make sense to me. I often think if someone of my limited intellectual experience can think that way, why doesn't the hierarchy think this way but who is to know. I remember that one very clearly because that was the very first one. I think probably over the whole time I was involved in Vietnam, I probably killed another 2 or 3.

03:30 I would say I did. Others I probably fired at and missed I don't know. But to me it is not something I would boast about. It's not something I would crow and pat myself on the back about. In fact I think it's a terrible thing.

**It is interesting to hear how you talk about it and how you've changed over the years.**

04:00 **Conversely what was the casualty rate in your Montagnard company?**

I think ours was very good. In the period of time I as with them, apart from the Ben Het situation where I got wounded and where we had the most casualties, I only lost about three or four fellows on any other

04:30 operation. Once again you could go out on operation and not see a bad guy and not lose anyone. Other times you might get one fleeting contact and someone might get wounded, one person or maybe two but not necessarily killed. It was fairly good but I couldn't put a percentage on it.

**One of the aspects that the Vietnam War was well known for and**

05:00 **particularly the Australians, was that the Australians had a very low mortality rate. You were amongst those that got out, what do you think contributed to that?**

Good training and discipline and I would say discipline more than anything. The training is good and we do our utmost to get the message through when you're training soldiers,

05:30 but the thing you cannot do whilst training is put an actual bad guy on the ground. There is no one firing at you, so during your manoeuvres on your training you do it knowing full well nothing is going to happen to you. You get soldiers who rather than lying on their stomach on the ground as they should do will sit down

06:00 because they know nothing is going to happen. You keep hammering home by either screaming at them or yelling at them or swearing at them, "Get on your gut, you're a smaller target". And you just hope and pray that on the actual day they are being fired at, they will do the right thing. But that's self-discipline. He's got to know and he's got to make sure he does it. So it's the

06:30 discipline side. All the training is there but it is up to the individual to do it. So I think the training and discipline is why Australia had so few casualties in ten years of war. Not quite 500 people in ten years. That's incredible. And some of those casualties were probably not war-related.

07:00 They were accidents: vehicle accidents and aircraft accidents and drowning or whatever. So it is not all attributed…the whole 498 are not all attributed to the gunfire.

**Why do you think you didn't die from blood loss?**

I really don't know. I couldn't answer that.

07:30 **What did you do? You mentioned you had tied up the wound?**

Well every soldier carries a field dressing. When I got hit in the lower leg at first I managed to get my field dressing and put it on there. It's just a big swab with a bandage and you just tie it on. You don't worry about cleanliness and all that sort of thing. You are actually once again trying to stem the flow of blood. The other shots in the upper leg and in the hip

08:00 were just grazing fire and consequently just tore skin off. They didn't penetrate through the leg or anything so they didn't bleed very much. In fact you could sort of give them a wipe and then ten minutes later have a look and they'd stopped bleeding. They'd clotted themselves. The wound in the butt was a different ball game. I had a bush hat on and as you may or may not know

08:30 it is a very soft type of material and I just took it and I stuck it in the wound which obviously stemmed the flow. Here I am today so I didn't lose too much blood.

**It's a very amazing story that you have and you mentioned that the Montagnards ran away but others came forward to help you?**

The others came forward under duress.

09:00 Simpson threatened the Montagnards he brought through and Peter Rothwell threatened the Montagnards when he was trying to get me into the helicopter, so they came down under duress. If it had been up to them, they wouldn't have come forward. As I said earlier I don't hold any animosity towards them or any ill-feeling towards them. They did what they did

09:30 because they thought it was the right thing to do at the time. It was fear or whatever it might have been and fear is a terrible thing.

**I know we haven't got much time but one of the things that we haven't really spent much time talking about which I am interested in talking about, given your particular story, is how the Montagnards dealt with death either of the white soldiers or themselves?**

10:00 I really didn't get too close to them in this aspect. There wasn't an advisor killed with me up until Mick Gill got killed and of course then I got wounded. So I really don't know how the Montagnard soldier reacted to the death of an advisor. We were still in the field and we were still too busy to notice those things.

10:30 The few times that we had Montagnards killed in action and we took the bodies out with us the local village people, from whichever village he came from, they took control of the body and took it back to the village and did whatever they did with the dead. We personally didn't get involved with that side of it. Once again it was like an administrative thing where the Montagnard company

11:00 commander handled it. He knew who was who and who belonged to what village so we didn't get involved at all. I know Walsh and I never documented anyone who was killed Montagnard-wise. That was all left up to the Montagnards themselves.

**I was just wondering whether there was any particular indigenous cultural responses they had?**

11:30 No. Not that I ever saw anyway. We would drag the bodies out of say the jungle to a safe area and lay them out near a helipad where we could get them on board the helicopters, would cover them with ponchos or something of that sort and there they lay. No one sort of stood over them or cried over them or did anything with them. The other Montagnards just went on with their daily routine. There was

12:00 nothing noticeable at that stage anyway. It may have all happened when they got back to the village of course.

**Moving forward, you've told us how your healing process began but I guess I'm wondering in yourself when did you feel you began to get back on your feet?**

12:30 When I became more mobile, I went back to work. They posted me to school cadets where I looked after four schools in the Liverpool, Bonnyrigg and Campbelltown area. I visited them one day a week when the school cadets had a parade. I just went along and

13:00 helped the lads with weapon training or drill or whatever they had on their syllabus. I was there mainly as an administrator if they needed anything or they were going away on a weekend bivouac and they needed something such as tentage or jerry cans for water and that sort of thing. That was our main task and it was a very sedentary type of job. There was no sort of physical work attached to

13:30 it as far as going bush or anything of that nature. The only time we went away from home was when the cadets used to do an annual camp away for 2 weeks, which was always up at Singleton and it was always in barracks accommodation. I was with them for about 12 months and it was a very light job when I started getting back on my feet. And from there I got posted to

14:00 Sydney University Regiment. But prior to going to Sydney University Regiment, I applied to go back to Vietnam and the Director of Infantry from Canberra, I knew him, he said, "Jock, get yourself physically fit and we'll send you back". So I started on a regime of physical training of running and walking and all

that sort of thing. But I forgot to tell

14:30 somebody, my wife. Anyhow, I was with the cadets and I think I was on leave or something at the time and my RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] from the cadets called in to home to see me and I wasn't there. I'd gone shopping or something. And he said to Glenys, "Tell Jock I'm sorry that posting to Vietnam has been cancelled". She said, "What posting to Vietnam? I'll kill him. I'll kill him".

15:00 Of course that was back in '72/'73 and the de-escalation was starting and they were starting to pull people back so he said, "No, he's not going to Vietnam. He's going to Sydney University Regiment" which was an Army Reserve posting in which I served two years. I was still a Warrant Officer and I was still unqualified for the rank but it was temporary. I did two years with them and I

15:30 then got myself physically fit again and I got posted to the 3rd Battalion back up here at Woodside and I did two years there. Once again that was quite a physical thing and the body stood up to it. I was quite surprised because I thought I might have had trouble with my legs or whatnot but no. From there I got posted to the Army Apprentices' School at Balcombe in Victoria and I did two years there.

16:00 During all these postings, I got myself qualified as a Warrant Officer Class 2. Once I was in Balcombe, I went off and got qualified as a Warrant Officer Class 1. I got posted on promotion as Regimental Sergeant Major to the Queensland University Regiment as the RSM and I did two years in Brisbane. I then spoke to the Director of Infantry and I knew there was a vacancy coming up

16:30 at the Jungle Warfare Centre for the RSM. And Paddy Brennan said, "No, Jock, it's been promised to somebody else. Where do you want to go?" I said, "I want to go back to Adelaide. Send me to Forward Training Group at Hampstead and leave me alone," I said, "that's where we want to settle". I'd got family there because my daughter, Jennifer, was married and living here, and Kelvin was in the army and Fiona was still at school. I was getting on in

17:00 age. I was in my forties by then and it was a young man's game. Anyhow, I came back to Hampstead Barracks where I was the Regimental Sergeant Major at Forward Training Group, which is basically Army Reserve. Whilst I was there, 2 years was nearly up and I got a phone call from the directorate and they said, "The posting to the Jungle Training Centre as RSM is now

17:30 yours on your next posting". I said, "No, I'm getting out." And in 1983 on the 1st of July, I became Mr Kelly and that was it.

**You had a very long and...**

Colourful career?

**A very colourful career?**

And one I would do again. I have never had any regrets.

18:00 You hear of people saying their niche in life, well that was mine. I feel within myself I was good at it. Consequently my promotions came quickly and when I say that, I also keep in mind that when I joined the army there were only 3 battalions and in those 3 battalions they could only carry so many NCOs so therefore

18:30 promotion was slow. But when national service came in, we went from 3 battalions to 9 battalions almost overnight so consequently they needed NCOs and people were getting promoted very quickly. To keep it in perspective, when I first joined the army to get to the rank of Warrant Officer Class 2, you'd have had to have been in somewhere between

19:00 15 and 17 years to reach that rank. I was in there 5 ½ years and I'd reached Warrant Officer Class 2 so I must have been doing something right. I was very pleased with that side of it and I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the army. The army has been good to me. When I say that, it has given me, I feel, a better perspective of life. It has given me all this.

19:30 I could never see myself having this if I had stayed in civilian street [civilian life] all my life because I can't say I ever enjoyed any job I had done. It was just something you had to do. But the army I enjoyed but it's not everybody's cup of tea. My two sons went in and they came out. And they apologised to me. And I said, "Don't apologise to me. If the army is not yours, it's not yours. It's as simple as that".

20:00 **Your body healed and your career healed, how long did it take your heart and your mental?**

It still hasn't healed. I found as I got older, I would mull these things over and over and over, the ifs and buts and the maybes and what ifs. They got stronger as I got older.

20:30 I began to drink very heavily. In fact I'm an alcoholic. I haven't had a drink for 3 years. I drank and when I was drinking, I didn't have a worry in the world. There was nothing. I couldn't care less but I woke up in the morning and I still had the problem. Not only that,

21:00 my family was suffering. Glenys was my punching bag and I don't mean physically, I mean mentally. My children would ring up their mother and say, "How's Dad today?" "Oh, he's in one of his moods" "Well, we won't bring the kids over then". That's terrible. That's shocking but I wasn't aware of it. There are a

lot of things I did that I'm not proud of.

21:30 I knew deep down that it was because of Vietnam but I wouldn't admit it. There was nothing wrong with me. The rest of the world was out of step, not me. Through the system of various Vietnam vets [veterans] that we knew, they often said to Glenys, "He needs help". I was always nice to other people.

22:00 Don't get me wrong, I would pat people on the back and I was the life and soul of the party or whatever, but I took it out on my family all the time. Eventually, Glenys had had enough and she rang up a fellow called Tony Flaherty. Tony was one of these fellows who was a Vet. He was a TPI and he'd gone through the same dramas that I was going through,

22:30 and he arranged for me to go and see a psychiatrist. Of course, "I'm not going to see a shrink. There's nothing wrong with me" – the usual approach to it all. I thought I'd go along because there was nothing to lose. I just thought I was getting older and getting crankier and I wasn't a drunk, I was fine. I liked my drink but I didn't realise. I used to go to the bottle shop and buy bottles of beer and sit in the car and drink it.

23:00 I wouldn't go in the pub. I didn't want to mix with people. I didn't want to know. Anyway the psychiatrist saw me a couple of times and he then sent me to a psychologist and in his words of wisdom he said, "As you get older, Jock" – because I'd said to him, "Why now after 30 years for God's sake?" - he said, "as you get older you don't have the strength of mind and body to

23:30 fight the problems that are there". He said, "I know you probably sit there and say to yourself, why? What if? Why did he get killed and I didn't?" And you do and you don't tell anyone because you don't want people feeling sorry for you or thinking you are crazy. So you don't do it, you don't tell anybody, and all this is bottling up inside you and it's getting worse instead of better. And I was working in

24:00 Numbaa at that stage, up in the gas fields, I was on the security staff up there. And I came home from Numbaa and I had an appointment to see my psychiatrist and he said to me, "I'm admitting you to hospital. Go home and get some toiletries and whatnot and come back". I did that and I said to Glenys, "I'll probably be in there 3 or 4 days".

24:30 Seven weeks I was in there. I was at that stage and I didn't realise it and I still question it. Anywhere I went in that hospital for the first 4 or 5 weeks, there was always an orderly with me because the psychiatrist thought I was going to commit suicide. I don't know if I would have or not. Occasionally on the weekends, they would say to me, "You can go home for the day".

25:00 This was after they'd stopped the orderly travelling around with me. I'd come home and I wouldn't remember being home or I'd get home and I'd be home a couple of hours and I'd say, "I've got to go back". With the noise and the kids around, I just couldn't handle it. There were times I do not remember being here. Seven weeks I was in there. And that's when they said, "No more work for you" and they gave me my TPI Pension.

25:30 I'm 66 now and that was 6 years ago and I'm still seeing a psychiatrist. It's not as often as it was, it's every 6 weeks or so. Sometimes it's just a chat and other days for whatever reason, I'm sort of back in Vietnam again. I have the odd breakdown.

26:00 **Well congratulations for being grog free for 3 years, but what do you think triggers your flashbacks?**

I think it is mainly, today it is mainly if I hear of other veterans either having problems or dying.

26:30 I tend to sit down and think about it again and of course it just escalates from there. There are nights I go to bed and I can't sleep and I'll get up and wander around or go and have a shower at two o clock in the morning, for God's sake, or I'll go and take another sleeping pill, which I try not to do. I don't take them regularly. I have them there if I need them. That affects me a

27:00 great deal. In fact last week here in Adelaide, I got a phone call from Peter Rothwell, the fellow I was in the jungle with when I was wounded. He rang me up and he said, "Jock, could you do me a favour?" I said, "Yes, of course Peter". He said, "There's a fellow in Adelaide who has died and he's a vet. He was in Vietnam in 1965/66". I said, "Yes" and he said, "He's in the Royal Adelaide Hospital and he died on the 27th of December". And this was

27:30 last week. I said "Ah". He said, "No one has claimed his body. He's got no relatives and no friends and he's dead and they're going to put him in a pauper's grave out at Centennial Park". He said, "Will you go along to the funeral and just see him off with a bit of dignity". I said, "Yes, of course I will". So I got off the phone and I got on the phone again to the RAR Association and to the Training Team Association

28:00 and 39 people turned up the next day for his funeral. Also, we got the RSL to pay for his funeral so he's not in a pauper's grave. He's got a grave and he's got a headstone. Also in that group of people who came to his funeral, one of the fellows got a young lass to come along and she sang Amazing Grace over the grave for him. That sort of thing gets me started and I get quite

28:30 depressed at times. It doesn't happen as often now but it used to on a regular basis. I would get up in

the morning and I'd say to Glenys, "I've got to go to bed". And I'd go into the bedroom and I'd shut the door and I'll pull the blinds down and I'd stay there for 24 or 36 hours just to be on my own. Whether it did me any good or not, I don't know. Then I'd get up and I'd be fine.

29:00 It's very hard to explain to people or get people to realise because there is no physical sign of injury. You can't see depression. You can't see the feelings of people. And I always try to think, "I hope you don't think I'm a bludger" because from the outside that's obviously what it looks like. When I got my TPI Pension I thought

29:30 people would think I'm swinging the lead or pulling a swiftie because there is nothing physical. You'd say, "Look at him, the poor fellow is in a wheelchair and yes he deserves his TPI, he's lost his leg or he's had his arm shot off". And here I am hale and hearty as far as the naked eye is concerned but they consider me totally and permanently incapacitated.

30:00 **When do you think I guess that sense of shame and failure from being wounded changes into something else?**

I don't think it ever will simply because you cannot go back and react it to see if what you're thinking every day would work. There is always that niggling doubt and it will always be there simply because you

30:30 can't do anything about it. Over the years, I've had various stories related to me about the battles of Ben Het and all that nonsense. One fellow, he was a captain, a Scots chap, I can't think of his name, he wrote and sort of condemned me for doing what I'd done and that didn't help me at all. As I said I

31:00 stood up and moved forward, which was what I thought was right to do, because as I said I was always a great believer that if you want men to do something you've got to lead by example and that's what I did, and I got wounded in the course of it. In his condemnation, this fellow said I was stupid for doing that. He may have been right. If I'd stayed where I was maybe none of this will have happened but we'll

31:30 never know. Once again every individual has their own interpretation and time is of the essence in those sorts of situations and there's not a lot you can do about it. Once you've made your decision, you've got to go with it. You don't have the benefits and the time to sit down and analyse it in detail.

32:00 **Many have been wounded in war and you have spoken today I guess of the Australian way of coming to terms with wounds, horrible wounds. How do you think that might have helped you?**

Me

32:30 personally? When you say help, I only thank God and the expertise of the surgeons that worked on me to get back to where I am physically. I only wish, and the days are coming you can see it with medical science, that they could have done more for fellows who were worse off than me.

33:00 It makes me feel humble when I see fellows – there was a fellow on television the other day, a member of parliament, with both legs off. He'd lost them in Vietnam and I think, "Jesus, what guts". To sort of tackle a job like that for instance with the handicap that he has that makes me feel so insignificant. So whether it's a good thing or a bad thing I'm not

33:30 really sure, but that's the way I look at it.

**How or what part do you think the process of healing plays in the whole big picture of war?**

That's a very difficult question to answer. I think healing is

34:00 the fact that you're still alive and the fact that you may be capable of doing something to prevent the same thing again. In this stage of my life, I would love to have all the answers that are needed. I sit here and listen to the TV and the radio about Iraq and Iran and Afghanistan and I think, "We're still doing it".

34:30 Yet if you sit down and look at the working class people of all the countries in the world, they really don't want to do it but we're still doing it. It's the great god dollar. It is money and it is power. We're not the people with the power or the money but we're the victims. It is man's

35:00 inhumanity to man and we just cannot get away from it. We are one of the few species in the world that kill for pleasure and we're supposedly supposed to be that intelligent. Are we? I think not.

**Today looking back with many, many years of reflection and hindsight what do you**

35:30 **think stands out for you as your proudest moment from your Vietnam days?**

My proudest moment is when I married my wife. It certainly is. Militarily, I don't know, every moment I'm proud

36:00 of. One of my wishes when I die is to be cremated and my ashes to be spread on the parade ground at Singleton because that is where I had my greatest days as a national service instructor. I look on those days with great pleasure. I met some terrific people and a lot of us are still friends today. I can go

anywhere in Australia and have a friend who will

36:30 welcome me and give me a bed for the night and give me a meal. And the little I've had to do with the civilian population, you don't get that feeling within the civilian populous. There are people who live next door to each other and they don't even know each other's names for God's sake. We'll pick up the phone and ring Anne White in Brisbane; she's just lost her husband, Alan. He was in the army with me,

37:00 we check on her. She's in Brisbane and there's not a lot we can do but we never lose contact with them. Kim Sigg she has lost her husband and it's the same thing, we'll give her a ring. The army population are like that. We had friends here not long ago who called in and I hadn't seen Tony since the Singleton days in 1968 and 1969. And he called in and we went off to dinner and had dinner in town together. And we

37:30 probably won't see him for another twenty years but it was just like yesterday. The conversation took up just like that.

**One of the big issues that gets associated with Vietnam is the lack of public recognition for returned soldiers?**

Once again I feel more sorry for the national servicemen.

38:00 All right it should never have happened and it is the first time in Australia's history that the fighting man wasn't clapped on the back by the civilian population. There was no flag-waving and banner waving and cheers down the street. All right, that happened and once again the people who stood up and decried

38:30 us for national service and the war in Vietnam that is their right. That is why we were in Vietnam, to give them the right to do that. If we condemn them for it, we are hypocrites. The national serviceman didn't deserve it because he didn't ask to go.

**Unfortunately we're coming to the end of the session today and I'm just wondering**

39:00 **what sort of message for future generations for posterity would you like to set down on record?**

I'd like to set down a lot of things but for God's sake somewhere in this universe there has got to be an answer against war. Where it is I don't know but if you sit down and

39:30 analyse all the wars we've go down in history, what have they proved and what have they achieved? I don't know. We were at war with Germany and now they are our greatest allies. We were at war with Japan and we buy all their motorcars and make them rich. We were at war with the Vietnamese and now we're inviting them to come and live here. Why? Why did we do it in the first place?

40:00 Is it money? Is it power? I think it is. So therefore the only place you can look for an answer is the politicians and the wealth and the tycoons who reap the benefits from these things. I wish I had that answer to give the world peace. Why do we have nations starving to

40:30 death and we spend billions on armoury and weapons and watch kids dying in the street. Nations like America and Australia won't go to some of the African countries to help them with their problems because there is no money in it for them. There is no oil and there is no gas and there are no minerals that we need or want, so to hell with them. But Iraq,

41:00 they've got oil and we've got to get our hands on that. So it is money. And as I say the working man on the street, irrespective of his religion or his background, he is the victim.

**Well thank you so much for speaking with us today it has been a real pleasure.**

Thank you and I hope it does some good but I doubt it.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**