

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Peter Kercher - Transcript of interview

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### Tape 1

00:41 **Thank you very much for your time today. To begin with, can you give me an overview of your life from where you were born to where you are now, just for about 5 or 10 minutes.**

I was born in Grafton, 1945. Only lived there for a short time, probably two and a half years and

01:00 my father worked on the railway so we travelled around the state a bit. Where did I go next? I went to Narrandera. I spent probably 2 or 3, 3 years there. Moved onto Goulburn, spent most of my school life. Sorry, before Goulburn we had a short stint at Shellharbour, you might know on the south coast area. That was only for less than a year before we were set up to go to Goulburn then spent the rest of the time in Goulburn

01:30 until I joined the army. This would be about the area until 20, I would have been about 20. After I came out of the army, I went back to Goulburn for a short period to finish of education that in the area of work that I was in and then decided like most at the time I was going to track around Australia. Work my way around for a couple of years. Every man and his dog had that idea - coming out of the army - so I got to Canberra

02:00 from Goulburn and I worked here for probably 18 months or so and I'm still here. I didn't get away really, so overall, what other aspects would you like me to enlighten on through that period?

**Yeah, can you just give me an idea of when you did join the army where you trained out and then where you actually served?**

Probably before the army I had some military training. This was in air corps and that would have started

02:30 when I was about 13 less than 13 really. The thing was then you were 14 before you went into those but I recall when I was 13 and 8 months I was on an NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] course, so I went in a lot younger than I should of. So at the age of 18 you finish with that you have to move on so I joined the Air Force Reserve. This was in Goulburn. Joined the Air Force Reserve

03:00 and then went into the army over 20, this was National Service. We all got called up most of us but I had missed the call up and I suppose with the military background and coming from a fairly conservative family, I must admit I was brainwashed in the military type of thinking, so I thought it was something I couldn't miss out on so I volunteered to go. Did my basic training

03:30 at Kapooka, nominated for SAS [Special Air Service] and because I was a Nasho [National Service soldier] they decided not to take me. They had taken Nashos before, but I guess they were finding that the extra training they had to put them through they are not getting the value out of them so you would have to sign on for extra time. I was on the verge of signing on for extra time and I thought I've got to go back and complete some studies so and I think that was

04:00 imprinted on my mind by my father. My father died when I was 13 but I can recall back of he used to help sometimes with homework for school. He worked as a locomotive superintendent, a locomotive engineer so he had a fair bit of administration work and he used to do that at home on the dining room table at night. I would be doing my homework and he would get a bit frustrated with me. I used to ask him about things, maths in particularly and

04:30 when I wasn't paying enough attention to things he would say to me, "What are you going to be all your life? A labourer?" And that was his general comment and that sort of stuck with me that I had to go back and do these extra studies otherwise I would have stayed in the army. Sometimes I'm a bit sorry I didn't but I survived quite well without it anyway. Now what was one of the other things he used to say at the? Oh yes, he had this one thought. When he used to teach me this, help me with my homework when I was a kid

05:00 he'd show me something and I'd get frustrated and I didn't want to stick out it sort of thing and he'd say to me, "Now do you understand?" "Yes." I didn't have a bloody clue. But you didn't come back and say

to him, "Explain it to me." Now if I had done that it would have shortened my education period because until the time I left school I wasn't really keen on education. I didn't want to be there. By the time I was leaving school it dawned on me, my father had died by then, the benefit of it. It took me another 5 years

05:30 of study to bring me up to what I could have been before I left school if I had stayed on a bit longer so as a background I'm repeating something I said before I think I was brainwashed in this military attitude. The only way was to do it the military way, anything you did, sort of thing. I think I've come out of that now. So do you have another question in that area?

**Just if you could list for us where you served in Vietnam?**

06:00 Oh I'm sorry. Basic training in Kapooka and I went then to Singleton to do the corps training. I joined reinforcement wing because as I was young and silly I suppose and couldn't get over there quick enough otherwise you went with a battalion so I joined the reinforcement wing. Served a short period over there with the reinforcement unit and was transferred to 7 Battalion. I was with them for several months and their tour of duty ended

06:30 so I went to the replacement battalion, which was 1 Battalion, and finished their tour with them. It must have been about '69, early '69 I came back.

**Excellent. Now coming back to your childhood. What are your early childhood memories of growing up?**

Well I suppose they are similar to most kids really. I was in a family of 6,

07:00 3 sisters and 3 brothers. Now the 3 sisters were older than us. They are 2 years apart and then there is a gap of about 10 years and then there is 3 boys nearly the same. One is 5 years older than me and one is 2 years younger nearly. Growing up was fairly uneventful. There was no dramatic things that happened except we shifted around the country. We'd get a dog and most families had a dog and each time we shifted we had to leave our dog behind so that was

07:30 a bit of a kick in the backside. We didn't appreciate that too much. A lot of sobs and cries and things as a kid. Must have been a bit frustrating for my father I can recall. Do you want me to go through stories and incidents? Okay, up in Grafton, the house was built on piers that were nearly a metre up and I was about 2 and a half, might have been 3 because I left there when was 3 and Dad had the ladder up against the roof.

08:00 He was doing some maintenance. Nailing down the tin or something like that on the tin roof and he's got something off the roof and went down on the ground with my other brother and was working on it. Straightening it or something so I climbed up the ladder and sits on the roof and I screams out, "Hey!" And he nearly had a backflip me up on the bloody roof. "Stay there, don't move." So by the time he got the ladder I was heading down so I met him at the ladder. So I did a few things like that. I didn't see the danger in it obviously at that stage but it must have terrified him a bit.

08:30 **So were you close to your dad?**

I think we were all worked pretty well. Yeah generally. I grew up in a family where I wasn't accustomed to big hugs and things like that. As far as feeling went he was quite a conservative person. To do the job properly was the main aim. What else could I say about him?

09:00 Concerning responsibility for his family. He used to enjoy a beer, I know that, which used to annoy Mum on occasions but he was not the sort of person that gets on the beer and gets a bit infuriated. He wasn't an aggressive person at all. He was a fairly pleasant person. He probably could be a more aggressive person in the job. I was too young to realise. It was not a problem in regards to what he'd do for the family or whatever.

**So he got on quite**

09:30 **well with your mum?**

Oh yes, yes. There was never any, oh there would be disagreements where Mum would, you know would get off side a little bit now and again but there was never he would never have raised his hands to her or anything of this nature. I can only recall as a young person he was inebriated slightly a couple of times but I never saw him drunk, stupid drunk or staggering drunk or anything like that. But I know a couple of times he was inebriated. One thing amazed me one time.

10:00 There was this one time he was out with his friends on some sort of social function and he came home and he was quite sick and I remember one of his friends saying he got a bait or something you know the morning after and he was in bed. I would have been I don't know about 4 or 5 and I asked Mum, "What's wrong with Dad?" and at that time she was going crook on me. You know when you eat bananas you've got to peel these strings bit off because they get in your stomach and cause all sorts of problems and I said, "What's wrong with Dad?" and she said, "He didn't pull

10:30 all his strings off the bananas." I didn't have a lot of faith in her stories. I wasn't that young to be that stupid.

**What about mischief? What sort of things did you get up to as a young boy?**

Well I suppose we used to smoke. My younger brother and I down in the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK house. This was in Goulburn one time we would have been about 8 or 9 or something like this and there was a hole in the top of the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK house. This was in one of the smaller pens and we were down there smoking and blowing this smoke through the hole in the

11:00 roof and my mother was up in the house and looked out and saw the smoke coming out of the roof. She knew what we were about. We only got reprimanded. We weren't strapped or anything. Other misdemeanours. Well probably things you don't talk about on camera. A few mischievous things. A little bit unlawful but caused no harm to anyone. We weren't vandals or anything like that but yeah, a few misdemeanours. I wouldn't like to elaborate too highly on them.

11:30 You wouldn't be sent to gaol over them. A bit of misadventure.

**Is this with brothers or with friends?**

Friends yeah, that I grew up with. One friend in particular. Unfortunately by the time I came out of the army he had joined the police force. I was going to join the police force with him at one stage and he was killed in a car accident, but we were very close friends.

**So what discipline would your dad dish out when you were in trouble?**

Well I suppose

12:00 it was a sort of sternish talk. At one stage, I can't ever remember getting the belt but one time when I would have been about 9 I'd been down the back yard and throwing stones with my younger brother and it went near a neighbour and he complained to my parents, so Dad had a chat to me. He was away at the time, Mum was giving him the information, and he said, "Okay, get in the bathroom and wait in there." And of course in the bathroom was the strap, you know you sharpen the cut throats [razor] on it

12:30 in the bathroom and that was the thing. You know kids about the neighbour would get the bloody strap so waiting there and that was worse than getting the bloody strap. "Christ what's going to happen here?" But I got a stern talking to. "This will never happen again, will it?" I can't remember being belted or hit by them at all. The only time I came, that was one time I would have been a lot older, 14 or 15.

13:00 No a bit older I was doing my apprenticeship but was annoyed me over something. Very annoyed over whatever it was and she was in the kitchen washing up with one of my elder sisters so I came through the kitchen door and she happened to be behind the door and behind the door was a hook where you hung the teatowels as I come past she had a teatowel. He had knife in one hand and a teatowel. She's hung the teatowel up and as I was coming past she was going to give me a clip on the ears and I

13:30 ducked and her hand hit the knife. "Look what you made me do!" So other than that. I got a clip in the ears another time off here. This was a lot earlier when I was about 9 or 10. We were down the coast on holidays with an uncle and aunt staying at their cottage at Lakehaven and I was told not to go around the rocks where the blokes were fishing. Not any reason why I shouldn't but it was obvious why you don't go around the rocks when the

14:00 waves are coming in and that but I had to go along and have a look at how the fishermen were going and have a look. They come along on the beach and here I was out on the blood rocks and as I was coming home I was being chastised and before I could duck I got a whallop across the ears. Bang! But other than that I never got a few serious except reprimanded a bit.

**And your mum, were you close to her?**

Quite well but she was again a person who came from a very conservative family to and it wasn't a big cuddly

14:30 situation. Yes she was fond of the whole family. There was no problem with that. She would give my little, or when I say little my younger brother a nurse a couple of times just to infuriate him because at that stage we would have been 6 or 7 that type of thing and at that age girls are not on for blokes and she would give him a nurse and he would struggle to get away and so forth but she only did that as a fun thing. There was never any great meaningful cuddles but

15:00 the thought and whatever actions were there so there was love in the family but it wasn't showed openly like some families do. More so these days than they used to do in those days.

**Were there lessons that your mum taught you like your dad had about life?**

Not really. I can recall a couple of people asking later this is when I was in my late teens and they would say, "Oh you're mother has done a great job of bringing you boys up."

15:30 The girls had left home by this time and they were married basically. And we never said this back Mum never brought us up but we helped her, not grow up but helped her exist like because the training we had, the upbringing we had before I don't know was fairly conservative, it was fairly and Christian is not the word either but if you can understand what I mean a fairly normal sort of situation I think where we were

16:00 disciplined enough that it carried over, so we knew what we had to do and we did it basically although

whatever mischief we got up and got home late and climb through bedroom windows at nighttime so they didn't hear me come in and get upset and worried if you didn't come in so I thought the simple way was to climb through the windows. I did that a few times. Actually my mates used to laugh, "Here you are, 20 or whatever you are climbing through the window." I just did it so that it didn't affect her. She would think I was home and it didn't worry her

16:30 but as far as her teaching me things except repeating some of the old fables and stories that are passed through generations no she didn't really teach us anything probably reminding us the proper, correct manners to have and that sort of thing but teaching us and growing up as an adult no not really.

**Family holidays. What do you remember of those?**

They were quite good. When Dad was alive

17:00 particularly because he, towards the end before he died he was working what they called the relief. Before he got his next promotion he had to travel around the state a little bit relieving other people as head of districts in various parts of New South Wales, so instead of us moving we stayed in Goulburn and he would be away a fortnight at a time sometimes. Quite often he would be home every weekend but more often every second weekend from wherever he had to be posted. He could be at that post for 2 months or so and then another one for 3 months

17:30 or something so that went on for a couple of years. So when we had a holiday we would go down the coast or Kiama sometimes. We went to Manly one time. Beach areas, generally, because we lived in the country all the time, so we had a holiday to the beach and they were quite pleasant. It would usually be my younger brother, myself, my parents, my elder brother sometimes but later on he started to work so he didn't join us but they were quite happy occasions.

18:00 **As far as the beach areas were concerned Batehaven was where you mainly went to or?**

Oh no. Kiama we've been to. Yes Batehaven more often you are right there and this wouldn't be every year but periodically through those periods we would go to places like that.

**Any fond memories or funny stories from that time?**

Just when Dad and I would go surfing together. I suppose I was getting up to about 12 and so forth

18:30 and as I growing up at that stage from about 12 to 15 I was fairly large. When I was about 15 I would nearly about the same height as I am now and similar size and so I was a fair bulking sort of kid to the others at school. There were some taller than me but pretty much thinner and we would go surfing and learn to ride the dumpsters and the waves. Not surfboard riding just body surfing in an amateur sort of way

19:00 and I remember I could handle it better than he. He came over a wave one time and we both landed on the deck and the wave caught him and he lost his dacks [pants] down here but some humorous things like that now and again.

**And your other brothers, I mean were they close and joined you?**

Pretty well. I used to scrap with my older brother a bit. My younger brother he was in the army too. He got called up in Nashos and we were both overseas at the same time. He was in 9 Battalion. He came over before I left

19:30 and he came back after I got home.

**Okay. Your grandparents, do you have any memories of them?**

No, they were dead before I was born. You see when I was, my sisters were quite older as I have said. They were about 12 and 16 years older than me so I would have been about, my mother would have been about 41 or something when I was born and at that stage their parents had died some time before

20:00 in that matter of 10 or so years before so I didn't know them at all. Maybe even longer than that before.

**Was there any particular reason why your mum and dad had kids, had a break, had kids again?**

Probably I thought, but I don't know if I was correct, the war might have had something to do with it. You see we were generally born my elder brother was born at the start of the war, I was born at the finish of the war but I think it has something to do

20:30 with just physical system insomuch as my elder sister and elder brother their birthdays are about a week apart. My second elder sister and I the second eldest our birthdays are on the same day. The younger brother and sister their birthdays are one day apart and Mum says there was no planning whatsoever. It just happened that way so I thought the war might have had a bit to do with it but not totally. It was just the way

21:00 things went.

**Your father, did he have anything to do with the war?**

No he was in the Second World War, he volunteered to enlist but they knocked him back because he was in, what do they call it? A protected trade or a protected profession with the railways and so forth they wouldn't accept him so he stayed. I suppose if I had been in his position, it's hard to say, being a family person you see when I went in, I wasn't a family person at all.

21:30 I think a family person might have been inclined to say you've got a family responsibility. He did go to enlist as I said but they knocked him back for that reason.

**Was he disappointed with that fact?**

He never expressed that to me at all. I don't know.

**You never talked about the issue?**

He was dead a long time before I was. He was alive, he died when I was about 13 and 8 months. I know that because at that stage I was on NCO course

22:00 in the air training corps. While I was on course it happened. But he had been now I come to think of it he had been in some military cadet system while he was at school but outside that there was no real discussion about it at all. I don't know his thoughts on it except to say that because he was such a conservative person he would have preferred no war whatsoever but apart from that I couldn't be sure.

22:30 **You've spoken a bit about your parents being sort of conservative. Were they religious at all?**

Oh, they would go to church, yes, but they weren't what I would consider heavily religious. I think it was probably the practice training they grew up with that you attend church and we did with them as young church but I don't attend, my wife does but

23:00 I don't attend church these days. I haven't done except for weddings, christenings, funerals that type of thing since I was about mid 20's or 20 and I didn't make a practice of going until surprisingly I don't know, I do know how I got involved because I was a choir boy in Goulburn. Of course I went regularly then until I was about 14 or 15. 14 probably.

**So what did you think of church way back then?**

Well

23:30 I didn't have a deep opinion of it insomuch as understanding it fully. It was something that was given to us at school and training and whatever and it was there as another part of living, another part of your learning and being taught but I couldn't grasp the full amount of it so it didn't have a great impression with me. I just sort of went along with it and not long later than that I would have some extreme doubts

24:00 about the situation. I could see the benefit of it for society, but I didn't think it was going to do a great deal for me.

**You mentioned your dad died. How did that impact the family?**

Fairly strongly I suppose. I was away on camp and some relatives come and my brother came and I went back with them and I never saw the body at the time and I know for a long time after I used to

24:30 think perhaps he's going to come home because if I'd see the body it might have been a different story but I did think that for quite a while. It was a sort of faery tale thing that these things happen and that's gone wrong there and he's going to come home but like I suppose anyone dieing there's a great upset but people have to live through it so I can't recall any dramatic situation

25:00 except the normal, what's the term? When you are in a state of, I'm lost for words. Emotional suffering. There's always that. You go through that and everyone's a bit quiet about things but you slowly move on and you get over that and get on with it.

**How did he die?**

A heart attack. It wasn't a heart attack as such. We were informed incorrectly.

25:30 We used to think that, a coronary occlusion. So his heart was quite good but it's the arteries that come from the heart. His style of sedentary living. He was quite a strong man. Very strong really he used to work at a desk in administration all the time and in the old days the foods were steaks and the chops and the fried eggs and bacon that they lived on a and a few beers and that sort of thing

26:00 so it wasn't good with the lack of exercise he had. So he was a little overweight and the arteries were clogged up. So what happened one was blocked off and ruptured and burst, so the term is coronary occlusion. Generally when you say that to people they say heart attack, but actually it's not the heart. His heart was quite good and he was by himself at the time. He was away at near Newcastle where he was relieving someone there. It was a

26:30 weekend and he had been to these, out with his friend out to his place and that friend's wife for lunch and this bloke dropped him back to where he was staying and he was up in the room where he was staying and they found him there later. Probably the effort of coming up the stairs, 2nd or 3rd floor or

whatever he was on and he had this occlusion and died there before he went to the room.

**So how did that affect you personally**

27:00 **when you heard the news?**

I was quite shocked. I was quite shocked. What actually happened I was on this training camp. We were doing some gym work or something at the time part of your lessons through the day and I was called to go the headquarters and I had to go back and change into uniform and pack my kit and the story they gave me - they didn't tell me what was happening - they said, "You have been moved to another hut

27:30 and you've got to do into town with one of the officers for something." Whatever I forget what that was. That was the excuse to get me all set up and I packed the kit and went down for headquarters and had to stand there for donks. Outside the office, inside the building and then eventually they said, "Come into the office," and when I went in there was my uncle, my brother and my brother-in-law was there and I was quite

28:00 surprised to see them for half a second, and then I knew something was bad, so it was a shock then. Then I guess it eased off after that but how long it takes I can't be sure. Whether it is days or weeks. Weeks I suppose, but there is some sort of acceptance there. I don't know what else you would be able to do.

**So how did the family or I guess**

28:30 **friends even from church or wherever help you through the grief process?**

Grief was the word I was couldn't find before. Well the neighbours alongside us would cook cakes and things and send those in. The girls who were all married and away from home they were at home a bit to help Mum through, so it was just a bit of a gathering of the family slightly.

29:00 Friends outside what I can recall would have sent their sympathies and that sort of thing but didn't make a big thing that wasn't wanted that they would come and be a burden and try and help out when there's not much they can do anyway. Some people when it happens don't like to talk about it. I know I had a couple of friends at school and they wanted to steer away from the subject altogether. Pretend it didn't happen.

29:30 They didn't want to talk about it. None of us do until you're hit with it and experience it instead of say, "I'm sorry to hear your Dad died," or that sort of thing. I might have been the same when approaching them I don't know. There were a few like that, others said the simple thing of, "Sorry to hear your bad news," that sort of thing but other than that, nothing stands out at all.

**How did your mum cope from then on? Did she get a**

30:00 **job and - ?**

No, no. She never worked. In the old days people got married and the women stayed at home and looked after the family. So for a long period after she couldn't get a pension because I suppose Dad being conservative he was fairly frugal. There was sufficient money in the bank that she wouldn't have got a pension anyway. She owned her own home and so forth

30:30 so at that stage I still had a couple of schools left and my brother had about 3 years of school left and she wouldn't have got a pension until after we left school because she always had financial support that was above the pension level.

**So as a family you didn't have to cut back because of the loss of your dad on food or toys or things?**

Toys weren't a big thing at that stage. We'd grown past that but

31:00 no we didn't have to cut back that I could recall. Probably Mum would have done in some respect but not that I can remember anything being cut back previous to what we had before. So we lived quite comfortably still.

**Can you share with me, you spent quite a lot of your time in Goulburn?**

Yeah.

**Just the layout of Goulburn the township and where things were.**

Well we lived fairly central. I think as you pass through Goulburn through the main street one

31:30 of the more prominent things is the big town clock. We lived about 2 blocks from that in a westerly direction away from the street. The other big prominent is the war memorial on the hill, on the rocky hill. That's on the other side as you pass through on the other side of Goulburn. I went to the high school there which is over on the western side. Goulburn High School. Since I left there they have another high school.

32:00 Population then was about somewhere around about 21,000 I think. It might 25,000. I might be more

than that I don't know. In layout I don't know in a typical town you have the normal things, hospitals, whatever, I'm not sure what you are asking in layout without showing you a plan.

**Were there any interesting characters in the community?**

That stand out. We used to have, like every town

32:30 has their wino [alcoholic]. We used to go down to the river and swim at the rock it was called as kids and I suppose we were taught to swim when we were young and were quite competent in the water. And what surprised me now we used to go down the river and swim by ourselves and nowadays you'd have back flip if that sort of thing takes place. The kids get in all sorts of danger but for some reason being in the country a lot we would get out where there were snakes and whatever. We were aware they were there

33:00 but the parents didn't get upset about it. Oh, getting to this character. He was a wino as most towns have and he used to sleep under the bridge a lot and he would come down the river sometimes and take his flagon so we would harass him sometimes from the other side of the bank as kids and call him a 'wino' and a 'groggo' and so forth and he'd get up on the bank and - "You kids! I'll fix you!"

33:30 One kid jumped in the water, he was bigger than us. We were only about 10 and he up the bank and - "You were only kidding, you were only kidding, off you kids go." Another time he was down under the bridge on the Crookwell Road and he caused a fire and the fire brigade had to go down there. He and his mate had their flagon and they were lighting a fire to keep warm and it got away from him in the briars and they had to send the fire brigade down to put it out. But of notable characters in that humorous manner I can't recall any others

34:00 to mind. Just the normal people you grow up with.

**You mentioned that you and a mate used to get out to a little bit of mischief. He turned out to be a cop. What was the local cop like if you got into trouble?**

No we really had. The only time the cop was there I got booked once and the charge was dropped I was going through a crossing and failing to stop

34:30 and I had stopped and there were 2 police cycles around the corner looking up the main street, up Market Street and they were chatting together and they saw me and hadn't seen me stop and I had my brother in with me as a witness and the charge was dropped. But generally I had nothing to do with the police there I think. Another time, oh another time a couple of young, a young policeman

35:00 and another and I blew the horn at a mate that was going down the road at 9.30 at night on the festive week, Lilac Time and he pulled me over and tried to get me for drunk driving because I'd had a couple of drinks. I'd had about 3 middies and in those times they didn't have breathalysers or anything like this so they took me down the police station and charged me and I had a phone call so I rang the doctor and he came down and checked me out and said, "There's no problems whatsoever." You walk a straight line

35:30 and put your finger on your nose and a few of these exercises that they get you do to show them how sober you were. I wasn't drunk at all, just a young cop that wanted to book me. Here's the other problem with that what I'd done when I drove up the street I'd went and picked up a chap that used to have a business there had asked me to pick up one of his vans and drive it up to the other end of town where he lives. It was parked near the shop. Now his employee that had it was away from the weekend and left it at the shop. What it was this chap was trying to get onto this policeman's girlfriend,

36:00 chat her up at some stage and when he pulled me up, he thought I was the Peter Divel. That was the instance of that. Anyway, he wasn't pleased that I had got off with it even though I wasn't the person he thought. Outside that. There were other things. I used to play football for Goulburn United and they had 2 football teams. The Workers' Club and Goulburn United and there were police in both of them. A Grade

36:30 teams and not the Sydney A Grade the big league, we were lower than that. They used to have to as a bit of a joke one cop from one team would book someone from the other team at the slightest chance. Be driving under the influence or something. Our coach got booked for riding his bike under the influence one time. They made this a bloody great joke between themselves. We didn't think it was so funny though. Outside that though fortunately we never got

37:00 hauled up before the police.

**Did you get them back for the boys booking several players?**

There weren't several, it was only 1 at a time and I'm probably make it sound more frequent than it was. It would only be say 3 times in 2 years that this might take place and I suppose one lot from one team would try and put one on the other. Most of them would just laugh it off and wouldn't bother about it at all, but there were the couple. Whether they had something in for one another

37:30 I don't know. I think that's more the case. They had it in for someone. One looked the wrong way at his girlfriend or something like this.

**Goulburn High School. Did you go to the junior school as well or just the high school?**

I went to the junior school which was called Bourke Street. It was Goulburn Public School but everyone knew it as Bourke Street.

**What can you tell me about your school memories?**

Say at Bourke Street

- 38:00 when I went through school at Bourke Street I used to protect the little blokes from the bullies. I remember there was a young bloke, Michael Mitton, they used to pick on him a bit. The only fights I ever got into were on behalf of someone else. I never got into a fight that I caused ever but I was sizeable enough. These funny things happened. When I was in second class there there was this bloke for whatever reason he we were going to have a fight. I upset him or whatever
- 38:30 and fortunately when we got home we used to have boxing gloves and my father used to do a bit of amateur boxing, just training and so forth when he was young and long before my period but he never fought in amateur fights except in this club they went to and so he used to teach a little bit with the boxing gloves. Not be a great brawlers or anything, but just to handle the boxing gloves and how to block and punch and so forth and it wasn't a great deal. It wasn't excessive just on the rare occasion these
- 39:00 these might come out as a bit of a fun thing really. Not serious. So this bloke, we were only about 6 or 7 or something and this bloke was going to have me for something. I must have upset him about a girl. You know, are always in these problems and so anyway, he's up there and here's haymakers, swinging madly like this and far as you can. He had no control. He'd never been in a fight probably and all I did was duck up and down and step down and they would go and I'd come up and go bang, and he got a bloody nose and that stopped the fight
- 39:30 and I was a hero so no one picked me up until about 6th class. From 2nd class up to 6th class I was a fighter you see but I had a bit of size with me you see so that helped. And I didn't have another fight until I was in high school and that didn't last long too and that was sticking up for someone else.

**We'll just pause there because we are now right at the end of the tape. We'll change tape and then we'll continue on. This is spot on, so thank you for this.**

## Tape 2

- 00:42 **You mentioned in high school you got into another fight. What was the situation there?**
- I think it was just a matter of people challenging to be on top. I suppose physically I was fairly
- 01:00 competent and just someone that's just trying to be leader. I was never out to be leader of the pack but that's what they wanted so they wanted to set up a challenge. I must have been young and silly. Just prior to this one a few ones picked me. They were all in the same class and I don't know what it happened over. Again for someone else and these 2 blokes try to give me a hard time
- 01:30 and I said, "All right. I'll take you both on," because one wasn't much chop anyway. He was a tall and lanky bloke, but I thought he would be too gangly, I thought. Anyway I challenged the both of them and they backed off. They wouldn't wear and then some other smarty thought okay he would like to rule the roost. Nobody was ruling the roost. I'm probably giving you the wrong opinion but he liked to be noted at the top or something like that. When I was 13 at high school I played in a
- 02:00 school football team with all the 5th years. I was a 1st year nearly 2nd year and all the 5th years were so I was fairly physically capable I suppose at the time. Anyway nothing much happened. It sort of blew out to nothing. We lined up to have a fight and he decided it didn't look right so he thought okay leave it and that was it basically.
- 02:30 Instant stare comes to mind. Mischievous thing. We used to - we had this Texan teacher come out. We thought he was a bit of a laugh. He was at the school for nearly a year as a sort of transfer I suppose and he started which we liked some of us a wrestling class. We had to go after school one evening a week and there would be about 8 of us
- 03:00 from the whole school and there would only have been. I'm guessing a bit but there might have been about 800 girls and boys in the school, wouldn't have done. Might have only been 600, I'm not sure, and about 8 of us used to go along to this wrestling class of a night time. One night he had a date with one of the other school teachers we found out later and he forget to turn up to this blasted class. He hadn't forgot, I'm sorry, he had passed the word but there were 3 or 4 of us it hadn't got to us and there were
- 03:30 3 of us turned up there. I don't know if my younger brother was with me. So you know we used to go into a gymnasium which was separate from the main building. The main building we knew there was one window that the lock was broken and it was in the music room. You know these sash windows that slide up and down and there's a latch on it. That one was broken and so we got into the school. I'd had the cane off the deputy head and I knew where he kept his canes in his office.

- 04:00 Behind a linen press not a linen press but a metal press a cabinet, kept them behind there. So I got through the window, crept up one floor and got these canes. He had about 3 canes there so I pulled them all out and we got out and closed the window up and we broke the canes up to about 6 inches and he lived about 3 blocks from the school. A little bit from our direction so I went down there and stuck them all in his letter box. So the next day at school,
- 04:30 he hauled another bloke up who had been in trouble with him. This bloke got the blame for me. A mate of it, a part mate. I used to play football with him and he got the blame for it. He was denying it, "No it's wasn't him," and he came back. "Some buggers got the canes," and he's telling me the story and then about 9 months later when everything had calmed down I told him it was me, so the other deputy tried to get him to say it was him to punish him so he couldn't get him to admit to it, so he couldn't really prove it so it sort of slipped by the way.
- 05:00 And another time after one of these wrestling things they had obtained at the school a big old car. It was like a Buick if you remember them. A big old black heavy thing and the teachers said they were going to teach the students to drive. You know the senior students not us to prepare for their permits and that sort of thing. I don't recall that ever happening at all but they used to use this big Buick for
- 05:30 it might have been a Buick or a Pontiac. Excuse me. They had used it on the oval to drag the mowers around. That was about all it was used for. It was parked out the front of the school and there's a bit of a slope on the ground so what had happened this other night we went along and no one turned up for the wrestling. The same 3, my younger brother this other fellow and his younger brother at this stage. We started playing with this car so we take the brake off and roll it down
- 06:00 towards the gateway. Push it back up again. There wasn't much of a slope we would push it up again, lined up to have another go and blow me dead. This is about 8.30 at night and it was dark and one of the teachers came back to school, was driving up the gate. The gates were closed of course so he had to stop and walk in and we recognised him so we bungled out of this bloody car and headed off and the car was still rolling. Shit!
- 06:30 We weren't game to stop and see what happened. What had actually happened it turned slightly and stopped in some bushes so everything was safe. Crikey and the other chap was with his younger brother, he wasn't at high school. He was in primary school and he had come along and he had left his jacket in the bloody car. I don't know what went on with that family because he had obtained the jacket from somewhere that wasn't his. Whether it was stolen or he just picked it up and didn't return it
- 07:00 and next morning at assembly it was announced. Here's the deputy headmaster and here's the coat. "If anyone in the school knowing who owns this would they please come forward or let me know who I might belong to," and I'm thinking, "Shit I hope that bloke doesn't walk out and get it." But he never did. He had enough sense not to. So that all blew over and nothing happened.

**So did you have a reputation with the headmaster as all of being?**

No I got on with the headmaster quite well, because I used to represent the school at

- 07:30 football and swimming. Generally I was a straight student. On occasions the kids got into mischief and so forth but other than that I never caused a hassle at the school I was what you think was a responsible, respectable student.

**You were mentioned earlier that often with fights girls were in**

- 08:00 **some way the centre of it.**

Well yes. Someone's got his attention on a girl and someone else looks like cutting him out and gets niggly about it. That was the start of most of them I think thinking back. Those are the ones that stick in mind.

**I mean you had sisters but did you have many girlfriends so to speak?**

Not a lot. I had friends but not serious girlfriends, "This is my girlfriend partner sort of thing," until after I left school,

- 08:30 then I had several who whatever, but I wasn't overly concerned because I liked playing football at the time. I used to go out with girls now and again but they weren't my main attraction at the time. I was a bit slow to pick and I made up ground later on. At that stage I wasn't chasing them madly that I could recall. If I wanted to go out somewhere with a girl I would have no problem finding someone to go out with but I wasn't chasing them around town sort of thing.

- 09:00 There might have been the odd one I was - that didn't work out anyway.

**Did you know from your sisters the difference between boys and girls and all that sort of thing?**

No not really at all. Obviously know the difference because I had sisters in the family and so forth but there was no sex education, no. Hang on, here's one thing that happened. When I was in air training corps I had,

- 09:30 I was heading off to camp I don't know whether it was the first time I was going. Going off to camp, this is junior school holidays. You do 10 days or a fortnight sometimes at one of the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] bases at Richmond or Wagga or wherever it might be. It must have been the first one and I was in the kitchen helping one with the washing up and she's fussy around more than usual and she said, "I want to have a word with you." And I thought, "Shit what's going on here."
- 10:00 "Come and help me make the bed." So we're going through making the beds through the house. She said, "I want to have a talk to you. When you go to camp you know you are going to a place where there other men and so forth are make sure that you don't sit right down on the toilet seat." And that was the end of the conversation. That was it. I thought, "Bugger me dead." "Yes, Mum, okay." Finished making the bed and that was it.
- 10:30 No, it was sort of too embarrassing a field for her to cover that. I taught my younger brother about it when he was at that stage I had ideas on the girl next door. We had a long block and we had neighbours that were 1, 2, 3, 4 houses. 4 houses down one side of the block so we had quite a few not just one either side, and I had ideas on one of these girls,
- 11:00 and always mucked up for me because her young brother was always with her so my young brother knew what was going on. He was 13, 12 at the time. I had to give him the drum what it was all about. He didn't believe me at first that this could be quite true but that's where we got our education outside the family. One time when I was much older and this is probably when I was 16 or 17. My sister was married and living down the coast
- 11:30 and I used to go down there often and I used to ski so we used to water ski with her and her husband who I got on very well with and she came out one time when I was sitting on the lawn. Rex was doing something with his car, that's the brother in law and she gave me a book. Just a small one, Sex and the Facts of Life. But it was a bit late at that stage there was nothing the book could have told me that I didn't know since about 12 or something. There were some minor things, but generally we had the
- 12:00 concept. Outside that no, I learnt it from friends.

**You joined the air TC at age of about 12. The air training corps.**

I was under 13 when I went in there.

**Why did you join that?**

Well my ideas were army all the time. I was going to join the cadets at high school. I had to ask Mum and she had to sign a paper for it and at the time my sister was at home. Her husband was in the air force

- 12:30 and he had been transferred to somewhere until they had their apartment or flat that they were looking for she was staying at home for a while and of course the army blokes are a bit uncouth and the air force blokes are neat and tidy and well groomed and well mannered sort of thing so to please them I joined the air training corps instead of the air cadets at school, instead of the army cadets at school. I think generally you might have had better training really.
- 13:00 That might be a biased concept but from what we saw we did quite well. They would have equally good training as far as cadets go that is. I thought ours was a bit better but that might be a biased statement. So that's why I joined pleasing my mother.

**What sort of things did they train and teach you?**

You did the normal thing with weapons. Used to go out on the range and use the rifles. In our flight, 25 Goulburn we had a Bren gunner,

- 13:30 sub machine gunner, a Thomson .45. I don't know how many of these there might have been about a dozen .303s. So we did that. You learned drill. You learned history of the air force and saw numerous war films, training films on the Battle of Britain and this sort of thing. Learned to identify aircraft. Do some amount of navigation and we were fortunate to we had
- 14:00 a Link training on our flight in Goulburn not that they used it often enough. A Link trainer is what they train pilots in in really early stages and they are like a little cockpit. You get in and they have the instruments in them. You pull the top down and you are all blacked out and you sit on a big stand and they move back and forth with the use of the joystick and they turn and all this sort of thing and there is a plotter on the table for, on the table along side with a map on the top and there's an arm comes down with a needle sort of plotting your course and so forth.
- 14:30 Get your altitude and you fly in this thing so when you first get in if the instruments were correct I would have landed about 900ft below the ground level and that sort of thing. Those things were good. You went away to camps did something similar there. You did drill and training and NCO courses of course you learned instruction, how to instruct, general service knowledge all those sort of things. In those fields they went more so
- 15:00 than what the army did when they did their basic drill. I don't know if they would have done training manoeuvres or anything like that. We would have lived a little bit more luxury than the army. The army cadets at school were given a tent with a bag full of straw. We would have huts with beds in them and

mattresses on them all this sort of thing.

**Did they take you up in planes or?**

Oh yes. Nearly every camp you went to you went up in a plane. Some were extremely lucky. I never

15:30 got a flight in one of these Vampires. That's like a 2 seater jet, a couple would on rare occasions but you would go up in one of the transport aircraft's and you might get, depending on who was in charge of the cadets in the camp like these reservists who were usually teachers from various schools that filled these positions so they would come to camp as officers. Some of them would, we were lucky in our camp we had 2 blokes that flew in the Battle of Britain and

16:00 in Goulburn and that was a bit of a rarity. And we had another chap that was a gunner in the air crew in the Second World War so there was 3, 4 experienced actually, in Britain area. One I said that was a gunner in bomber systems and 2 of them were pilots, fighter pilots. So that probably didn't add a lot to our training but their experience must have rubbed off in some fashion before.

**Did they talk about their,**

16:30 **the war experience for them?**

Not often usually most things when you think back you think of more humorous times. Say Goldsbrough, he was a flight lieutenant in our group and he had flown in the Battle of Britain area and he was saying one time of a night time they would get on the booze a fair bit and get out of their mind a little bit. I was trying not to say an impolite term then and next day they would get up and be hung over and they would have to do some

17:00 areas along the Channel or something and he was coming back one day and he was flying and he felt so bad he didn't care if he got killed really. He was feeling so crook he could have died and he was flying along and he fell asleep and the next thing he remembers these hedges were in front of him as he was coming across the countryside and he pulled up and scraped the top of the hedges. Woke him up with a jolt and he got back to base okay. A couple of things they referred to as I remember him again and he used to give

17:30 lectures on navigation and things and dead reckoning. Simple turn in navigation you estimate really. You might have an island or something and you are heading that way and the wind is going this way, your speed is such and such. You don't do any calculation you just say if I take a bearing so much that way the winds going to take me across and he ends up on the island after about hour and half flying or something. Things like that they would come up with. Norm Goldsbrough that was and another one

18:00 was a chap named Little and he was in the Battle of Britain as well. He still did - he was a crop duster sometimes, but he was the, he had an aero club in Goulburn and he was their head officer or whatever they termed them our there. In charge of the aero club and on occasions we would get out there and fly in light aircraft they would take us up. We had one person that was a, wasn't military personnel at school a sports master. Pug Curtis. He was

18:30 quite a reasonable person. Feet on the ground. No nonsense bloke with the kids at school. He ruled, no one sort of gave him any back chat. He was fair dinkum sort of thing. Probably more bluff than we realised but he was a member of the aero club and on occasion he'd take them up. He liked taking them up the first time. I remember we were with him 2 of us in an Auster I think at the time

19:00 and you'd be taking off, "Would you like to go up?" "Yeah." Straight up and your bowels are falling back in you, and you think what's going on there? "Would you like to go down?" Down and then he'd pull up and he just liked making people bloody sick if he could but sometimes like that. Not often but we got out there now and again.

**How did you fare? Did you throw up at all?**

No I was never sick in the air. My brother in law - this is years later after I probably got back from the army - he

19:30 had his pilot's licence as well. This is the one I used to go down the coast and stay with. I had some memorable time with him one time. He wasn't reckless but he wasn't experienced enough in a lot of things safety wise I think. Anyway we were flying along and there was another chap on his tail and they were having a pretend dog fight sort of thing. They weren't doing loops or whatever so he dropped down and went down this way to get away from him and falling faster than gravity

20:00 in this fashion and there is a wrench on the floor and it just floated. It was amazing. This wrench just floated like this and we are falling down and I grabbed the wrench and there was no weight. It was a light as a feather. You know a bit wrench like this that a plumber would use. They would probably weigh several kilogram and when I touched it and it was just like a feather but as soon as you started to slow up it would floating and then it would go whack. Could cause a lot of damage to somewhere. He should never have had it on the floor

20:30 but anyway, yeah.

**You mentioned earlier that the phrase brain washed in respect of the training corps. Can you talk me through that?**

Well it's probably not just that but I would say my family upbringing. As I say I was emphasising a fairly conservative family and you always have to do the right thing and a job is only done if it is done properly and all these sort of things

- 21:00 and it's a sort of discipline thing that leads easily into military life. When into the military, when I went into the army eventually no problem fitting in while blokes coming off the street who never had any of this obviously a big difference. But its just the discipline we were brought up with, which wasn't spartan, but I suppose what a lot of people had grown up with in those days. You had to do the right things whether you did it or not but you pretended you did.
- 21:30 Just the things I mentioned at school. You pretended you did the right thing but sometimes you stepped out of line. You didn't tell anyone. So it was that and I suppose I had some sort of whether it was an admiration or a desire for the military side of things. There was a big talk in our family and I exaggerate a big talk but a theme of things anti Communist strongly.
- 22:00 They had this fear of Communism, I exaggerate when I say fear. The Communists were going to come down from the north. They are so big in Russia and so forth and that's part of the reason I suppose this Vietnam thing that I was so willing to go along with so readily at the time believing the domino theory was put forward and that seemed quite logical situation where all these little countries were being taken over, so it's that attitude
- 22:30 I guess from the people of the time. Not just my parents, but the people of the time this big Russian thing, the Communists and they are the worst of the worst if you had listened to what my sister said in part. So I think it was that initially and how I developed this, whether it was an admiration or whatever for the military side of things the training, the discipline whether there was a glamour. I don't know if I would say a glamour
- 23:00 but there was something there that attracted me so I fell into the mould fairly readily, fairly easily.

**During your time in the air training corps were you training in a sense as young teenagers with an enemy in mind?**

Not particularly no. The idea of that obviously the same as with the army cadets I suppose more so in the air cadets to try and attract cadets into the air force. That was one of the main aims of it. It might have been the ultimate

- 23:30 aim I don't know but that was the general aim so there would have probably been an underlying subconscious thing of that yes but it wasn't pressed upon you as major thing. Not at all.

**You mentioned sort of the conservative side of your family but also that emphasis on military things. Does Anzac Day an important day for you or your family?**

Important we would

- 24:00 always go and see the Anzac Day march. My uncle who is in Goulburn was in the First World War and friends of my parents had been First World War and most of them had died and I hadn't met them so through numerous people that they had known that had been through it and not so much the Second World War their friends. Two uncles I had,
- 24:30 sorry the second uncle - he was Second World War. He was up in New Guinea. He was taken prisoner up there and he escaped from the Japs. The first one, the older one who died when I was 14, 15 he was in not the light horse but the mounted, the ones that dragged the cannons around, around the battle fields.
- 25:00 So probably their association as well. He used to come back with stories. This uncle he was quite a humorous sort of bloke. Not so much tall stories but funny stories to kids particularly but now and again when he was talking with the others he would come out with his experiences and so forth. Not so much in great depth but at those times he would speak about those things
- 25:30 that gave you a laugh, the happier things that seem to stick in and you forget the others.

**What stories did you hear about World War I and World War II?**

One with my uncle said one time they were under fire and they were moving these cannons and he got hit on the hip and he could feel the blood running down his leg and into his boot and he was riding and didn't look back and they were just charging to get out of his area

- 26:00 because they had cannons so they must have been fired upon by other cannons so they were riding flat strap through wet and mud and so forth and they would have gone a couple of km nearly before they hauled up and he had this sensation of this wet and when he looked it had been a water bottle or something like that had been hit. I don't know where he got hit I don't think it had even spilled but he just had this sensation he could feel it down his leg. Nothing had happened to him really. He hadn't been wounded at all.

- 26:30 He just felt this shrapnel. Not a great deal more I can recall of him. He got some gas in the trenches over there. When he was over, he had some leave, he had some trouble with gas over because he hadn't nominated early because when they were gassed they pulled out and had to go to hospital and have whatever treatment and they either did that or they went on leave in Britain for 10 days or something like that in Britain and
- 27:00 he didn't say he went on leave and he suffered this gas a bit later on. While he was on leave they had to line up along this bloody street there was a parade coming through whether it was the King or something, the King I think it was in his coach, so they all had to line up as his Guard of Honour with the Poms there, the Pommy army and they were a bit peeved off because they had to waste their leave time standing on the street and he said he was whingeing to the other bloke, "Bugger the bloody King,"
- 27:30 he said and some Pommy said, "And bugger Ned Kelly too," back to him. They thought Ned Kelly must have been our God or something. Stories like that now and then float back.

**And the World War II uncle?**

He had a bit of a harder time. He was up on the northern side of New Guinea they were captured bunches of them and they tied them up with barbed wire, hands behind their back

- 28:00 they put them on the deck and they came along and we bayoneted them and he pretended to be dead, pretended to be dead and when it came dark they crept off into the bush and after a day or so they met up with a couple of others that got away and made their way back overland and he had 2 brothers with him. One had died. No what had happened. One couldn't go any further so they had to leave him because
- 28:30 they didn't have enough food. They had to keep moving they hoped to get food or something and his brother said, "No he wasn't going to leave him. He'd stay with him." There was either 2 or 3 of them pushed on and the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels [indigenous Papua New Guineans] met them and they helped them back to the other side of the coast and they picked up a boat there and got back to Australia because the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels had pulled them out. Well when they got this
- 29:00 boat. I don't know if they stole or what back to, back to the coast heading towards Australia and they were picked up by a merchant seamen or something. They were just about done at the time they had spent so many days at sea without food and water and so forth and probably, I'm guessing but many, many years later he was walking down George Street and bumped into this bloke they had left over in New Guinea with his brother.
- 29:30 They had told the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels about them and the natives went back, picked these blokes up, brought them through. Took them to the coast and they got a flight back all the way back and put in hospital when they got home so other than that he didn't tell a lot of stories. He told a few things. One that I'd rather not say on camera it's a bit humorous.

**Go on.**

Well he was talking about his mate and when they were over there,

- 30:00 no women about for a long time and blokes get a bit randy so for a few cigarettes or so they could get one of these native women. The real bush woman with the bones through the nose and grass skirts ugly as a hat full sort of thing. He said they were pretty grotty. The grass skirts still had shit on them when they had gone to the toilet and that and hadn't cleaned up properly so this blokes taken this bird behind a tree and he's going away and
- 30:30 he goes crook, and he says, "Don't look at me while I'm fucking you." She was an ugly old thing he reckons. He closed his eyes he reckons his mate. But anyway other than that's a funny little story perhaps.

**These early sort of stories that you shared did they worry you about war, inspire you in respect to service?**

No generally I suppose when you are young

- 31:00 you don't think you are invincible but you don't think it will happen to you. It will happen to someone else. You will be okay. On that sort of a funny thing in so much that one time, 2 times I, when I was going, before I was going over there I thought I'll come back there's no problem. I went over on the Sydney, we were just
- 31:30 going out of Sydney Harbour and I had this gut feeling that it was, not quite the same as when someone walks over your grave you get that shudder but something a long the lines of that, a very gloomy feeling and I looked at the Heads and thought, "Christ, will I ever see those again?" because I had been out of the Heads before. When I was about 19 I had gone to Japan on a holiday come back and I had seen them before and I thought, "Christ will I ever see those again?" and suddenly, suddenly after that I thought, "Well
- 32:00 I'll - I might get wounded but I'm going to get back, I'm going to come back." In actual fact I got wounded and came back. That reminds me of another story when we were in Ingleburn not long before we were due to move. We were in the bar and one chap was talking. He was really down and we are

trying to liven him up a bit, "What's the problem?" We thought he might have a girlfriend. That was usually the problem

32:30 he reckons he wasn't going to come back. He knew he wasn't going to come back. We tried to talk him out of it and reinforce that he was going to come back. "How can you say you're not going to come back?" He didn't come back. He got killed. I don't know exactly because I went to a different area than he did but I think you sort of psych yourself up. Now I can imagine if he's lined up and he's about to line up with someone else and he's going to shoot him he's going to freeze

33:00 and it's happening, it's going to happen now, it's going to happen now. He get himself into. I don't know if that's how it happened. I wasn't there obviously so that doesn't make or break it but I think that helps. When I think of this chap he was convinced before he went. He got over it a bit later but he reckoned he wasn't going to come back and I think he talked himself into it. You get, you do things by reflexes

33:30 and his reflexes wouldn't have worked then. That's what I think. Whether that's right. Strong possibility though. When I thought about myself and just coincidence I suppose. I felt I was coming back for sure but I thought I might get wounded and I did so I dare say it might have something to do with it in some cases. I think it might.

**Just coming back to the older men who had served overseas. Did you know anyone in the Boer War?**

34:00 No. I'm pretty sure I didn't. Only what I read of them, but I didn't know anyone personally who was in the Boer War.

**In respect of those you did know your uncles and such how did World War I and World War II affect them? Was there a difference or were they affected in the same way?**

I think they got over it pretty well. My first uncle whether that was his nature. He used to swear like a

34:30 trooper. He used to modify it when he was around us kids but he would swear like a trooper. He was a trooper I guess but. He had a humorous side to him. A serious side as well, but a humorous side and I think that makes a difference. My other uncle the one that went through the Second World War. He didn't speak a lot about it but I think it affected him a bit. He didn't ever discuss the Japanese

35:00 and the people that went through that they must have had a great hatred for them that went through those sort of things but he really didn't speak about them. He would talk about the humorous incidents that happened there. Not really a lot of stories came out of him. He was more quiet about it.

**When you finally enlisted did he pull you aside and have a word in your ear?**

No he was. I lived in Goulburn

35:30 at the time and he was in Sydney. I'm just trying to think. Yes, he was in Sydney. They retired to Port Macquarie after that. Not really. If he had been here he may have done I don't know. I think everyone was, generally I exaggerate when I say everyone was of the attitude it was good training or an experience or something.

36:00 **I just get you to watch your feet because the microphone will pick up the vibration. After the air training corps you joined the Air Force Reserve is that right?**

Yes.

**What was being taught to you there and trained there?**

Actually there not so much being trained there taught to be an instructor to teach the cadets what you've been through and what you've learned. So I was in there from 18 when you leave the air cadets

36:30 until I joined the army, and I must have been 21 or something.

**Had they taught to fly at all?**

Not really but the option was there. You had to have 4th year high school. 5th year was the final year relating that to what it is nowadays. I'm not sure what's the final year in high school now?

**Year 12.**

Year 12. It must have been something like year 11 or something

37:00 I would assume. You had to have 4th year well I left in 3rd which was Intermediate Certificate. As to the stage at the end I didn't have any inclination to go on and it would have been a drain on my mother if I had of done. If you'd done 4th year you could to go for, apply and they would teach you to fly. They only take some many cadets per year and if you made the selection board you'd got but I hadn't even reached 4th year so I didn't look like

37:30 getting into it at all. If I was more inclined to. I thought I would have liked to fly yes but if I was more

inclined to I could have joined a flying club. That was still expensive. I was on apprenticeship wages basically. Towards the end of apprenticeship wages at that stage. It was a bit expensive to take up yourself to pay to learn so I passed that up.

**So even though originally you wanted to join the school cadets you still went on into**

38:00 **the Air Force Reserve. There was no inclination for you to transfer back then to the?**

Not at that stage. That's where the training lie and I was getting more interested in the flying so that was of some benefit and I suppose you are in a group and you make your friends and associates in that group. We travelled away more than the army cadets say in the reserve I would take.

38:30 This is instance I can relate to you. I'd take cadets away to rifle shoots, interstate rifle shoots in Sydney. We'd take a swim team there and you'd go on camps if you wanted. I'm just thinking. I took cadets down I'm trying to remember what for. It might have been a rifle shoot in Sydney. These are cadets ranging from 14 to 18 go down by train and coming back and of course cadets weren't allowed to smoke and we used to let them smoke so I'd sit in one compartment and they'd sit by themselves

39:00 and I'd pretend I didn't know about it and there is a buffet bar on this train but all the carriages at the end of the carriages shut off. So I'm sitting there and there's a couple of people sitting where I am, a sort of compartment and you walk down a corridor to the other compartments and suddenly the train slows down and comes to a stop and some bloke comes from the engine comes down, "Who's in charge of these kids?" "What's going on here?" I stuck my head out the window and here's a bloody kid on the side of the carriage. What they done.

39:30 The door was cut off, locked to the buffet bar. They'd climbed out the bloody door, window on the door, they'd climbed onto the next one and the next one and get in and got down. Frig! I'm in charge of these kids and if there'd been an accident I'd have been hung drawn and quartered. I was lucky. What had happened the train was going around a corner and when he happened to look back he saw these bloody kids on the side of the carriage. One along the side and the other about the come out.

40:00 When I get back I'll give them a bloody dressing down. I get back and I think I hope nothing comes of this. When I get back after parade half way through the night I get called up to headquarters. Didn't have a clue what this was about. Just hoping I wouldn't get put on the mat. "Okay tell me what's going on?" Of course one of the blokes in the railway spoke to one of the blokes who knew who happened to be in the corps,

40:30 he obviously knew that and passed the message up the line. Crikey. I was told you know basically don't let them out of your sight next time which was quite bloody right. I sat these kids down after when they got on the train and sat them down in front of me. "You bloody move and I'll hammer you." Yes that was fortunate that nothing happened out of that.

**We'll just stop there and change the tape.**

## Tape 3

00:44 **Just to go back a bit. One piece of social history I would like to pick up is the big technological development or thing of your generation of television. What do you remember of getting television for the first time?**

Well we,

01:00 television had been around for a while before we got it and I can't remember exactly when it was but we must have been around 14 I suppose. I'm guessing a little bit. Might have been 15, yeah, in that period. The television we had then this was in Goulburn. We didn't get it for a long time because it was quite poor reception you know all this that we don't get nowadays and so forth so it was a bit of a pain to look at. But we did end up getting it.

01:30 It did improve a bit but it was still not as perfect as it is nowadays. There would have been, I'm guessing here very haphazardly. In Goulburn say 20% who had TV before we got it. Eventually I suppose 50 or 60% of the town might have had it. I'm guessing there I don't know the statistics but I'm just thinking of the people I knew who had TV.

02:00 Something of that nature for that period.

**Was it much of a change for your home life getting TV?**

Yes I guess it was particularly for winter when you sit around the fire sort of thing and watch TV and when I think back on it now you see some of those old shows why did I watch that crap. It was so plain Jane sort of thing with not much of a story to it but you would get this is pretty interesting stuff at the time. I still at that stage

02:30 wasn't as kids are now and sit down now and are clued to the TV. We would only have it on of an

evening after dinner. Never when there was meals or anything like that. Totally after dinner and before bedtime and it probably at the stage later than that I had started my apprenticeship and so the homework I had to do I used to do go to my bedroom and do it. TV usen't to worry me at all. I'd get in the bedroom because I didn't have the distraction of the rest of the family chatting.

03:00 **Any particular programmes that you really liked?**

Not that I can recall at that early stage. Later stages, much more recent when I was grown up, further grown up things like the Mavis Bramston Show. I don't know if you remember those at all, but that was a sort of comedy type set up and yes, there would have been some serialised things that I would watch but I just

03:30 can't draw them to mind at the time.

**Just to go back before you got TV. Was the radio something that your family listened to a lot?**

Yeah. Quite a lot. I can remember such things as you may have heard Jack Davies, Bob Dyer shows. It could be watched every week. There was a series on every week and as a kid the serial for school kids of the afternoon. 4.30, 5.00. You would get your jobs done and

04:00 come in and listen to the serial. Rocky Star or something like this. I forget know. Biggles or something along that nature. Radio yes was a big thing before TV came about.

**What about the cinema in Goulburn? What was that like?**

Quite good. We had what we called the Odeon Theatre and it was a big theatre. It was spectacular. Probably one of the best in the State outside the metropolitan area. It was big inside and it was in 2 sections. The front section was like a big entry foyer where they used to hold balls. The

04:30 main balls that went on in town at the time and you walked in this ballroom area and then you walked into the theatre area which was bigger again from memory and it had a slightly rounded ceiling at the top and it was in a blue velvet type thing with stars stuck in it and a moon in the corner. This type of thing and 2 storeys. When I say 2 storeys and upstairs type of thing which for a country town was pretty elaborate. It was an elaborate theatre really. I remember

05:00 it was the first cinema a big wide picture there, Seven Brides for Seven Brothers, and there must have been about 8 or 9 or something and this was the first coloured one we had in town, coloured film that come to town.

**You talked a bit about the Cold War context. The theory of Communism and that kind of thing what sort of politic events do you remember from your childhood that really stick with you?**

I can't

05:30 think of anything specific. Probably stories that came through from not so much my uncle but people of the First World War era of when the Russians marched towards Berlin. The atrocities that went on. They were on both sides but I was told about the ones on their side. The Russians that is as they come through villages and so forth and slaughtered people willy nilly and

06:00 raped women and pillaged and whatever else some of the armies do and the aspects of Russia was always related to us as a very harsh, severe country where there is no give. You are under a dictatorship and the Communist line and bang, that's it for you. Trouble and you are in a concentration camp so of events other than that battles that they

06:30 would have had nothing really except a few things I read going back of the old Empire days.

**What about the current events like the Cuban Missile Crisis or?**

What do I think of them now? So much that they are on a sort of fragmentation system with the Russians. They are stronger than what we are probably led to believe but their strength has been broken up with this fragmentation and the breaking away of states and this kind of thing.

**How real was the fear of nuclear**

07:00 **war for your generation?**

It wasn't. I never thought of it. I suppose in part we really didn't know of it. It was a long time after that they started to have these guided missiles and things like that. It was out of our line altogether. We did have some rockets and whatever, and missiles, yes. When I was in the army I did the guided missiles course in Victoria for about a week. A small

07:30 anti-tank vehicle in case they used it overseas but they never used it anyway.

**Where were you when you heard about President Kennedy's assassination?**

What year was that can you fresh my memory?

**1963.**

'63, I would have been in Goulburn but I can't recall where. I remember it was a very astonishing thing at the time. It sort of stopped you in your stride

08:00 but I can't recall precisely what I was doing at the time. I was in Goulburn at that period and I would have been in my working life at that period.

**We'll get back to your story. Your working life started as what when you left school? What was your first job?**

My first job - I'd applied for a lot because I thought I was a drain to my mother. I started off - I was going to be a merchant seaman, which I'm pleased I didn't venture into that. I started to prepare for it. I did eyesight's tests and things like that

08:30 and I think the stopper on that I had to put down a 500 pound in those days, bond if I didn't finish it, because a lot of them I suppose got fed up and walked off. And I said I didn't have 500 pound to put down which would have been as you might imagine back in the early 60's, 59, 60 was a lot of money. Then I was going to be a jackaroo which I don't know where I would have ended up there if I had taken that on so I ended up getting a job in town

09:00 and that was in a hardware shop that were quite big and they had a timber yard involved with it and glass so I got a job in the glass area glazing and so forth and from there I took on an apprenticeship so at first the boss said if I stayed on I could do my tech [technical college] and apprenticeship with him, the 1 day a week at tech and stay working where I was and stay on the same wages and the wages I was on then was about 9 pound 5 shillings

09:30 and to start an apprenticeship, I had to go back to 4 pounds 9 shillings. Something like that and I had the realisation that if I was going to do an apprenticeship I had to learn it properly. It was any good staying there where I was even though the wages were higher at the time I was better off getting out and getting with a builder which I did and did my apprenticeship with a builder.

**Did you enjoy it?**

Yes I found it quite good. In the background I would have liked to be an architect and I ended up doing that well to some extent

10:00 but I liked the building and I suppose at that stage I liked the outdoors as well. I spent a fair bit of time in the bush I guess and I liked the bush and the country so outdoors suited me better than. I enjoyed it and I did quite well at it. At tech I did quite well and passed highly in the class and that sort of thing. I was a reasonably conscientious student through that period.

**When did the prospect or the shadow of National Service really come over**

10:30 **your generation?**

Well towards the end of my apprenticeship and this must have been about '65 or some such. They must have been starting to take them in so there wasn't much of a shadow before it when it was announced it wasn't long before they were into it. I'm estimating I suppose by the time they got organised it was 12 months or so. I think it would have been about '65 or so and I went in in '67.

**Can you briefly explain for the archive the system**

11:00 **of National Service and how it worked being called up?**

I looked forward to it in part but I've got some pictures about it and such. Okay you are called up and it is a lottery system balls in a barrel. You are called up on date of birth so when they pulled the balls out with your date on it then they would go into Nashos. Well the lottery system was a pretty poor system anyway I thought. The thing that really bugged me about it was

11:30 when I went into the army, we'd gone to dollars then I was probably on about \$88 a week or some such. When I went into the army I was on \$16.80 or something of that nature. \$16 as a basic. After about 10 weeks it would go up several dollars, not much. Okay they are supplying food and everything but what was the bug bear of that anyone that was on a government job

12:00 that went in they had their money made up all the time right through the army so they, if they were on \$80 or \$100 a week and they were drawing the \$19 or \$20 while they were in country. You got a rise when you went overseas and they had all that made up. The first thing, the lottery. It was the simplest way for them to organise it I suppose but it wasn't very fair and the next thing this bloody situation where some blokes are getting their money in civvy [civilian] life made up because they worked for the government

12:30 and those that didn't work for the government, stiff mate. So that's the part I didn't like about it. 2 years training. That was all right. I think we were trained quite thoroughly for what we went for which when compared with the Americans their 3 weeks and a bit more and they are in country. Not that I met a lot of those but there were a lot of them that were bloody useless some of them. Yeah, sorry.

**Just back to the system of being**

13:00 **called up. You said that you were quite keen. What was the reaction of the reaction of the**

**people around you and the guys your age to the prospect of National Service?**

Some didn't want to be in it no matter what, others were unsure and I think a few were in the middle or undecided but when they were called up they went but they would try and there were a few that bucked and tried get out of it still and dodge it

13:30 were forced into it so I missed the call up and part of it as well being a reservist, in the air force reserve. One of the officers there said that anyone that was in the reserves or whatever wouldn't be called up. They would pass those over anyway I missed it and I don't whether it was the luck of the draw and the dates or because I was in that. With the training I had been through and as I said earlier brainwashed to some extent

14:00 I couldn't miss out on this so I went and joined up. So my attitude was I guess I looked forward to it I suppose at that stage. Once I joined up say there was about 5 of us from Goulburn that went in the same intake and there were others that went in before us and after us but none of them were really bitching about it. They weren't 100% comfortable but they were going along with it.

14:30 **What did you know about what was going on in Vietnam?**

I suppose there was a fair bit on TV but it didn't show the true picture. You seemed to get the opinion at that stage and this is particularly with the Americans that it was a week, sort of week war. They went to war during the week and came home on the weekends. When I mean came home they were back inside the bases living it up in very comfortable surroundings

15:00 and then they might be out during the week. It gave that impression of it but when I was there I didn't find that at all obviously. I can see in some of the Yank situations yeah they were. They lived in what we would term semi-luxury I suppose. Does that give you an idea of what?

**But taking you back to when you were 20 years old then from the information you had from television or whatever about the prospect of**

15:30 **this that excited you or made you want to be part of it.**

Not exactly part of growing up but it's part of one thing is. There is several things involved. The domino theory, which I accepted at the time. Adventure because you are young and silly. I exaggerate the silly but you don't think as deep as you do when you are older and that the psychology getting Nashos about 20. You can train them

16:00 more easily than a bloke of 26 because a bloke of 26 is going to think more than a bloke of 20 and I guess adventure was a big part of it as well as the others, the political side of it. I'm not a political person at all. Patriotism I guess is the other thing which I think when you think about people now it doesn't seem to exist as much because they are more informed than what people were in previous times.

16:30 **Patriotism and the domino theory are partly the same for you at the time?**

Yes I would say they would be close.

**You mentioned you talked to Michael [interviewer] a bit about the older generation and some of the stories you heard about the wars that they were involved in. Do you think that you saw yourself a bit in the Anzac tradition or did that not come into it?**

Not really no.

17:00 No I don't think so. Anzac Day is nominated which is good but when you think about it in retrospect we are celebrating a battle we lost. It is done in very well and because of the stuff ups like many things leading into it. The results of it at least the number of people killed of course and we were given that propaganda say 8,000 or so over there but when you look at

17:30 the Poms and some of the other allies they had much more numbers that we had around the place and suffered much more casualties than we did but anyway, I don't think it was really a. It was a sort of Australian, patriotic tradition yes but whether the Anzacs had something to do with it didn't stand out in my mind no.

**So you decided you'd missed the call up that you would volunteer. What did you have to do at that time?**

Send in,

18:00 I had to go in. I don't know I might have got, it was run from a sort of employment office in town. I think I might have picked up the forms there, the application and of course if you are under 21 you have to get your parents to sign and I was under 21 so I forged my mother's signature on it and didn't say anything. They thought I was called up until a long time after. They didn't know I was a volunteer. They thought I was called up so there was nothing said about it.

18:30 They just went along. At the time more so in Sydney they were kicking up a fuss about this National Service and having demonstrations about it but none of that in the country areas. None that I ever struck. I couldn't say there was no whatsoever but none that I ever struck and the country people I

guess it comes to this patriotism because they are less informed and it's a thing that has been done for generations and this is what we got to do

19:00 attitude. So there was really no, they didn't want us to go but weren't going to make a noise about it same as we weren't making a noise about going.

**You obviously didn't tell your mother the whole truth. What discussions did you have with her about what you were doing?**

Well none really. What I was going to tell her was when you are over there, they give you postal boxes that all your mail goes through

19:30 and sent across there. I was telling her that I was going to Perth and I was going to spend 12 months over there and I would be on holidays after but the rest of the family let her know that was I going overseas. I forget who. I told one of them and of course once you tell one of them the story doesn't stop so okay she knew I was going over then.

**And what was her reaction?**

She wasn't jumping up and down saying, "Don't go. You can't go!"

20:00 and that sort of thing. She didn't want me to go but it wasn't, there was no fuss caused over it. It was an accepted thing that I was going.

**What about the call up and you volunteering. What did you tell her about that?**

I didn't tell her I volunteered. Many years later my sister let the cat out of the bag but it was all over and done with then. No problem to worry about. It was past history at that stage. There's no

20:30 real hassle.

**So you signed up the forms and the next step was what?**

You waited to see what happened. An okay, the information came to the employment office that forwarded it on to me saying you report at such and such a day sort of thing. The chap from the employment office in town he had to go down to the railway

21:00 station to obtain the tickets, issue the tickets to us. Well he didn't issue we had to go down to the station and he gave the tickets to us there.

**Were there any tests to pass? Fitness or medical?**

Oh yes there were I'm sorry going in. Before you went after your application had gone in and the forms came back for a medical examination. Local doctor so I went and did that and he forwarded that information on

21:30 and then he got one to say appear for sort of training at such and such a date.

**What sort of tests were they do you recall?**

Just a general medical. Heart, pulse, breathing, the what do you call this on the chest thing for breathing, the around the neck bit?

**Stethoscope?**

Stethoscope yes. Reflexes, eyesight, hearing

22:00 and just asked you a few questions. Obviously they asked me and I suspect they asked everyone the same thing what they felt about going so if anyone had a strong objection they could make it, but they still got called up. A lot of people didn't realise and they weren't going to say if you made a big fuss and objection you wouldn't go overseas but you would still do your training back here on something or other. There were a few that tried to get out of it. One chap not from our area at all. I don't know where he was from

22:30 on the grounds of being a vegetarian and he went to court but they had declared that the food that was organised by the troops had been sort of confirmed or whatever by food specialists and was quite nutritious and there were no problems at all so he stayed back here and he just cut hedges and that and mowed lawns and he still did his 2 years. Another chap up in, met him

23:00 I don't know why he ended up on Singleton but he refused to pick up a rifle so he didn't go overseas obviously. So the inference I was trying to make if anyone made a big stir they wouldn't send them.

**Apart from that question was there any sort of psychological element to the tests they conducted?**

No not at that stage. The query was do you want to go, do you like it or whatever and I remember after he asked me

23:30 that I just thought it was a general question he was asking me and then he was writing stuff on his

report so it was going back as well what your thoughts were so apart from that no.

**So your train ticket was all organised. Where were you off to?**

From Goulburn went to Wagga and a bus picked us up there and took us to Kapooka that's the army training camp there.

**And what did you find when you arrived?**

We met this little dicky bloody corporal

24:00 who was a tankie and some men get promotion because they are good what they do or because they had some ability. This bloke got his promotion because he had been in the army as a regular and he went to a training camp and as soon as you get there so you can tell people what to do they give you a couple of stripes so that's how he got his stripes. He was a bloody dick really. That's my opinion and many others, all the others that were there at the time opinion as well so how he turned out later on I don't know.

24:30 So we had to go in and we are lined up and we are in civvies. I don't know, we didn't get out uniforms the first day. It might have been the next day but we lined up, have a meal because it is evening at this stage. They line us up and pass through this area and draw pay. Just hit the place and they give us so much pay. It was only about 3 pound or 2 pound 10 [shillings] or something we were getting.

25:00 Walked past that and then they have stuff on a bench and you pick it up. Boot polish, cloths. Cleaning gear basically, Brasso all this sort of stuff and you go past the cash register and they take the 2 pound off you and put it in a till. Frig this is a bit of a catch so yes, we had to pay for our bloody boot polish and gear like this and then off to our huts and line up the next day and fitted out with the initial issue of uniform, sort of work

25:30 uniform.

**Who were the, what were the mix of blokes like that went in with you?**

Varied. I suppose because we came from Goulburn and there were about 5 of us we were in the 1 Platoon. There were others that we mixed with as well that were quite, blokes of a similar sort. There were others that were, a couple that were

26:00 out for themselves only but generally they would have moulded into similar sort of characters in working together I would think.

**You mentioned that there was quite a distinct big city and country divide in Australia.**

Well that's my sort of concept of this any demonstrations put on always came on from the city areas and generally in conversation the people from the country disagreed with it

26:30 and there may have been situations where there was opposite to what I'm saying but all the ones that occurred and the people I spoke to the people I heard speak from other areas and so forth when I moved through them and so forth were all of the same sort of thing you know. These people that were causing the demonstrations ought to have their heads red and put in a situation where they realise if you don't have the armies and that doing that you are vulnerable to whatever has happened in previous wars etc.

**Did you see a difference**

27:00 **in the, among the National Servicemen between those that had come from the country and those that came from the city?**

Just the odd ones not exceptional. That the country blokes were comfortable in the bush and not saying that the city blokes didn't get used to it to but some blokes from the city had never been to the bush. I can recall one chap when I first got to Vietnam, he was a bigger bloke than I, quite strong bloke

27:30 but he was scared of the dark and we were on picket duty near the wire and he had to walk back. There was 2 of us in this pit and he had to walk back to get one of us to get the next ones to come to about 2 or 3:00 in the morning or something to get the next ones to come and do 2 hours. He wasn't game to stay in that pit himself. Strange thing about it he had to walk a trail about 60 odd metres to where the tents were to get another one

28:00 now if someone was going to come through the wire they would attack the bloke walking back there by himself I would have thought. Not the blokes that are in the pit with the ammunition and everything stored for him. But he was uneasy about that. There were a few, not so much scared as he was of the dark and but they were uneasy in the bush.

**Do you know what his background was?**

He worked for some sort of finance group. Not a banker but in finance somewhere. His schooling in Sydney

28:30 all his life. He'd obviously been to the country but never spent time in the country at all.

**When you first arrived at Kapooka what problems did you and the blokes you were with have to adjusting to this new environment?**

Well I didn't have any. One bloke did. One of the chaps that came in with me at the time, Peter Beilby, he was in the Air Force Reservists with me. We had been in the same air training group in Goulburn so we went together. He ended up going to tank corps

29:00 so we fitted in quite well. Another chap he got hauled over the coals one day I remember. He came down to, it was before parade but he hadn't shaved. You get up first thing and you shower, shave and you off to breakfast. He went to breakfast and you have to clean your huts and rooms and everything up and you have an inspection then before anything else goes on. Inspection comes on and he hadn't had a shave and he was from the country and what he was accustomed to. He lived on a property. His parents had a

29:30 property. He would get up early in the morning during shearing time, you know they would get up at 4.00 in the morning do a couple of hours work, go to breakfast, back onto the job and knock off again for a job at 9.00 or something and they wouldn't shave in that period and so just through habit he had gone to breakfast and came back and starting to work and clean things up and suddenly we are having an inspection and hadn't shaved and the blokes - the NCO that grabbed him thought he was a smart arse trying to pull the wool [trick them],

30:00 but he wasn't at all. It was a lapse of mind because it was the practice of the way he lived so there were a couple that had no military experience at all. There were a few incidents like that but they were quickly knocked into gear. They didn't let that go by at all.

**How did they knock you into gear? How did they mould you into a unit?**

Well there is the threat of discipline now in the army. It is quite different now when I hear how lax it is.

30:30 The sort of thing they have control in so much as to the extreme it would 28 days in boob [military prison]. Not that you wouldn't do during the training course. They have control over your power of pay. You can be confined to, well you were confined to base anyway but outside that you were confined to base, your leave's cancelled and whatever. If you break that and piss off anyway you go to boob and you're pay is cut, you are fined. So there you could be find, you are given extra tasks. So you knock off at say

31:00 about 4.30, 5.00 and you have mess after that and you've got the night free. If you have any studying to do and you've got to clean your gear obviously so they can give you extra work. If something has to be cleaned or there's something that has got to be done or you go on guard duty. Instead of having your turn at guard duty once a fortnight you are going to do it every night for the next week. If you renege on that go to the boob, you are fined again, your pay's cut. In that way they have control and you can say, "Well stuff this," and over the fence and off you go but then you're on the run until

31:30 they pick you up and end up in the, fine you again and put you in boob. So that way they have control. Some of the heavies. We had a chap named Enchong. He was part Thursday Islander. He was our warrant officer when we went through training and he was short. He was only about 5 foot 5 [inches], I think, but he was broad and built like a tank and dark skin and he had a voice on him like a fog horn. Sometimes he would be walking around the place and he'd

32:00 be a hundred yards up the road and he'd bellow out and everyone would be and - "What's fucking wrong?" He had the scare up everyone. He was as tough as nails this bloke anyway when you first go in some of the blokes aren't use to the system so they rebuff the bloody corporals. Tell them to get stuffed or something. Some of the corporals like the one I mentioned earlier they get self opinionated, "I've got rank now. I've got a bit of power and I can tell you what to do," so they pull the power a little bit too much and this bloke told this bloke, "To go and get stuffed

32:30 and get out of the way or I'll hang one on you," or something of this nature so the chaps called up and he goes in to see a warrant officer. Stands in front of him and the warrant officer gets up, rolls his sleeves up and goes and pulls all the blinds down., "Do you want to have a go? Have a go at me?" Well the bloke wasn't going to have a go at him. He looked too fearful. He wasn't but he looked bloody fearful and so another time. Blokes like that are hard but

33:00 they are good and they've got to appear hard to get you training and whatever else but if something goes wrong they will stick by you and that's great. The sergeant I met down in Ingleburn before we went over he was a, he'd been through the system. Both of them had obviously and he lines the platoon up. He says, "Right oh you blokes and this is what we're doing and by the way, I don't believe in any of this stuffing around and charging blokes. If you step out of line we go around the back of the tent we'll fix it up there. Anyone

33:30 who doesn't agree with this or doesn't think I'm fair dinkum out now and we'll go around the back of the tent." No one said a word but he was an excellent sergeant. He'd train blokes to perfection or as best he could and if you were in the shit he would be there so there were a few like that that were excellent really.

**Can you give us an idea of what your training was? A typical day at Kapooka.**

- Well it was broken up into parts. A bit like a schooling system where you might have a period of
- 34:00 40 minutes to an hour doing something and then you'd change. A big emphasis on getting people fit to start with so you would have physical training everyday. I can't remember if we had it twice a day sometimes and on the rare occasion we might have gym, circuit training and that at night on some occasions. Beside that we had your rifle training. Drills and emphasis on that to get people disciplined to moving to orders and so forth. You have
- 34:30 bush skills training, map reading and those that didn't have any educational background like the preliminaries, intermediate certificate they would have to do a special additional training course in general schooling. Maths, English that sort of thing. We all did a test on that sort of thing and those that didn't pass that or didn't have the qualifications had to go and do X days further
- 35:00 to bring them up to that level even in the aspect of that. So we did radio procedure. All those various things you do. Weapons training but I think I mentioned that to you. It was broken up in the day of at least 40 minutes and sometimes they might have double periods on various things. Histories and so forth which not so much benefits of the army but procedures of the army
- 35:30 to bring everyone up to scratch I suppose so they know what they are about.

**How long did a day's training last?**

Well you would rise probably 5:30, 6:00 at the latest. You have to clean up and so forth part and you would have breakfast at something like about 7:00. At around 8:00 you would have your inspections of your huts and we were in good quarters. We were in

- 36:00 3 storey buildings, long buildings but you had to have the floors polished. Every day this was done. Floors polished, everything spic and span. Your wardrobe. You had a wardrobe and a small locker desk. The locker desk you had one door on that locked. That was personal. They didn't look in there everything else they looked at. In your wardrobe you kept your equipment. Everything was set out precisely, everyone was the same. They gave you a sheet. Jacket hanging there and then there would be shirt or jumper
- 36:30 or something. Your socks there in pairs. Pull a draw out and your underclothes would be there folded in a particular way. Your boots would be there. Everything is exactly the same in every wardrobe. Beds are made the same. Windows are all pulled up the same. There might be a bayonet length. All the windows are pulled up the same so you are out of the building and you look up and everything is uniform. Uniformity was the thing obviously. So there was the
- 37:00 latrine that had to be cleaned. Some people would get duty to clean the latrine areas. That the showers, toilets everyday. You would have a toothbrush on the tiles that sort of thing. All that had to be done by about 8:00. the night before obviously you would have all your gear cleaned and you would be starting into work by 9:00 at the latest and you would finish about 5:30. It might have been a bit earlier. It might have been 5:00 the finish time. Unless
- 37:30 you had duties to do you were free for the evening then until the next morning. When I saw free you had dinner, mess, go to the boozer for a bit and get into your gear and clean it up for the next day. Clean rifles and whatever else.

**You talked about how your gear was laid out. Can you briefly explain what gear you had?**

Well we had, when we first went in the first few days you were just given basic working gear.

- 38:00 You would have your battle jackets, great coats and things like that. Boots and whatever. As you got on and they purposefully left this to latter in the training, about when they started to get people a bit fitter and those overweight lost weight and so forth so they didn't fit them out with a new uniform to start with. They fitted them out after. They would fit out in the last 8 weeks. What you would have there is your great coat, walking out as you might term uniform dress, your greens, usually your working dress. You would have a pair of boots that were
- 38:30 working boots. At that stage initially we only had our work boots. We didn't have our parade boots. We used both for the same thing. Shirts, socks, singlets, your rifle, bayonets, webbing. You are issued with so many drill rounds. Probably a couple of clips that's about 10 rounds in there. Your housewife which was a little folding thing that had such things in it as spare buttons, cotton, needle, thimble
- 39:00 etc so if you had any tears you would sew these up. Your giggle hat that you wore in the bush. Your slouch hat those things. They were the basics. You didn't have any personal gear in these cupboards at all in that one.

**What about in your draw? What personal affects did you have?**

In this one here where you say on the side draw where you could lock the drawer. I just had some writing material in there. It wouldn't have mattered if they looked in or not. But

- 39:30 some people would have some photographs of their fiance, family, memorabilia or whatever suited them.

**We'll just stop there.**

## **Tape 4**

01:09 **Hold on a second. You mentioned a different parts of the training. I'd like you to just give a little more detail on some of them. What weapons training in particular were you given?**

Fairly basic there. We used the SLR [Self Loading Rifle] 7.62 rifle or

01:30 automatic rifle and we had training with a 9mm pistol. Now outside that as far as weapons we didn't cover any thing physically that I can recall. At basic training that was all. Just those 2. Oh bayonet training. We had things lined up for training. We had these big framed 2 and a half metres high and about

02:00 2 metres wide and like potatoe bags strung in between them stuffed with straw and wired off at the side and we would run back and line up and fix bayonets and you'd have to charge this thing and as you charged of course you had to scream. If you've been through any training at all you've got to scream and someone's coming at you and they're screaming there head off you don't think twice before you moving in one direction and that way or whatever. It scares the pants off you and I'd

02:30 done some of this with the cadets when I was a kid so I put on a fairly good demonstration and the others stopped and actually watched me. Here I am I'm locked into the hip and I'm charging at the blastard thing and bellowing out with some bloody force that the others stopped dead and I was charging and I hit this bloody thing and it went right through past the sight guards on the thing and it got caught and the wire broke on the bottom and the thing went up in the air and I went arse over tit and my feet in the air and this thing swinging above me and I'm laying like a pig on the ground.

03:00 But yes that was another episode but they were only the basic weapons we handled.

**How much is aggression encouraged, aggression encouraged in that kind of training obviously?**

Not really because we didn't do in that any sort of any physical combat. Endurance was encouraged but not so much aggression. They

03:30 tried to emphasise in part the training of the soldier there was to keep him informed and let him know what is going on so he has understanding. You don't go into something, you are fearful, you have some idea of what is happening. You've got an idea, they keep you informed so they were emphasising, that was their idea at the beginning which I guess it was to a very big extent but I can't really recall any aggression. No, not at all.

**What about live firing? What did you do with that?**

04:00 Live firing as far as on rifle ranges pretty regularly. Another part of introduction, even at this stage I'm not sure if it was true. When we went through Canungra we had to cover some fields. You know stop, start on the ground. Up you go, running. And they fired one of these old, supposedly Vickers machine guns over the top of us as we went to introduce you to fire so when you get out there eventually you don't freeze up and they claimed

04:30 it was over our heads. It could have been 3 metres up you never know or whether they were using at that stage I wasn't paying enough attention to notice whether it was a blank or a real shot but it was continuous automatic fire as we were going across this field a couple of times. So they could have just been firing blanks. One would never know. When I think back on it they had a hill behind and it was in a training area so there were no personnel other than us

05:00 there it could have been real bullets I don't know.

**What about things like grenades and mines? When were you introduced to those?**

Let me see. Did we use them at Kapooka? You're refreshing my mind a bit now. I know we used them at Ingleburn. That was when I was and at Singleton but I can't remember using grenades at. I could be wrong but it doesn't come to mind.

05:30 We were training with them yes later on and we used a fusing that was about a 4 second fusing. The other ones might only have 2 second fusing in them so the training ones were something. I don't think they were as long as 7, thinking back. I could be wrong. They could have been longer but they were at least 4 second fuses in them.

**What was the drill you were trained on with the grenade?**

Well you had an area to throw them in. You were behind a wall that would be sort of double brick

06:00 and something like about 1.5 metres but when you threw your grenade you watched it and then you ducked down behind the wall and at these areas they had a brick hut built so those that were awaiting

their turns stayed in the hut and I called it a hut it was only 1 door sort of thing facing away from the range and all of you lined up with your instructor, took a grenade and they had some sort of target things out there you had to try and throw into. Throw the grenade, you'd watch it where it

06:30 landed and duck. So that's why they were using the long time fuse on them.

**How difficult is that to do the first time you do it?**

I didn't find any difficult. As I said going through training before not that I had ever used grenades before but I suppose when we were kids some of the mischievous things we did with the old double bungers. It was an extension of that I guess but there was no fear of it or whatever.

07:00 **You hear stories of people freezing up the first time they do that. Were there any instances of that that you saw?**

There were some that were nervous about it but they did it. No, yes I've heard of someone freezing up and the instructor had to grab the grenade off them but I hadn't not seen it myself no.

**What did you see of any training accidents small or large while you were?**

07:30 One that comes to mind. It wasn't serious at all. It was in Canungra where they have ropes swung between trees and you've to go across the rope with your gear on and you hold onto the rope and you have your feet straddled across the top and you go along, caterpillar upside down sort of thing and it wasn't far probably about 20 metres or something like that and it was say 2 metres off the ground. No it was a bit higher than you could reach, maybe 2 ½ m off the ground nearly,

08:00 barely that and anyway one chap was going across and of course you have your rifle slung and he got half way and for whatever reason decided he couldn't do it and let go and bang on the deck. He got up and walked about after so he wasn't injured. Accidents other than that? One lieutenant at one of these grenade training things. They had an observation post above the wall. It was only in

08:30 corrugated iron and this little peep hole out of it and he was watching when they threw the grenades instead of moving back from the peephole he looked through the peephole and got a bit of shrapnel across the top of the eye. Just enough to cut it and lacerate it. Just a small one. He was lucky it wasn't in his eye but other than I can't recall to mind. Of course you have accidents in everything but I can't recall during our training that we had any serious accidents at all fortunately.

09:00 **What part of the training did you find the most difficult?**

Just being peeved off a bit at one stage. I don't think going back on what I said because I had been involved a fair bit of sport before that and physically fit that I really didn't find anything difficult.

09:30 At one stage and this is all within the training for psychological reasons or whatever for we were up at Canungra and we were up in the bush and we do about 5 days, 4 days out in the bush and you are harassed all the time. They have other training groups up there that act as the enemy and they don't let you rest. You are buggered and you want to bed down for the night and they attack and it would be day and you have a break for a cup of coffee and you go in harbour position and this is fantastic, just about to enjoy it

10:00 and here these bastards attack again so they keep you harassed all the time. And then you've got do you want to spend time on this or?

**Tell us about this and we'll go back and forth.**

Okay. Then you've got to find, we split up and you have to find an enemy camp. So I find this enemy camp and I go in there and so forth and then we move back. This is about 4 days in the scrub as if you are in combat conditions and people think, "Oh Christ, this is the end of this. We can go back to camp now

10:30 and have a shower and a decent feed and get off the rations for a bit," and we get back to camp and we it's coming over dull that day and it's bloody starting to rain and we think we'll get back in camp just in time to miss the rain and roll into the camp and the bastards keep rolling out the other side and down the road and, "Where the hell are we going?" and get about 5 km or so out of camp and off the trucks and the trucks go back into camp and we start walking. This is about 5:00 in the afternoon or something

11:00 and about 8:30 we haul up in the dark. It had been raining at this stage and we were saturated and they say, "You're not wet until your bum hole is wet." Well our bum hole was wet. Break camp, try and make a bit of tucker and into the hootchies [tent], put your hootchies up and that night me and another chap were the only chaps out of this that got a cold. What happened we were saturated right through to the skin and I stripped off totally and we got into the silk sleeping bag we carry and fold up very small under the hootchie

11:30 and I got up the next morning and had to get up into this bloody gear. All the blokes that went into their sleeping bags in their wet gear got up dry in the morning. So I got a cold. Not very serious but the getting aggro [aggressive], this getting aggro about coming through the camp and thinking we are back here and then the bastards spring this on you. Take you out into the bush and make you walk for miles

and miles in the dark and get wet and sleep in the wet. That sort of pisses you off a bit but it is good training about what you might expect later on.

12:00 So outside hard training there are times when you are puffing and sweating but I can't recall anything that was dramatic.

**What about the flipside of that. What did you enjoy the most?**

Being successful in part of the training like when we were up in this Canungra when we were in this 4 or 5 day thing in the bush as I say I was comfortable in the bush

12:30 and I was finding whatever we were doing. There was a hut in the bush that these people acting as enemy used to use and it had a fridge in it, a kerosene fridge in it. I'd track and find their, we went out in scouting patrol in small groups and I'd pick up their trail and track them down and find their thing and bring that back and they'd say there is no one out there, they probably don't exist and they'd say, "We have to find the enemy camp." I could track and find the enemy camp. They sent us into different areas and

13:00 I don't know if they sent me into that area purposefully. There was about 5 or 6 groups and we were given different areas of the country to cover and there was an enemy camp in one of them and then make a dawn attack the next day. It was in the area that I was in and I don't know if the instructor I had purposefully put me in that group thinking that I would have a chance of finding it I don't know. Well being successful at those things and having my navigation spot on. Head off somewhere and do a sort of triangular navigation in thick scrub

13:30 and coming back spot on where you started from. Things like that you feel good about. Other than that just getting, when I came out of Canungra I was physically fit then. Fitter than I had ever been in my life because we went through a different course than the battalions did. I went through one of these what they call a 3 week course and that was more intense than whatever the battalions do because we were in the reinforcement wing. Coming out of that you feel good after that. You feel bloody

14:00 hard getting through it, bloody hard. Other parts of it I don't know. Things like passing out parades and so forth when we finished at Kapooka, those things used to give me the bores. All the clean brass and everything else and lining up on parades I didn't find that as interesting as being out in the scrub doing what I had to do but outside that there are not greater highs that

14:30 I think that I can recall.

**Just stop for a second. I'll just get you turn a bit more to camera because you are going out one side. How did the training progress? From Kapooka were you all sent on together to Singleton or?**

Oh no we were given corps to go to. You'd nominate what corps you would want to go and not always people got it. Of course the biggest they wanted was

15:00 to fill infantry. Cannon fodder, so the majority of people went straight to infantry even though you might have applied for something else. You were allowed to apply. You were given 3 options and well some of them got those so those that were designated for infantry generally went to Singleton for training and some went into admin or mechanical or whatever would have gone to other areas for training. We all got the same basic training then we went into our

15:30 corps areas like Singleton we did infantry training in much more depth than you do in basic course. We used grenades and everything else, machine gun. I'm fairly sure we didn't use a machine gun in basic but grenade launchers, rocket all the, we used all the extra stuff. Did more in radio, not a lot of radio really but we got basic training in that and practically all

16:00 weapons. Not everyone, like I fired a 50 cal at one stage. No everyone got a chance of doing that several others did but all the small arms stuff you carried with you. Everyone was trained in those quite thoroughly.

**When you divided up into corps what was your preference and why?**

Well when I, we had 3 choices and I put down SAS for the first one, SAS for the second one and SAS for the third one and when I went up the officer, I got on with

16:30 reasonably well he was lieutenant we had in basic was very, he was an ex-copper. He was in the police force, only a young policeman but he was called up to do training so he went in there and he'd gone to whatever it is in Sydney. I forgotten now, the training for officers for National Service and he was a dogmentive,

17:00 self-opinionated bloke and no one liked him at all but because of our military background we handled him all right, you know, we didn't take. He roared me up one time in particularly but when I didn't respond like the others and didn't buckle he started to get a different opinion of me. How that came about we have to have our units where we lived, huts spotless. Not a spick of dust anywhere. Absolutely spotless and the floor polished like a mirror nearly.

- 17:30 He came in and there was a cotton thread on the carpet. We had a small carpet beside our bed and he got onto that and he roared the stuffings out of me for not cleaning the room up and I just stood there. You can't look at them, you look straight ahead. So he wanted an answer out of me. "So you haven't cleaned your room." "Yes, Sir I have cleaned my room," and finally I said, "I may not have cleaned it as thoroughly as I should have done," and I had cleaned this bloody mat all right. How this thing floated
- 18:00 in later but anyway that's how you were under. He was very dogmentive. He was the sort of bloke at that stage if he had been overseas he wouldn't have come back alive and it probably wouldn't have been the enemy that would have shot him. But I accepted that okay. I suppose there's a difference too. When I went in by the time my papers came back, I was over 21 now if you can think back in your time the difference between the age of a person of 18 and 21
- 18:30 in maturing doesn't seem much but at that age there is. I know that when I went through my apprenticeship you could see that and when I was in there plus I had some military training but I was about 18 months older than some of the others, 12 months at least and there was that difference plus the training made a difference so we accepted things and handled them without the, what would you term, discomfort or dissatisfaction that some of the others might have done.
- 19:00 **What were you told about SAS and the reasons of not getting in there?**
- Well I did, I eventually got an interview for one who said, "Would I sign on?" and I eventually said, "Yes. If I was taken into SAS, I would sign on then. I wasn't going on to sign on before I went in there," and there was several lined up. They had taken us. I was at Singleton at the time. I had to go down to Sydney for this interview
- 19:30 and I suppose when I think back I could have been better presented in the interview than I was. I know I bullshitted to them at one stage. They asked me because they check everything out and they go back to your home town and get your police records. "Ever had any trouble with the police?" and I said, "No. I hadn't," Actually I had been pulled up, I had been booked for failing to stop at a crossing which I had done. I think I had a speeding fine
- 20:00 and these incidents with the football club and so forth. Not so much me but associates and when I said, "No," I had lied to them and they would want to know why I was lying and saying I wouldn't sign up until I was in SAS and then I would sign up. I was willing to do that if they took me through so it didn't come through. I didn't get nominated and they'd said not the 2 that interviewed me but one said later that they are restricting, they are not taking Nashos in any more
- 20:30 so if you sign on the line they would look at me very strongly but I'd have to sign on the line first.
- I'll kick you or something if that comes up again. Were there any other selection processes at that stage but just the interview?**
- Well what put me in line for it when we went through tests at basic training I got an SG 1 [psychological] rating and their ratings go from probably SG 1 to SG 10
- 21:00 and after SG 7, they wouldn't have you in the army anyway. You are not mentally or, what I'm trying to say psychologically suited. At SG 3 above you can get in the parachuting group, SAS and probably other, some other areas so I had a good psych rating so that put me up in line straight away but going for tests at that interview no it was just the
- 21:30 initial verbal interview that I went for.
- What were the kinds of tests that gave you this SG rating?**
- They were a combination of quite a few things I think. Now we did some tests, what do you call them? Ability tests, whether you are mechanically minded, whether you are more literate in other areas of academia, your abilities. You can
- 22:00 probably draw to mind what are these tests called? They are sort of. There is a term that I can't draw to mind.
- Your aptitudes.**
- Like an aptitude tests. Okay we did those. We did questionnaire tests to try to bring out your psych feeling and knowledge as well obviously. How far your education was. You would look at mechanical diagrams and you had to nominate, if he turns this wheel what will happen at the end and those sort of things
- 22:30 and aptitude tests were part of it as you said. Such questions and I think I would have faired well when I think back and odd question like what was your choice? Would you spend 100 years in hell and a 100 years in heaven or paradise if you like. 5 years in hell and 5 years in heaven, 1 year in hell and 1 year in heaven and I said and I felt this too, 100 in hell and 100 in heaven. That 100 in paradise would be fantastic.
- 23:00 You have to suffer the first bit. A lot of people say that's too hard for me I just take the 1 or the 5 so things like that to try and seep out your psych side of it.

### **Who ran those tests?**

Well I don't think this, he may have been but I don't think he was from the psychology students. I think he was just from the administration unit. We all filed in like a class lecture room, filled in these forms, the tests would have went for probably

23:30 just under an hour and we would have done some other aptitude tests and they come back with a psych rating. I was surprised that I got a SG 1 and there was surprisingly and I must admit some of it must have been a bit of a fluke because they give in some of the trig areas word associations and so forth. I was educated to intermediate level and some of these words I didn't know what they bloody meant. "Christ what did that mean?" What's the association? So I'd take a guess and I think in some

24:00 of those I was lucky enough to guess the right one so all that added to the rest of it and I got this SG 1 rating and out of the whole group there might have been 2 of us out of about 50. When I went to the, when I was at Ingleburn to do this guided missile course at Puckapunyal for about a week and they just went down the list and pulled out the SG 1s and from where I was in

24:30 Ingleburn I was the only one pulled out and in that bunch of troops there must have been about 3 Platoons. When I got down there there was another, I can't remember now whether there was 5 or 7 blokes. There would have been more than that in the army obviously it's just in these people going training that look as though they are heading there they gave us the training in case they used this weapon which they never did.

### **Did you know, did everyone know their own rating? Was this information available?**

Oh yeah, it was given to you what your rating was.

### **At Singleton or Ingleburn what other**

25:00 **I guess you might call academic or theoretical training did you get?**

From recollection not very much at all. It was all in lectures of field work, infantry work basically so there were no such schooling or whatever, written work at that stage that I can recall. I'm sure we didn't do any written work after that. It was all hands on training.

25:30 **At any time during your training were you told about the war and what was going on? About?**

Not to any extent that we were lectured or whatever. Oh yes we were lectured and part of this on the Sydney going over there to. This is the fill in I suppose there were some talks about so we knew where were heading about the history of Indochina to give us. It wasn't an in depth one but to give us an appreciation

26:00 I suppose of what it was all about and why we were heading in there and so forth.

### **At this time the media have begun to cover the war in Australia a lot more. What news were you getting about what was going on in Vietnam?**

Well while we were in there not too much at all and I suppose none of us were great paper readers. We were training and we went, in our spare times we would fit other things into it instead of sitting down and reading books or reading newspapers so we weren't picking up

26:30 much there except what was being passed through the system from your NCOs and other people about things. Information comes back through the ranks if you like and passed on and we pick information up in that matter. Before I went over they of course had Long Tan and a few stories of that passed back and a little bit more later on when you, I don't know where I picked up the rest of it. From people

27:00 that worked in different areas say radio and security areas over in Vietnam they passed on about it. Things that happened so not much from the papers at all really.

### **You didn't get into SAS but you ended up in the reinforcement unit. How did that happen?**

When we were, when I say I was young and silly. Up in Singleton we were getting towards the end of our corps training and there was some chaps they

27:30 were going to Malaya. I forget which battalion was there at the time to help build up the strength in that battalion probably blokes coming home or something or someone was going over. A battalion was going over for a 12 month or 18 month stint and they wanted a number to go with them so they had this bloody lottery system. We were all in huts, you write your name on a piece of paper, put it in a hat and they draw you out and if you wanted to go you could go. So I wrote my name on a piece of paper and I folded it up very neatly

28:00 and the bloke threw it in the hat and my went close to the hat and it was quite different because it was folded very neatly and I was watching the chap that was drawing it out. I forget if he was a warrant officer and of course mine looking different, he took mine out, so I could go to Malaya. "Frig, I don't want to go to Malaya I want to go to Vietnam!" And young and stupid, I could have sold that thing for about 40, 50 or 60 bucks and one bloke there

28:30 he wasn't over keen on going. He wasn't a sook or whatever, but he was a bit of a softie and I said,

"Here you can have this." "All those people who have their papers out the front." They were only taking about 8 out of how many, about 80 blokes so he went to Malaya and young and silly again I thought I'm going to sit around here that's a bit of a waste of time.

29:00 So joined a battalion and you train with a battalion and they do about a 6 week training course. About a 4 weeks training course in Canungra and they do other training around the place and then they go to Vietnam they are prepared for it. If you want to get there quickly you go to reinforcement wing. You could be there in a week or 10 days. You got to Ingleburn and do some training. I ended up actually in Ingleburn for about a month or maybe a bit more but about that period before we went over. In that time I went down to Puckapunyal on a guided missile course

29:30 and I purposefully got low results in that because they were going to call the blokes back that got top results in that course and the top couple of blokes in the course they would bring them back for further training so if the team was over there you would have a team controller and you would have someone to work under them so that meant you went back to Puckapunyal and I didn't want to go back there again so I purposefully made sure I got low marks in that, so I wasn't called back.

**You were in infantry, what role had you**

30:00 **decided you had wanted to do from training? What particular area were you particularly interested in?**

As a scout because I was particularly interested, comfortable in the bush. When I first, they didn't have any training for scouts because it just fell on whoever wanted to do it over there basically. I remember one time the bloke that was on the RAAF with me

30:30 Peter Beilby that went to Kapooka with me, we were at home and we were discussing things and he wanted to go to tank corps and he dropped this bloody faux pas [a social awkwardness] that I wanted to be a scout and I just passed it up and told them he talked a load of codswallop [nonsensical talk] at home but anyway I think I wanted to go there basically because I was comfortable in the bush and basically because I didn't want to follow anyone in to the bush that was going to lead me into trouble. If you

31:00 make too much noise and do the wrong thing or don't watch what's going on around you, you can walk into something quite easily so I was comfortable doing it myself rather than follow someone, I would rather do that. So when I got over there to 7 RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] before I changed to another battalion I just worked as an ordinary rifleman. When I changed to another battalion I started to scout and I was a scout until I was promoted after that.

**We'll talk alot more about the role of the scout when we come to talking about Vietnam but just**

31:30 **to fill in the general training area for the archive can you explain for the archive how an infantry battalion is organised into a company and platoon?**

Well generally you have about 4 companies. Each company has about 3 platoons and you have what you could call a 4th Platoon, which is headquarters. Headquarters is your OC [Officer Commanding], radio group and they carry a small amount of infantry with them like a machine gunner, several rifleman and so forth so even

32:00 when you go out there it is corps headquarters even though you are in the bush but 3 rifle platoons and generally we would go out training in company strength and there would always be another company if you were in operations. Generally the aim was if you were in operations to have another company to back them up if they got into trouble. Sometimes there might be 2 in the bush. Usually there was but one had a more targeted operation

32:30 so if they got into trouble the other one would move in to just back ups, reinforcements or cut off blocks something like this. You'd have to leave, generally leave 1 Company in camp to guard perimeters and works that's necessary in the camp. Now that in those companies I mentioned, those 4 rifle companies you would have a support company or more often a support platoon which would be, generally they try to select people in that that were tradespeople.

33:00 They were something like the old assault pioneers. They would have the recoilless rifle they would carry on a vehicle. They would carry the mortars and things like that so they were less mobile but a support unit. Now involved in the battalion itself you have groups of unarmed soldiers that is, your transport and every other day thing. Say in camp at Nui Dat you had blokes that are cooks, your

33:30 admin officers, your orderly room, pay clerks, dentists all those sort of things that stay in camp all the time. Does that give you a rounding idea or do you want me to go into more?

**Yeah that's a great description on the larger scale level. What about in a platoon? How is that organised?**

Well you are broken up into sections. You have and each section has a corporal called a section commander. Over the platoon there is the platoon sergeant which is obviously on top of that and then

- 34:00 above him is the platoon commander who is a lieutenant. The lieutenant has a batman which is usually, well he is the radio operator that is with the lieutenant all the time and he is his batman in camp. He washes his socks and that sort of thing. The sergeant - obviously the next in control and the sections under a section commander. When you are actually in contact the orders come from the top but when you are in thick scrub it related through
- 34:30 the section commanders. They are told what they should be doing and they use their own incentive sometimes when you can't get orders to them and its," too noisy to hear a thing that you've got to organise a group. Well it's supposed to be 10 men but you never had 10 men because you've got to leave some behind to guard the wire so there would be at least 1 or 2 doing that. You have a bloke out wounded and a bloke on R&R [Rest and Recreation] and on your tour up there you can get time off. 5
- 35:00 days, 4 days and 5 nights R&R. A bloke on R&R, a bloke of sick or wounded something like that you only have 7 blokes quite often and on the extreme occasion you can be down to 5 but hopefully more about 7 in your section. How they operate further? The order structure comes down, passed down from headquarters to the lieutenant what you're progress is going to be, where you are aiming, what you are aiming to do.
- 35:30 That is passed down to the sergeant most of the same information and it's only when you are in contact that varies and sometimes you've got to act independently. When I say act independently you are still acting as a platoon but you might have to move in different directions or some such depending on what you are up against.

**So that small group, the section within a platoon was the main operating group for you in Vietnam is that fair to say?**

Yeah, yeah.

**Where were you first introduced to working in small groups like that in your**

36:00 **training?**

Probably more at platoon level but corps training we do small patrols in 5 man, 7 man patrols sort of thing. Mainly in section size on occasions but mainly we moved in platoon size.

**And where would the role of the scout come in?**

Well each section had a scout. The usual procedure when you are lined out.

36:30 You would usually move in a line and depending on the density of the - you could be anything from 2 metres apart to 4 metres, so the scout moved ahead out front and he was observing everything. Depending on how good your scout was how far he moved a head. You could leave them out of sight and they go and check everything out and if there is something they come back within sight and signal to them what was going on but what your job is is not to lead them into an ambush.

37:00 Predict where an ambush might take place. You're moving, sometimes, a lot of time we move on tracks. Sometimes but not all the time move on a track and you move into an area which would be a good ambush area and you would circle that and check that out and come back and say, "All right, we can go through" or something, so it was like a first warning, preliminary warning and then the section commander walks behind him and he controls the rest strung out behind.

**Okay I'm probably getting a little bit ahead of myself so**

37:30 **I'll come back to that role later on. During your training time how much leave did you get?**

Basic training you were there for 10 weeks from recollection, 10 weeks and at 5 weeks we got a weekend off. I'm sure it was only a weekend not 3 days. It might have been 3 days but about a weekend we got. Back again after

38:00 those 5 days and those times the first 5 weeks you had no time off whatsoever except when you went to bed. No weekends. After the first 5 weeks you could get a weekend, if you weren't on duty you could go into town. As soon as we finished that we went straight to corps training no break then we got weekends off. Before we went overseas we had about 5 days I think or something. If you were in a battalion you would probably

38:30 get a week or something like that. Depending, you see we'd hadn't been in the army barely a year so I suppose we weren't really entitled to leave much then so I can't recall toward the end of corps training having any extended leave at all. Going to reinforcement wing weekends off again unless you were on duty and then going overseas

39:00 I didn't get, I might have had 3 days or something like that but no extended leave at all.

**In the leave, the extended leave you did get you might have gone back to Goulburn. How did you find people reacted to you in uniform?**

We back in civvies. We back home in uniform and changed and moved around town in civvies so times I was in uniform there was an interest of, "What training are you doing?" and, "What's happening?" and interest in so much as to

39:30 say without it being said, "You are doing the right thing, it is acceptable," but there was no dramatic carry on about it all.

**Did you encounter anyone with a negative view of that uniform?**

No I didn't. Others have. I guess that's been reported but no I didn't at all.

**We'll stop there because we are out of tape unfortunately. It's crept up on me. It seems to be going quick.**

## Tape 5

00:42 **Peter was there any mischief or pranks you fellows used to play on each other?**

Yes a few. Same basic training up at Kapooka I remember. The platoons, we were in a 3 storey building.

01:00 Fairly modern, 3 storey huts. We were on about the second level and there was another mob on top and towards the end of the course about 2.00 in the morning the blokes from upstairs came down and took all the door knobs off and put them all in pantyhose and put them up the flagpole in the parade ground and surprisingly the - our warrant officer thought that was quite humorous. Quite a good trick, he thought.

01:30 So we get up in the morning and all the bloody handles are missing. Someone outside, later, like ½ hour later spotted them up the flagpole. A mad race to get the bastards down again and get them all on the door so humorous things like that. Up in training at Singleton one of the chaps I saw out in Victoria he was we were in a hut together. There was quite a few. There was nearly a platoon in each hut

02:00 and you want to go to bed early because the training is fairly physical and some more getting more tired than others they would go to bed early. We would go down the boozers, have a few boozes and come back and roll them out on the floor. They didn't appreciate that too much so this bloke complained miserably. Waited until one got to bed and rolled me out of the bed and I realised when he did it that I couldn't buck because I had done it then and he was waiting for me to have a growl and I didn't growl at him just took it okay.

02:30 But not tremendous amount. You see everyone was busy. Everyone was training and getting used to things. There would have been the minor ones that cause a bit of a laugh or something but nothing major at all aside from those ones.

**Where were you when you received your orders that you were heading overseas?**

Well I would have been in Ingleburn. This is in reinforcement wing and when I went there I thought I

03:00 would be going within a week or something and we were on and on and on and 3 weeks and nothing happened and we were on a call up and we were sent down to Kapooka and I was a bit annoyed about that because I thought by the time I went down there and got back the rest of the blokes would be gone. The ones I was with there and in a short time you start to meet a few that you mix with and get along with so when I got back they were still there so it would still have been about only a couple of days.

03:30 I think when I think back about it we were told we were given and we weren't given the exact date, approximately when we were going. We were given 2-3 days leave so I went home for 2-3 days and then I went back and they weren't going to say when we were going to go because they don't like that sort of news being passed out. People going on the HMAS Sydney to go across. It came out in the papers when we were going because some smart journalist rang up the

04:00 someone on the board the Sydney and said, "I've got some food supplies, potatoes or whatever to send to the ship. What time do you want them? We are a bit short for time here, we are pressed." "Well such and such a time. As long as they are here before - " whatever time he stated. "They must be here before that." "Right," so Sydney is going to leave at such and such a time. He was a few hours out so the word was out but we weren't told exactly probably until

04:30 2 days or 1 day before that we were going the next day so we had a bit of booze up that night most of us. I was a big thick in the head to start it off in the morning and the news was passed out so the family came down to see me off. I don't know how that news was, did I tell them? I must have otherwise they wouldn't have known. I had a brother working in Sydney at that stage.

05:00 An elder brother and he came down and we had a few boozers and they closed the boozers at 9.30 and we weren't ready to go to bed so he goes down the road and gets a case of stuff and we go out, sneak out in the carpark at the front and spend half the night drinking bloody booze. That's why I was a bit thick. The platoon sergeant at the time, he was a reasonable. Different to the one I spoke about previously but still reasonable and they do a bed check. They come around about 10.30, 11.00.

05:30 Torch and my bed's empty and someone else's bed is empty. The thought would normally be that these blokes have gone over the fence. You are heading off tomorrow so they are going so somehow those

blokes know the troops they are training or working with and they just said, "He's just out having a few beers with his brother," and he accepted that quite well. He didn't worry, he didn't call out that someone was missing or whatever so when he came to check in the morning I was there

06:00 and he was confident I was going to be there.

**Did that ever happen though that fellows did jump the fence?**

One that I know about who was in a different group to what I was but that wasn't prior to going over that was a long time before. He was up in Queensland and he went disappeared over the fence. The term over the fence but there's no fence you've got to climb. You can walk out the gate but he went over the fence. One chap

06:30 didn't go over the fence but he was dodging. He got his call up papers and went missing and the MPs [Military Police] went out. He went through basic training with me. He didn't want to be there. It had to be under sufferance. The MPs went around to his place and knocked on the front door. He thought I'll get you buggers and out the back door and over the back fence right into the arms of the MP that was waiting for him. They had it all worked out so he knew that if he went over the fence again they were going to catch him and make him come back and do it so he may as well get it over and done with.

07:00 But outside that none that I know of. Not saying there weren't more.

**Now initially you shared with your mum, she really didn't know where you were going and what was happening. Did your mum come and see you off?**

When I thought later. I said before my sisters passed it on and I thought it was a long time after but it wasn't because she was there to see me off and my sisters and elder brother. What was my young brother doing at the time?

07:30 He must have been, yes he must have been in training, then called up, that's why he wasn't there.

**So how long had he been involved in, well when had he been called up?**

Well at that stage I had been in about 12 months I suppose, nearly 12 months so he must have been only in several months at the most. Maybe 2.

08:00 About 2 I think. He would have finished his basic training so he would have been in well over 2 months.

**And he had a desire like yourself to serve overseas?**

Not really. He didn't volunteer he was called up. At that stage no one knew that I'd volunteered and he could have got out of it but his sergeant came and told him because he got a letter from me.

08:30 This was later when I was over there and I sent a letter back and I wrote to him and it was passed on by his sergeant and same name you see and, "Who's this?" and he said, "That's my brother." He said, "You know if you've got a brother serving over there you don't have to go." And as part of our training kids I suppose and what irked him my sister had said to him but something along, I can't remember the exact words

09:00 but something along the line of, "Sort of do things properly and be as good as your brother is," and because of that he wasn't wanting to go but because he felt he had to go because if he didn't go it would show him to be a lot less. This was bloody women again. You hear them bitching about things. There was no need to say that but anyway he went over there.

**Can you share with me then your send off**

09:30 **on the Sydney?**

Well there was a whole lot of relatives from different people. We mingled with the crowd. We went in on trucks. I'm not sure who was there first them or us. About the same I suppose. Mingled with them and talked with them and it was announced okay on board and we were warned probably the day before on parade what's going to happen that you will go there, you are allowed to say goodbye to your folks and so forth and when you

10:00 are called go on board, don't stall because if you stall it's going to be embarrassing. They'll have MPs or something there that will have to drag you off if you don't go. That's not good. When you get the call on board. No hassle everyone went on board and then headed out obviously and that's when I was looking back at Sydney Heads and thought initially, "Will I see those again?" and when that feeling passed, "Yes, I will see them again."

10:30 **Can you describe for me what your accommodation was like on board the Sydney?**

We slept in hammocks. So it was if you know the Sydney was an aircraft carrier, had been and now it was a troop carrier and I suppose they termed, sort of humorously favourable as the rust bucket. It wasn't actually a rust bucket but it was an old creek. You'd hear it groan every now and again as it went through the sea not that we had rough seas that were

11:00 anything. We were up towards the bow at the front and we had these hammocks so each night you

would sleep in those that were quite good really. The old thing about the old seafarers that used to always prefer that to a bed because if you hang the right way in a ship, when the ship's rolling like that, the hammocks stay level. It's only when you go up and down the big waves that they cause a problem so I got used to those quite quickly and they were quite comfortable to sleep in.

- 11:30 So accommodation then there the normal shower blocks and so forth but we were in a bit of an open area really and fortunately it was summertime you were heading out because it was open, at the bows at the front there were open areas so the breeze came through on it so it was quite comfortable. I expect in winter they would have put canvas up or something to keep the wind off us. We were had meals quite okay.
- 12:00 They were done in 2 sessions. You were given a disc, a sort of reddy brown one and a white one because they couldn't fit everyone in the gallery at one stage so there would be 2 sittings depending your discs. You were allowed 1 can of beer a day. This was the big can about a pint size and when you went in to get that you would line and pass through. I'm trying to recall whether that was, yeah late afternoon after knock off time basically for most of the workers. They would open the can and give it to you. They wouldn't give you a can unopened.
- 12:30 So the best thing was to make friends with someone that didn't drink and the officers, one of the officers in particularly not that I worked for him emphasised to the troops, we were sitting in lecture one morning and he emphasised, "Now you are issued with this beer don't waste it. If you don't drink yourself there are some of us here that would like an extra beer don't waste it." Anyway it didn't go that far we used it amongst ourselves. On the odd time I would get a second one
- 13:00 not on a regular basis.

**What sort of food were you eating?**

The military food. It wasn't bad. The military food is as bad as people made out I thought. You would get whatever. The steaks weren't as good as you would cook yourself or have a home but they were reasonable. You would get all the general foods. Your potatoes, your vegetables, meats of various types on different occasions. Breakfast would be eggs and bacon or just

- 13:30 cereal if you wanted it. Lunch you would get some amounts of salads. Cold meats someday, cold sausages or whatever so there was a range of food. It was quite good. It wasn't unhealthy by any means. It's just the mass cooking of it the same in all changes it a bit from what you would go in for the a la carte restaurant sort of thing but I find it quite livable. I didn't have any complaints about it.

**Did you have duties you had to do on the way over?**

Oh yes, not a lot.

- 14:00 I was on duty a couple of times and one of them was down in the lower parts of the ship there was one of these dumb waiter things where you had to bring food stuffs out of the stores and go up in the waiter to the level and along to the galley, that type of thing. Others would have cleaning of the latrine area so there wasn't a lot of work to do at all. You didn't get that very often. That was a matter of filling in time. They liked to keep you occupied so they'd take you up on the deck and sometimes
- 14:30 you'd have practice rifle shooting over the edge of the boat. Some callisthenics on the deck, so you didn't sit around all day. You were generally occupied doing something but it wasn't in depth work. It was fairly laid back. There wasn't a lot to do. You wandered around the ship a bit and you weren't supposed to go in certain areas, but it wasn't a harsh life. A bit of a soft life, really, while you were on board.

**The rifle shooting were you aiming for a target or just shooting?**

- 15:00 It was bloody difficult. They used to blow up balloons and all the wind drafts come around the ship the balloon wouldn't float. It would be up and down, up and down and they would all blow away so there were a lot of balloons that got away. A majority, I would reckon.

**Competitions or awards if you managed to hit?**

No not really. Okay you did well that sort of thing but no awards. Part of it, the officers that would be up there in charge of it, there was something

- 15:30 a little bit to keep your hand up but to keep you occupied so you weren't sitting around twiddling your thumbs or thinking too much. Just to keep people occupied I think.

**And the callisthenics. What sort of things there?**

Normal. What would you say? Normal jump and giggle type things. Star jumps and push ups and bends and stretches and all these sorts of things to keep you loosened up, a little bit fit. I can't remember

- 16:00 any running around the top deck but it was all stand in the one spot and do all these.

**Did you have any drills like life boats drills or those sorts of things?**

The navy did. I can't recall us doing. I remember a couple of times they had divers on board and they

would practice a man overboard drill. Lower an inflatable, they would drop something off. Something partially inflatable. They would drop the lifeboat down and a couple of divers would go, maybe 3 of them,

16:30 do a routine manoeuvre around the back, come back and pick these divers up. I don't remember dropping speed to any extent not that it was a fast thing. Just trying to think what it would be. Somewhere between 12 and 18 knots I would think. I might be wrong. Just guessing but we were given instruction around the place were life jackets and things. If the alarms went to put these on and where to line up

17:00 and we were told what do next type of thing. What boats were available. I can't recall that there would be enough boats on the thing to get us off really. I can't say that exactly but I don't think there was from memory what I saw about.

**Now you mentioned a few times about the lectures on board. What sort of things were they covering subject wise?**

A little bit of history again on Indochina. Sex information, that you don't do it

17:30 while you are over there, because you can catch all this stuff. Scare tactics they give which I think some are obviously made up to keep blokes on the straight and narrow and it never does. It does with some. One was they had this what they commonly called Black Jack. If you got this Black Jack, there was no cure for it and you won't go home. There is an island off the coast of Vietnam and there's ex-amount of Americans on it

18:00 and there was one Australian on it, and these blokes had got this Black Jack and they're never coming home. When I got in country I never heard anything about this whatsoever. It was all bullshit, but it was to put a scare into you. Another one about one of the women over there, the prostitutes. It had a tube up a vagina had a razor blade in it. Unfortunate bloke peeled back like a banana. Whether that was true or not, I don't know. I never heard of it over there,

18:30 but as well as the different things when you go on R&R, you use a French letter [condom] and whatever else and play it safe. The only best way to do it was to abstain. You were given these sex lectures along these lines what you should do and the other things were generally fill in things I suppose. I can't recall much else in the way of further training in lectures there at all. In an evening they had, there was a film on every evening.

19:00 Just normal, the same as you would see in civvy life. Just a relaxing film, just for recreation. Not an excess amount of lectures. Just some. Minimal.

**In respect of these rumours spread about what you can catch over there sex wise were they given by an officer, a doctor, a chaplain?**

Yeah, just an officer.

**Did the chaplains have any involvement in this sort of thing?**

In all the camps there was a chaplain.

19:30 The only time I heard a comment from one was up at Kapooka, basic training we'd go to a film night that was sex and it starts at the very basic as if you knew nothing. How kids are formed, born etc and in the dark there was a few comments from smarties saying a few, I don't know funny. Not funny but kid stuff comments and the minister that was there,

20:00 or the padre as we termed them, made a comment later he thought it was a bit immature some of the comments that came out in the dark when no one could see them but it reminded me of another story if you would like me to tell this one. This is outside civvy life when I talk about in the dark of the movie theatre. It comes to mind it was about the Odeon Theatre or the theatre in Goulburn. It was a good theatre. This night I went to the theatre and there as a western on and you know you get the good guy who always goes off into the sunset at the end of it.

20:30 It he gets tied up with a bird and gets out of that and rides off into the sunset. He never gets tied up and he's in a gun fight and the girl steps in front of him and catches the bullet before he does and she dies and of course he can ride off into the sunset then. The last breath in his arms and out of the darkness in the theatre, I think you might have to cut this out after, out of the darkness comes this voice, "F... her while she's still warm," and then the usherette's torch is flashing all over the place.

21:00 That just drew a thought back to mind. I think you'd better edit that.

**So on board the Sydney when did you realise you were actually approaching Vietnam?**

Well what happened on that we went to Thailand first because we had a group on board that were signallers and they were going to Thailand on the pretence they were doing some training over there and the association of the forces in Thailand like Thailand troops. Obviously there were setting up there as listening banks

21:30 for Cambodia and Vietnam so we dropped those off and then we came back south and around the bottom of Vietnam so we hauled up off the coast of Vietnam and you could barely see the coastline. Stopped because we were going in the dark and then they put these blue lights so all the lights on the ship, they went around and changed all the bulbs they were blue. You could dim them a lot so you can still see going down galleyways and so forth but apparently you can't see these where if you had the white light you would spot them

22:00 so we were aware then that there it is and every now and again with the swell you could see some hill line out on the horizon as we stopped out there and anchored. I don't know if we anchored, but we were pretty still. We weren't moving anyway. They were probably not anchored down but they were just floating in that area for the night.

**Do you know what ships were supporting you in the convoy or was it just the Sydney boat?**

No it was just the Sydney by itself. Of course they could have called in air cover I

22:30 suppose if they needed it and there would have been other surveillance about to know what other ships were in the area I would suspect but we travelled just alone.

**So you arrived in Vietnam. Did you drop anchor or go into port or what was the?**

No we pulled up very close to the coast within, what would it have been, hundreds of metres. I can't remember whether it would have been 500 metres and

23:00 choppers came in to lift us off and take us straight into Nui Dat and from the Warburton Mountain areas there was fire opening up on the choppers all the time so the choppers turned back so they decided okay, instead of dropping us off on choppers they would take us in on land barges so they dropped land barges and we boarded land barges and we went in on the beaches. But what was disconcerting about that none of us had weapons. On the ship they only had a small amount of weapons on shore

23:30 we were going to be given our weapons when we got over here and we were in these land barges and there's a big front on it. You can't see what's in front of you. You don't know what's bloody happening. You feel it hit the bottom, the front goes down and you all charge out onto the beach, so you all charge out on the beach and line up on the beach and there's lot of villages on the beach. They were very, we were alongside Vung Tau and not knowing what to expect. We were there for a very short time and the trucks roll up, jump on the trucks and drive through Vung Tau and head out to Nui Dat.

24:00 I found that was bloody disconcerting because here we are on the back of these bloody trucks with no weapons. Don't know the country, don't know anything and if we're going to be hit by bloody nogs [Vietnamese] what hope have we got. Fortunately nothing happened. We got to Nui Dat and not a thing but those areas they covered were fairly safe. Not 100% safe because they used to get sniped some of the transport coming from Vung Tau to Nui Dat on occasion but there weren't forces in the area that could do much

24:30 too them at those stages unless it was different in the Tet but I suppose I was worrying unnecessarily because they would have known it was safe to do otherwise they would have brought down armoured personnel to go with us or arm us or something. But I just felt uneasy on the back of this truck and I wasn't the only one. There was 25 or 30 or something nearly on the back of the truck. 25, I suppose. 20-25 or something.

**When you were in the truck did you smell or hear or see**

25:00 **anything that was different?**

Oh yes going through Vung Tau from this beach area, coastal area through the part of the village and the huts and that weren't too unusual because I'd travelled to, when I was about 19 I took a trip with some mates to Japan and came back through Hong Kong and so forth and Taiwan and back home. It was about a 6 or 8 week sort of holiday, so it wasn't totally foreign to me

25:30 as the outer villages in some of these Asian countries. The smells are different as to here obviously when you go into a new area and I can't remember precisely to say how it smelt differently but it smelt differently and the people looked at us and we probably suspicious of them but it wouldn't have been anything unusual for them to see a mob of troops go through. So I guess that wasn't too unusual to them. The countryside

26:00 different to here obviously and I was surprised when I got to Nui Dat the area we went into had big banana trees around it. Most of it was rubber plantation. The first area we went into where the reinforcement wing was they had banana trees. They were around the other place but the other thing obviously were the rice paddies. In the town area the villages you might term it the area we moved through more like thatched hut type things a lot of tin on them.

26:30 But typical hut things you would see in an Indonesian village hut area.

**So what happened when the trucks arrived?**

Well we were dropped, we went basically straight to reinforcement wing area. Unloaded there, shown, probably introduced to the CO [Commanding Officer], OC rather, of that unit, shown where our quarters were going to be. Tents that is.

27:00 I can't remember anything significant greatly about that except I found it a bit strange being in a, it wasn't exactly a banana tree plantation area but there were quite a few banana trees around not the rubber plantation in that small section.

**Can you describe for me Nui Dat once you started to settle in?**

Well I suppose the main point out is Nui Dat Hill that was SAS Hill itself alongside that was the air strip

27:30 and in a sort of circle nearly we were around this area the battalions, 4 battalions. What am I talking about 3 battalions around this area. Area for the RAAF area, choppers areas, different support areas. Tank areas were splattered around in variation of that so say in one area we might have been on the southern side where the reinforcement wing was then there would be a

28:00 group of battalion and another one further and as you get around the northern side there is another battalion and they semi-circle around Nui Dat Hill and beyond the eastern side of Nui Dat Hill, western side I'm sorry was fairly open. There were wire fences but there was no battalion or infantry except temporary ones that went there at a night time for guard between Nui Dat Hill and the open. Artillery covered that area pretty well but it was fairly clear country in front of that so it wasn't making it good

28:30 for anyone to come across there or attack. The distance of it. I'm not quite sure but it must be 5kms long. I'm guessing a little bit. It was sort of taking enough information off a map to say what the scale was but I guess it would be about 5 long and about 3 wide. I don't think it would go to 7 but it was a fairly spread out area. I suppose you don't want everything in one position. I guess for obvious reasons you don't want them in one position.

29:00 You get a bomb on that or artillery or whatever, and too damaging.

**Was there a particular reason why the SAS were kept separate from anyone else?**

Not particular. It was just that 1 Battalion is in their area, 2 Battalion is in their area and they've got an area where the tank corps is and probably operate autonomous to others most of the time and they could have been in another area, it was just happens that they were

29:30 in an area that we called SAS Hill which was Nui Dat Hill. The artillery was there too. They used to fire the beat offs [slang, rounds of ammunition] there on SAS Hill and as well as that there might have been some other transport, some air transport units with them on that areas so there was no reason why there were purposefully set there that I am aware of.

**Now you mentioned that you had no weapon when you landed nor in the trucks. When were you actually given weapons and equipment?**

Not until we got to

30:00 Nui Dat at this reinforcement unit. We were issued weapons.

**And what were your early orders in respect of patrols or guarding the camp?**

Well I can't recall anything specific except if you were going on guard duty you didn't have to be ordered to do anything. In your training you were aware what you were there for and what you had to keep an eye out for and so forth so it wasn't

30:30 any specific orders when you went out on patrol and I guess the first few we went out on were just training patrols in areas that they thought were pretty safe I would imagine. This was on foot we weren't at this stage flown out on choppers onto patrols that we were likely to be hitting anything. It was just observation. We were going out to check an area out. They were probably aware that there was nothing there but we didn't know that. That would be in the first week or so and then after that

31:00 we were reinforcement wing still, but we went out to support other companies in the battalions. They would have operations on and we would be flown out to support them and join as a platoon in addition to them so we were under their control but I couldn't say we were autonomous. We were basically under their control and we operated with them in those areas that was necessary.

**How long were you sort of in the reinforcement wing before you were actually attached**

31:30 **to 7 RAR?**

I don't remember precisely but I would say a month, 3 weeks at least. I don't think it would be anything less than about 3 weeks that I was there and I was shipped over to. You had a choice then where you would like to go to because all the battalions need reinforcement now and again you know chaps that are wounded, gone home.

32:00 One unfortunately got killed. Some their time might have been up over there and they were coming home so there was always the necessity for reinforcements to go in and we were given the option. We were given the choice I think of 3 RAR, 7 RAR and something else. I think 3 RAR was coming home in about 3 months, a very short time a month. No 3 months and they were coming home so you had to spend a minimum of 3 months

32:30 there and then you could go home so if you went with that battalion you could go home and that was defeating the purpose of why I was there so I didn't join them so I went to 7 RAR. They must have been staying for only a shorter time it must have been. I'm not sure if I've got the dates correct and you went to 7 and then you would stay in the next battalion so I went to 7. Some of the mates I was with I was on the verge of joining, these were Western Australians these 2 blokes and I got on with one of them really well. He was a good mate

33:00 and they were good mates that had joined the army together with the Nasho system and so forth and they were going to stick together and one of them wanted to join support company. Of course they had the perception that if you joined support company you were safer there. Not right at the front which in their case didn't work out so his mate was going to say, he was going to come with me and he said, "No, I'll have to go support company." He wanted me to go to support company and I thought about it for a second and thought, "No, I can't.

33:30 I'll go to rifle battalion." So that's why I ended up in 7 but I would have been there. I didn't answer your question. Somewhere around 3 weeks I think.

#### **And what happened to those 2 fellows?**

Later on they were in Coral contact and they were wounded and sent back home. It could have been a lot worse for them really. They really got hit badly. I don't know if you want to talk about it now or later, but I suppose it's easy to say because of mismanagement but you know things go wrong.

#### **In respect to just**

34:00 **support company. What is it's role in linking up with the?**

As it's name say in support they would have mortars. You see travelling infantry through the scrub you don't carry anything like that. Too heavy and whatever so they'd carry mortars. They would have at least 1 vehicle with a recoilless rifle on it. It's like a big Land Rover. What else would they have? To some extent they might carry explosives. Usually if you need

34:30 explosives they engineers would bring that in and they would do the job. A couple of times we helped them lay out their fuses but they would do the firing and tell us what to do. So support was basically as it says. They would have mortars and they had a machine gun group and I can't recall anything else particularly to mind they might have had. They would have other things such as I mentioned before the assault pioneers of the old days where they prefer the tradesman. They might have to build something. Make a fortification,

35:00 put up wire or something like that. Generally when you are out we put our own wire out on the perimeters but they would do such as that but pretty well a rear support. If we were under pressure and you went out and set up a big harbour position out in the scrub and moved out with platoon size patrols around it we might have support company there with mortars possibly. If we are near a village we quite easily have them there with the recoilless rifle

35:30 so they wouldn't spend quite so much time out of the Nui Dat base, and it was perceived that they would have a more safer time anyway which was generally the concept but as it doesn't always turn out that way.

#### **Now you are still with the reinforcement in that group, those 3 weeks were just initially what to give you a taste of Vietnam and acclimatise?**

Just a settling in period yeah, yeah.

36:00 That wasn't purposefully planned for that but it gave them the option, the chance of doing that. There would have been some situations which were a bit of a rarity, where you could arrive straight there and be sent straight to a battalion. So in a big conflict like Long Tan or something like that, they would want reinforcements quickly so you might just hit country and over there. But we were over there, as I say I'm anticipating several weeks.

#### **And those early nights before you actually were linked up with 7 RAR**

36:30 **what noises did you hear and sounds?**

Well not too much that was unusual I don't find. There was, I remember a couple of times. I was going to say hear an owl or something at night time those sort of noises. I was on picket duty and this was only 40 or 50 m from the tent lines on the wire

37:00 and there was an attack going on somewhere past the horizon sort of thing and there were gun ships going in and you could see these tracer bullets and things coming of these bloody ships and it's very space like. Like the films you see with those zoom rays you see going down. It doesn't light up the night but you see all these tracers and the red ones and then these green rockets or something flying down all over the place. It's a bit of an unusual thing if you haven't seen that sort of thing before. There would be some

37:30 instances like that. On occasions you would hear the artillery. They would fire a round, not every night but most nights at varying times. Anything from sundown to probably 12:00 at night, I don't know if

they went that late they might fire off 8 or 10 rounds. And they would pick spots around outside Nui Dat that they would fire these into to deter anything coming up and while that's happening there are constantly TAOR

38:00 patrols go out. TAOR - tactical area of responsibility - so you've got - around Nui Dat you've got a battalion here and a battalion there and they have an area responsibility out there so they would have 5 man patrols going out there all the time. 5 man patrol out there all the time so when one is coming in one is going out. Normally they only had 1 out in each sector but sometimes there could be 2 and they go out and you've got to follow an exact instructions on the map where you go to.

38:30 It's not a sort of go to the other side of the wire which you heard when we first go to Nui Dat there was only 1 battalion, 2 battalions setting up there and go through the bush and they hadn't been through these areas so these blokes would go over the hill and camp, sit there on their bum and camp because they didn't know what was out there sort of thing. How true these words. That the story I've got on a couple of occasions but you set out there you've got a grid pattern or wherever you are going because the artillery is going to come in. If you are not where you are supposed to be, if you're not you radio back and

39:00 give code messages where you are so you're not having artillery coming in on top of you so there's sort of a balance plus these firing off every night.

**In diet in respect to Nui Dat. Had that changed much to what you were getting in training?**

A little bit. A lot of the stuff we got was supplied by the Yanks. Ammunition and this sort of thing and the food now and again we used to get these steaks and they were bloody

39:30 pathetic. Yank steaks, not like the steak - it's compressed meat, you know, bits and pieces all clamped together. I don't know if they used the glue in it I exaggerate but it's all clamped and they don't have the taste or whatever. The Yanks think they are pretty good. They haven't had decent meat and then we used to have these bloody ether eggs. You used to have eggs for breakfast if you wanted it but I don't know if they gassed them ether, put them in ether cream but they were ether and you'd eat them and get ether for flavour. You'd eat the egg,

40:00 and you'd taste bloody ether and there were 2 sayings over there. You know when you're coming home and you're talking to blokes and they'll say, "I've got 10 and a wakey," meaning they've got 10 night sleeps and a wake up, and you're home. It was either that or, "I've got 5 more bloody ether eggs," then you are home. But the food otherwise was much the same as here. Probably not as good because they had the kitchens and that to do them in to a lesser extent

40:30 than here. They were field kitchen so they were still satisfactory but it would have been better back here slightly.

**We'll just stop there because we are at the end of the tape.**

## Tape 6

00:41 **Not long after you had been after Vietnam, the Tet Offensive happened in the beginning of '68. Can you tell us about what the lead up to that was for you and what you were doing?**

01:00 Well I was in the reinforcement wing and we were being introduced to the country and we weren't in the depths of the Tet in the most intensive fighting at all. We were what you might call perimeter down around the Baria area, which was pretty thick anyway with nogs trying to push through. We were backing up 7 RAR and on the flanks of them basically if they was going to be any spillover which the spillover we got were

01:30 only minor numbers. They weren't the full force so they suffered the full force of the areas and we got the flack off them that we were in.

**What was your first deployment if you like into an engagement?**

First one. It was on this Baria period. We were on the fringes of it and it was night time attack.

02:00 Small band of nogs trying to move through our area so there wasn't much fighting, well a fair amount we struck more later on and there was blood left but we didn't get any bodies in it. So some were wounded and they dragged them off. Whether they were walking case, carrying case I don't know so first introduction was probably not as scary as I had thought.

02:30 You know when you're preparing for it you are a bit nervy of it because we were fairly sure they were coming at us in small blocks, in small numbers and we had stronger numbers. We had support by choppers, artillery and whatever else that we had a certain amount of confidence things weren't going to be too bad for us.

**What was the situation as far as your strength in numbers and that kind of thing?**

We had a, we were supposed to go out in a platoon but we had

03:00 a platoon and a half size really. There was another platoon probably several hundred metres away from us so in actual fact there bits of gaps in the line. Those gaps were paddy fields, where it would have been very difficult for someone to cross in the dark but they could. They could crawl across and get through but we had it surveyed visually reasonably well and at that stage they weren't dark nights. We had moonlight and so forth

03:30 so somebody getting through would be pretty slim and we were in plenty of range of fire, small arms fire to stop anybody going through so it was probably a gentle introduction really.

**Was that a defensive position? Am I right in saying that's how it was described? You were set up to defend your own?**

Outside our. We were still Phuoc Tuy Province, but we were outside our Nui Dat area.

04:00 and I suppose we were defensive in that we were laying in wait. We weren't moving through there. We were waiting for them to come to us where the others were pushing their way through the village of Baria and so forth we were just sitting and waiting behind a rice paddy bunker, not a bunker as in round but the mounds around rice paddies giving you plenty of cover, reasonable cover anyway.

**How do you set up**

04:30 **a position like that? Was there a particular strategy you use to?**

Well I guess not so much. We are told a position to go to and whoever is the controlling officer of that particular operation takes his information off a map and so forth. He can see where the central points of activity are, where the main forces are attacking, where splinter groups are going to try to dodge out to so he puts offcutting, blocking forces in those areas

05:00 and tries to maintain them. He would if necessary not so much in the villages but bring in artillery if its required so we were basically a blocking force if anyone was going to try and slip past on the flanks.

**As a rifleman what are you, what is your responsibility? Are you given a field of fire to cover or - ?**

Not so much unless you are in a harbour position but whatever is in front of you basically and while you are doing that you watch your rear as well. But

05:30 its not field of fire. Anything in front now you might have offsidiers that is a couple of metres either side of you. It could be further sometimes. If there was something come up in his field you would have a go at it to. You wouldn't just leave it for him to do. Whatever you see moving that you think is enemy potential you open fire on.

**When you said you saw something there but it was only on the fringes?**

Well we weren't in the village itself

06:00 and so we were having nogs coming through it wasn't until the evening trying to move out. They were trying to. They struck with fairly strong force. More than we had struck in other occasions but because of their large numbers they can't move unseen so when they are in a tight spot they've got to excavate themselves, evacuate themselves rather they've got to break into small groups and try to be less detectable and that was what they were trying to do.

**Were there anyone that you**

06:30 **fired upon at that time?**

Oh yes there was.

**And is that the first time you had to use your weapon?**

Against anyone? Yes.

**Was that something you thought about at the time or?**

Not that I can recollect strongly but I think that comes about by a long time back at training. The training I went through

07:00 from cadet up wasn't initially setting out to shoot anyone obviously but your target training and whatever else and such things as when you go through Canungra you are shooting at profiles of people in uniform. You go down snooker alleys and these things pop out and you've got to react straight away to them so all that leads you to that point and I suppose there would be very few

07:30 that think about it in depth. Some may but it becomes a reaction in part so through the training if you're training is intense enough you react without thinking and by that I don't mean to say you don't think altogether. You've got to have some control but you instinctively protecting yourself in part.

08:00 **Is there, excuse me if the emphasis sounds wrong here but is there a sense of triumph or**

**something as well that you are actually involved in something that you have been trained for so long?**

Yes initially. A bit unfortunate the first time I was aware that I had killed someone I felt a triumph really. I thought, "I beat the professionals at their game."

- 08:30 It wasn't I didn't sort of think of it, when I thought back a long time later I was the professional and some of them hadn't been trained at all so I thought I'd bet them so that was an accomplishment. It wasn't me it was them. After those periods when you get a few friends shot
- 09:00 you don't think of them as human beings so you have a, well I did. I don't know if other did I thought of them as a sort of robot with no feeling. A long time after when you think about it you realise they are the same as you. They've got mothers and brothers
- 09:30 going through those periods. I had less feeling about them than shooting a dog. I didn't appreciate, I didn't think that they have feelings. They were enemy. I suppose we had trained enough with silhouette firing and when some of the other fellows are shot you can't shoot enough of them, so it's a
- 10:00 bit of grim stage, I suppose that you are indoctrinated into that.

**What was that exact instance that you became aware that you had killed someone for the first time?**

It wasn't on that occasion as I said they carried off, they had blood trails so I suppose you couldn't be sure if it was you or someone else at all, but

- 10:30 I was on a gun position and you take turns when you bed down of a night in a harbour position. 3 places in a harbour position and each section has a machine gun so I was on a machine gun and these 3 come down the track. There is another one on the machine gun with you you know in this big circle which could be anything in the order of 20 to 50 metres in diameter,
- 11:00 depending on the terrain and I'm near a track edge and 3 came down and I opened up on 3 nogs. I don't know. I was definitely, 1 was killed, 1 was wounded and I don't know about the third one whether he got hit or not. He went off with the second one.

**And did you see your, the results of your own firing at any time?**

Yeah.

- 11:30 On that occasion we had been moving, we had been out in the scrub for some time but we stopped near a fire support base and these had been Americans. They had sort of mobile cannons and we called them cannons on tracks. Similar to tanks but a big cannon thing on these tracks and they were in a harbour position and they had infantry around them protecting them.
- 12:00 We pulled off those and someone from our company had gone into converse with those and we had sent out small standing patrols. Went out and there was about 5 of us, there might have been 6 of us and we went out several hundred metres from where the company was and some nogs walked into us. 3 of them and the gunner we had with us at this stage was just new to the group. He'd come through as a reinforcement like I did
- 12:30 he was with us probably a week and a half and this was the first time he was out with us and they were coming up and he was expected to fire and nothing happened so they had to scream at him, "Fire! Bloody fire!" and this drew the attention of the nogs looking at us through the scrub about 20 metres away. Out of my view but in his view so they opened up and they moved, with the noise they moved and opened up at him
- 13:00 and he actually got a scar down his back. He was laying on the ground and went along his back. He got a scar about 4 or 5 inches lucky for him he opened up eventually. Knocked down one and got another one through the hips who crawled off, 2 crawled off through the bush so from this position we had to go out and see what we could find so you go out in a sweep. You line up for a sweep you line up like a radial arm and go through the jungle that way. Go around and see
- 13:30 what you can find. We found a blood trail so we had to follow that along and found him. He was towards his last I would say because he had lost a fair bit of blood and as he was behind a sort of anthill and I saw the movement so I immediately opened up on him. So he's
- 14:00 when I got to him. I'd given him a second burst. I was about from me to you away from him and he was, what he was actually doing he had partially crawled to get to the position he was and left this blood trail that enabled me to follow him. I guess lucky for me he dropped his weapon back further. He's laying on his back and he had one arm under him and he started to move and I thought he had something in his hand, a weapon or grenade. An old trick but many people
- 14:30 wouldn't do, some said they would that you know you are at the end of it take a grenade, take the pin out and put it under your back and when anyone picks your body up boom. So I let him have it. I thought he had a pistol. Anyway he had nothing at all. He had his arm under his back and I thought he might have had something there a grenade even so after that I called some of the other chaps up and

they covered me

15:00 while I went and put a rope on him and pulled his body so we would all be flat on the deck then. Expecting to pull him over and the grenade is going to go but he didn't have anything under him so then I had to search him. We weren't far from where our company had gone to ground. Not far only a couple of hundred yards and so I had to search him if he had anything and then get straight back because they wouldn't leave a small group out

15:30 there there might be others coming through. In that case there was only an isolated group travelling from somewhere to somewhere through the scrub. They had come there before. There were signs on the track showing them their way so I had to part strip him and see what he was carrying, take what he had and take it back and that went back to our group and then to intelligence.

16:00 **You said just a moment ago that your reaction on that first occasion was as a professional. That you had done your job.**

After the event, yes, I thought I had the feeling of sort of accomplishment. I'd done what I was, I didn't think that I had been trained to do it but I just thought yes I'd bet the professionals at their game.

**What about the gut reaction? Is there a**

16:30 **human reaction as well when you realise you've done that?**

No not really. I didn't that I could recall. That was accomplishment and that was soon sort of forgotten in part. I was safe, I'd bet them at their game basically and I suppose a little bit. Going into those things the first time, at any time you are

17:00 not a bit blasé, you are a bit nervy. It's a bit of confidence building and as repeating I can say it a bit more easy now it's not until you get a few mates killed that the attitude changes. It was surprising when I think back on it that I had no feeling whatever as a human being. I didn't see him as a human being. Like you would kill ants or something. The thing I remember one time I was in picket. This was when I first got into the country. I was out on patrol

17:30 and I am sitting by this stump on picket while the others are having a lunch break and these ants are crawling up this little limb and I was going squash, squash. That's the sort of thing I was thinking of these people. Why I was doing that, I don't know why I was even doing that. Bloody ants. I'm not a Buddhist or something like that but I had been brainwashed,

18:00 I used that term I suppose, trained to that way to react and I guess it worked well while I was there at that stage.

**What about blokes that developed a blood lust if you like? A desire to?**

Well I had it when my mate was killed I would have liked to have killed more and more. Not for the sake of blood lust as blood spilling but these nogs that weren't people.

18:30 When I say they weren't people I'm saying in my mind they are not people, it just didn't register. It was like they are like a robot or something like that. A nothingness that I was dealing with a sort of development of a hatred for them. Despising them totally and they might have gone through the same thing on their side as well.

**Thank you for sharing that with us. We will come back to talk about those things as they come up but just to get our chronology back again**

19:00 **this first kill that you just talked about was this after you joined 7 RAR?**

That was 7 RAR, yeah.

**Tell us about joining 7 RAR and your impressions of what that new battalion was.**

Well when we went in there the first thing we were dropped off there might have been about 8 or 9 of us in this group. We went to Charlie Company. There would have been others that went to other companies. We were dropped off, so their OC met us in the centre of the camp at headquarters and

19:30 introduced himself and welcome glad to have you the normal sort of thing. Now he said, "Would any of you blokes like to stay together? Are there any mates that would like to stay together?" and I thought there is something strange going on here, because the mates I had left had gone to support company so it didn't matter which platoon I went into and being through military stuff before I read him as strange and there were several that said, "I want to stay with so and so,"

20:00 and the first blokes he picked you go to so and so, you go to so and so. The first 2 he split them up. He said, "We are all mates in this company. You'll make mates in that section." So I don't know if that was good philosophy or not. That was his philosophy. He wasn't going to have little cliches which always develop. You have a mate here and there. Someone that you get on more comfortably than with others so it always develops but I thought his introduction was a bit strange, so I go to a platoon

20:30 and I thought very much the junior how all these blokes are just professionals. I'm just the beginner.

They've been through combat and so forth and I'm the newcomer and in the platoon I went on there wasn't many that went, I was the only one. In the section I went there was there might have been 1 or 2 others in the section. I think there was but the rest of the blokes went to other platoons in the same company and the section commander I had

21:00 was very good. He'd been through Borneo and so forth. He had quite a bit of experience and with experience always brings ability and whatever leadership and so forth. So he was quite good in that so I was a bit perturbed as how I was going to be accepted as wet behind the ears and

21:30 I had a conversation with one of the blokes, "What's the...?" Oh we had this parade just the platoon in the their clean greens. There was some visitor and I think it could have been a politician coming into the camp area and walking in and we sort of had to line up and look good that was all and we had to put the ribbons on and I said, "Well I haven't been here long enough." To get your first ribbon you've got to be there 3 months. I hadn't been there 3 months I can't wear and they said, "Put it on, no one's

22:00 going to know the difference." And I said, "What if this bloke asks me questions?" and he said, "It doesn't matter." I said well, I don't know this came to mind he might have asked me how many kills I'd had to something like this, so I must have been getting to the stage of indoctrination. They said, "Oh Christ you don't have to worry about that. In the platoon there's only about 5 blokes that have ever shot anyone." I was suddenly surprised at the

22:30 amount of men in country, and how few actually ended up shooting people. There was not a large number. Say in different combat times in operations there would have been very intense fighting and everyone would have done some but there were some many other small contacts a lot of shots fired and nothing happens out of it. One wounded and taken off or one killed in an operation or something

23:00 like that and I was probably surprised I thought everyone had been through this and they had all done it. I thought, "Crikey, not so far behind after all. These blokes are not much, are much the same. They have only been in country. They haven't done any more than I've done basically." So that was a bit of a surprise. There were a few hard eggs that thought a bit of a green horn until you are out there and you have done something you are accepted quite well. I'm probably making that too harsh. They really didn't

23:30 say you are a green horn we don't want anything to do with you. That was just in my mind not in theirs. The NCO I had there, Ray [Robert] McFarland. As I said he was good. Another part of this young silliness of mine. We were out in the scrub this time and in the early parts. Fairly open ground and we were walking through and we had an arrow head formation and blokes strung down the sides and the sides they were about 20 metres apart or something we were travelling fairly close together

24:00 moving together and we pulled up for some reason. For a smoko and striking nothing so we just sat on the deck and as I said fairly open country. A few bushes and trees about for a couple of hundred yards and Ray McFarland came down the line. He was our NCO, corporal and he was chatting to a couple of blokes and came to me and there was another chap, he had been there longer than I but he had been a reinforcement to

24:30 and he came to us both at the back and he said, "We need 2 blokes to go out the front." And this other chap said, "What for?" and he said, "Well there's 2 nogs out there and we want you blokes to go and check it out." And John said to him, "Why only 2? Why can't we all go?" and McFarland said, "There is only 2 of them." And he looked at me and said, "Do you want to go?" and I said, "Yeah, I'll go. My map reading's all right.

25:00 I'll go." And John was crimping on this he wasn't going to go. He wasn't going to send us he was just checking out what we were like so he was smart in that respect that he would sort of his men in that respect. Not that he would put everyone to the test and he good reading psychology level or something like that. So that sort of thing stuck in my mind what he was doing. I didn't realise. I was too dumb I suppose to realise he was feeling me out

25:30 to see what my reaction would be and fortunately it was different to what John's was. He didn't want to go. He wasn't going to go but I was young and adventurous still and I thought I would right and I had travelled in the bush myself prior to the army so it wasn't a worry to me.

**If you had been asked that same question in a real or false situation later on in the war would you have the same?**

I thought it was real then. I didn't think he was joking. I think I would have had

26:00 much the same but not as much blasé though. I felt comfortable in the bush and I felt that I could move through the bush fairly quietly but the thing always is if someone is sitting in a guard position or a picket and they are sitting watching you pick up movement. No matter how slow it is. If you have enough clearing. I found through training what, another thing the, this is back in Australia training the lieut [lieutenant] we had, he ended up over there, he

26:30 was our lieut for a while and he was training us while we were over there and he and his backman would go off into the bush and go and hide somewhere and we would have to move forward and check them and whether it's just a good guess or whatever you would see their tracks going into a certain area but I would leave the others and go around and come back and catch them from the back. The

blokes would just be moving in and I would spring them from the back several times. I felt comfortable in doing that. I thought I could do it okay

27:00 but going back to what I said you've got to be lucky because someone sitting on guard and you are moving towards them there is no likelihood that you are going to get there without being seen but if the advantage you have got if someone is on guard duty for hours or a long time they get tired and they don't look as carefully, they don't look as clear so you can get under their guard a bit. Not that that happened in particularly in what I was speaking about, but that is the perception I had.

**You were a reinforcement.**

27:30 **You might have been called green or you might have thought you were green. In what ways were you a bit wet behind the ears?**

Only that I hadn't been in combat with these people. I'd had a slight taste of it. Nothing really serious. We had the upper hand and they weren't pushing us really they were trying to run from us really. When you get stuck in combat in the bush. Fortunately for us on practically all occasions we were on the offensive and they were on the defensive

28:00 so we were pushing them or they are trying to get through us to get away. A few occasions and I was fortunate not to be, oh except on Coral, when we were in the bush on small patrols of platoon or even company size that they were on the run. They wanted to get out and they only hit us as a distraction. We would be on top of a camp some would hit us while the rest were trying to get away and then they would try to get out.

28:30 So we were basically pushing them instead of them pushing us.

**7 RAR were coming towards the end of their tour is that right?**

Yeah.

**Were there any difficulties in just getting to know these men after they had been through almost a whole year of what you were yet to do?**

Not really. Some were like all people you meet they vary in character. Some as I said had been out in patrol in some thick stuff but hadn't

29:00 shot anyone, so they were easier to talk to because I was on a level, even par with them. The others were hardened troops I suppose to some extent who didn't bother talking about that anyway so at the boozers you would still have a drink with them and that sort of thing and there was conversation with them but it was, and it was on my part I think. Me thinking those blokes are there and I haven't reached there yet was

29:30 what it was about I'm sure. Not so much on their part.

**We'll come back to talking about how the war hardened you or how it hardens people but what does it mean to be in country? Can you explain that for us?**

The other term was the funny farm. It's using 2 terms. If some people are based here in Australia and someone is out on training

30:00 or in country, when you are talking in country it means in here. When you are over there in country meant you were in Vietnam, in country. I don't know how to explain it more clearly than that. I suppose in country was meaning over there and not on leave or back at home was in country was the general term. The other place you sometimes heard people talk about the funny farm, meaning it to be different. It wasn't funny, it was just a funny farm.

**How much of your**

30:30 **time in country was spent on patrol or in the jungle I suppose?**

Well I can't say precisely but when we were there 1 RAR at that time was supposed to have the most time in the bush than in the base. If you are meaning tour. I was over there for 13 and a bit months in country if that's what you are aiming at but while we were there we had more time in the bush now I think that might have been changed later. The battalions that came across later might have spent more time in the bush

31:00 than we did and even that doesn't mean that you had more contacts or more combat activity. It doesn't necessarily say that. It's just that we were out of camp more. We had more time out when we were there.

**Can you describe how your patrols were organised? Starting maybe with 7 RAR and the first ones you did. What were you going out to do and what were your objectives?**

Mainly it was search and destroy

31:30 as the term was given. Okay from the task force headquarters they would have indication of activity happening and what would usually take place the nogs would usually sneak into a place and build up a

camp and this is bunker systems and whatever and because regularly B52s or whatever were flying, American stuff was flying over but very high up. Most of the time you wouldn't know they were there. Taking photos, using infrared equipment which supposedly at that great height would pick out

32:00 bodies in the jungle. This was the story. How that worked at the time I don't know. They claimed they could pick up, I don't know at what height this was, a cigarette in the bush. A pretty fantastic story but they claim that. So just put that question to me again what?

**So what would you? Can you maybe take us through one of these patrols. What would you know about what you were called on to do and how would they?**

Okay this movement that they would detect somewhere

32:30 or they might see from aerial photographs trails. If you've ever been in an aircraft and look at the ground rabbit tracks are easy to spot if they are used a lot even if there are canopies over the top so if they get movement or whatever they would surmise there was something there if they didn't there was a fair amount of activity so the message would come in to intelligence etc and it would go to the commanding officers who would pass it through to the companies and there is activity there so you people are going out into that area

33:00 to cover that area and see what you can find. Sometimes there was known that there was something there but more often it was go and see so you move in there and you might find caches of food. You find camps. More often in a camp they would have weapons storage would be away from the camp. They would try and trick us in that so when we found a camp and they moved off into the scrub or whatever we would stay in that camp for a while and do a thorough search around the camp for a while

33:30 for hundreds of yards out and see what we could find. More often than not we would find weapon caches. Depending on what was about they would have a little bit of information on it we would move off straight away because they would rush off, head back and fire mortars back into the camp thinking that we were still in the camp so they would get us with our guard down.

**That's something outside. So you would be sent off in what numbers? I mean what information a grid reference or what?**

Well we'd have

34:00 a general idea we were going to an area and why we were there we covered an area called the Firestone Trail in the southern little bit. The battalion before us spent a lot of time up on the Long Green, which is the northern area. You clear the nogs out of there and then what would happen you would search and clear other areas. They are like ants. Nogs move back into that area and start building up so move back into that area and clear them out. Destroy what they have built up, you come across bunkers. There might be

34:30 a skirmish and they would take off so you would destroy the bunkers. You'd call the engineers in and they would lay their explosives and blow those so that's disrupting them. What you don't catch or whatever. What they were doing was sending in small groups, setting up a camp and then they would bring more in place. They liked to have a few about so they could over about from time to time. You think they're there and they're over there and so they liked to have a variation about the place where they could go to

35:00 and their attitude was not to stay in big groups. They are more easily detected so stay in small groups wherever and when they had an operation on that they were going to do attack somewhere a village or roads or whatever the message would go out and they would draw together and meet and go in and attack and then split again and off to wherever.

**So can you take us through going out on one of these search patrols? How?**

Okay, I don't know if I've explained

35:30 it clear enough. We've got information that there is activity in the area and generally all that information doesn't come down line to us. We are going out to search this area and we don't know. Sometimes you get an operation and you don't get anything but a slog through the bush. A bit of a holiday. So what comes on first we know we are going tomorrow or the next day or whatever it is. We get word. Usually it's not a long time before we are told.

36:00 Headquarters know a long time ahead but you're not told this. Trucks come into the compound area. It was not a compound but where we were in our company area and everyone is on the trucks and you go down to the chopper pad and you get in a chopper. As towards, not so much in the early stage but the latter stage of time over there was a big difference when you came out and got on the truck. You look around the blokes and you could cut the air with a knife. You could actually feel

36:30 an uneasiness or an anticipation that it was not going to be a pleasant one. There is hardly any talking so we go down. The reverse is when you come back off an operation and get off they are all cheery and it's great to be back and all this sort of thing because they are relieved the pressure is off them for the time being so you get on a truck and go down to the chopper pad. Get on choppers and they fly you out to an area, hit the ground, you jump out and off they

- 37:00 go and spread into the bush and the next lot comes in depending on how big an area it is for the choppers to drop off and they send the first couple in and the other stall for a while. Sometimes they, depending on the information they have on the area. If the nogs are in the area they will have a go at the blokes as they land so the first lot go in and secure the perimeter and then the next lot come in and off fairly quickly. So the choppers come in and they are only there for a short period. Sometimes they don't even touch the ground. They are just about the ground, might a foot or so,
- 37:30 2 foot and everyone gets out and they are off and another batch comes in. Okay hit the ground and when you are sure the area is fairly secure around you then you move off and usually when you move off through the jungle in nearly all cases you are in a single line. Now at company strength the company should be at about 120 or whatever and more, but because you've got to leave some behind for duties you could be down to 80. Lucky if you go out with 90 odd. You are moving through the scrub.
- 38:00 You could be from 2 metres apart to 3, 4 sometimes more. If you are in open ground you would be more so you are moving over a long period, over a long distance so if you get a contact at the front the front sections in the contact the rest of the platoon with either flank it slightly, go to the flanks a bit to give it a bit of support and the rest then while that activity is taking place time then goes
- 38:30 really quickly. I remember one contact I was in it was about I don't know 9.00, 8.30 in the morning and we only seemed. We'd gone through this and the rest of the one before we moving forward to organise the group to go to cut off groups that supported the back so that they could reinforce and they could push forward if possible and it only seemed to be going 20 minutes or so but when I checked my watch the bloody thing was about 11.30. So time, a lot of time in those circumstances it can
- 39:00 drag but when you are in action like that it goes past in no time. Okay trying to tell you what we did. Okay we were travelling in line. Generally every hour sometimes if the going wasn't too hard every 2 hours we stopped for a break. You might get 5 minutes you might get 10 and then you are on again. You are not moving excessively fast. Fairly slow because 1, you are carrying your pack on your back with about 3 days rations, your ammunition, your rifle, your water and everything else,
- 39:30 what sleeping gear you have and that's an effort in itself so you are moving fairly slowly or slower but you don't want to make too much noise because you give yourself away. So in a day we might march 2,000 metres. That's not a march you are creeping through the scrub. 2,000 metres you are going pretty good. One time one company was in
- 40:00 7 RAR they had to, they got the nickname 'the Roadrunners'. They were called to support somewhere. It wasn't a really serious position but they had to get somewhere in quick time so within a day, in daylight hours they travelled 4 kms. That's a bit of a record you know under those conditions. They would have been making a noise as they moved through. So a couple of km, a couple of thousand metres through the jungle would be reasonable going. Sometimes it would be less than that
- 40:30 we'd move.
- Well just stop there for a second because we need to change the tape but I want to continue on and we will go through it more in a minute.**

## Tape 7

- 00:45 **I just want to continue this description you were giving us about the company on patrol. How close are you to the next man when you are walking in this line?**
- It depends
- 01:00 on the density of the jungle. Sometimes its well when you are in the front when I was with 1R initially I was a scout and you've actually got to break yourself through it so the next blokes waiting behind you and he might be an arms length behind you and the next bloke is sprung out a bit longer distance. You know the 2 m I spoke of. I retrospect I think more accurate was probably 3m generally minimum
- 01:30 and could be 5 or 6. Unusually 6 in the thick scrub itself but the scrub a lot of it is thick. You couldn't stand up and put your hand up with out hitting anything. That was fairly easy going scrub. Other stuff was medium dense. The vines you had to cut yourself through with a machete so the scout not only being at the front you've got the vines and things you're going through you've got to break through those vines and that makes a noise so you think, "I hope to God they're not in this area,"
- 02:00 because they would hear you coming. Not as quiet as you would like to be and you've got bulky blokes and they are trying to get through these bloody vines without making noise. It's near impossible in some circumstances. I can recall at some stage and lieut behind he's halfway down the platoon and he's wondering why we are moving so slow. When he came to the front and we stopped for a pause. You could have a smoko in some circumstances even though. When you think there's no nogs about,
- 02:30 you definitely know they all had a smoko when they stop for their break and I was completely saturated.

The only thing, you've got the pockets on the front and you've got to carry a bandage. It's wrapped in a bit of plastic and every man carries a bandage. It's a shell dressing that you carry in your pocket well on the front of that was dry. Everything else was absolutely wet from perspiration from breaking through the scrub and he came forward and see what was going on and

03:00 when he came along there was a sort of pathway cut through the scrub that everyone was cutting through. It was quite okay. He didn't realise what it was like up front so he changed his mind a bit after that. I'm sorry I've lost your question a bit. I'm moving forward.

**You are moving through an operation. The movement was silent. Can you give us an idea of how, what's happening?**

You can't be silent but that's your intention. You know there's twigs and things and you'll walk and see the twigs

03:30 and you'll be 20 yards ahead and you'll hear some bugger behind you has stepped on the twig that you thought should have pulled it off the track or something. Not that there's a track. Apart from that there's noises in the bush all the time. There's bark that's falling off the tree somewhere and you wonder what it is and that's all it is something like that. There's all other sounds when you are initiated and you walk through the scrub not by myself and there's this rat, a tat, tat. Something I'd never heard before. Bloody woodpecker.

04:00 Various other noises. One time coming through the scrub there is this crash bang coming and I thought, "Here's someone coming, moving fast coming through the scrub towards us," and go to ground, quiet waiting for them to come out. Something like an orang-utan but smaller about 5 of them come through. Going through the trees above us. The trees are close together. Surprising the smell of us in the jungle you would have thought they would have picked it up but they didn't

04:30 seem to notice. They moved about I don't know 10 metres away from us and just kept going. It wasn't much of a breeze that I can recall in the right direction. Another time I can recall, this is not so much the patrol you asked me but the thought comes to mind. We were out on a patrol, the company goes down and we are out. Early detection you are. If anything coming you can give word that they can be prepared to hit when back in the harbour position and we were out all night and we were under a tree

05:00 that had fallen down and we were all lying out under this big tree and here this noise coming and this is just after the sunlight started to break and hear this noise coming and here's a bloody great pig with tusks like this sticks his head under the bush. I had him lined up if he'd done the wrong thing he was going to get blasted but he sniffed us, looked at us and wandered up. The next time a rooster. I was very suspicious this time but nothing happened. He was wild but he looked like a domestic rooster that got out of a camp or village or something.

05:30 He came trotting through the thing. I heard this coming so we all froze. He came trotting through. He looked like he was out of the farmyard WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK house and I thought there's a bloody camp around here somewhere. We couldn't find one so it must have been just wild.

**A couple more questions about the patrol in general. How does communication happen in that environment up and down the line?**

Hand signals. Various signals. Generally the thing is whatever the man in front does you've got to do. A stop,

06:00 a lot of them got slack on this. A stop means, you don't say anything, you stop and go to ground. Give a stop sign most blokes would just stop and wait. If they are trained properly they go to ground but there are various signals you pass back all the time. Now when you part way down the line someone will whisper together or say there are some things said but at the front you don't make a noise, try not to make any noise and as I just said that is practically impossible but you've got to keep it to an absolute minimum. Absolute

06:30 as best you can.

**Can you give us some of those signals that you used bearing in mind the camera can't see all of you so if you could give us some.**

Well when I was at the front say you were think there is a good ambush position ahead. You would give a (hand signals) stop, scout, going for a rec, that's a recy, you are going to look. So you would give that and they would go to ground and wait you'd take off and usually you would say ..... that sort of thing,

07:00 5, 10 minutes. They didn't like, the OC didn't like you going forward a long time by yourself but it was better not the envisage getting killed but better that one person getting killed than the whole platoon or something. Various things like 'sergeant' ..... 'major' ..... 'gun group' ..... What was rifle group now? 2 or 3.

07:30 'Scout group' was ..... So if you wanted a 'gun group over there' ..... 'rifle group over there' ..... and you would spread out in a line in that form. 'Ambush' ..... initially they started off ambush was over the eyes but decided ambush was over your mouth. You know there are nogs there you go into ambush position immediately

08:00 so you all tried to go to the same side of the track. Depends on terrain it can't always be done. Obviously both on either side of the track and start opening up not a good picture so you tried to go to the one side. The other .....means 'break, smoko' and after smoko is ..... 'put your packs on, we are going'. Harbour position .....this is when you are going towards the end of the day. That's a great sign, everyone looks for that.

08:30 You are slugging it out and this .....and that means you are going in a harbour position so after a few minutes you get yourself in a circle and go down to harbour position. The other one, this one ..... 'going around back that way'. ..... that was 'friend' and ..... that was 'enemy'. If you got that ..... you were as quiet as a mouse. You didn't always go to ground but be prepared to go to ground. Someone has heard something and thinks its enemy so ..... and there's others that

09:00 slipped by the mind but will come back. Oh this one ..... 'come to me'. You might be talking to your scout and this is ..... 'really get here quickly'.

**Just check did you get all of those? Yep great. With the thumbs down signal are the ones that you sort of fear the most or?**

I suppose it got you into action quickly. I don't know if you feared it

09:30 because you didn't know if it was there so you did something. I think probably fear it anticipating it more so than, "Bugger they are there," and, "Let's get out of this." "Let's get down." So you do something about it.

**At what point in a contact situation would you start speaking?**

After it opened up if they knew we were there you would have to call out. You might see the command might be saying, "They are moving on the right of us,

10:00 they are moving on the right, there is someone in the tree," or something like that. That only happened once in a tree. News came back there was a sniper in a tree and it turned out it wasn't a sniper in a tree. A lot of things got mixed up. One of the blokes, Ray from Wollongong, was supposed to have passed this message, "Ray said there is a sniper in a tree at 1:00." I talked to Ray later on and it wasn't him that passed the message at all. Someone had stuffed something up. They were on the ground firing at us pretty well

10:30 but there were no snipers in the tree at that occasion. But yes when it opens up and they know that you are there and the heavier the firing gets you can't, you don't have time to see the signal. Perhaps it is part of the story but there is so much noise going on they know you are there so you need to get the information quickly so you scream at someone you know to move this way or watch your left flank. You might be moving through there and the blokes on the left mightn't know it so you are screaming at them what's happening. There is some movement on your flank. That sort of thing.

11:00 **What happens at the end of the day when you harbour up?**

Get the harbour position? You pause and usually the someone goes forward it is usually the OC and someone else and looks at the ground and decides what is the best position. Where he wants the machine guns. We have 3 machine guns. You put them at 12:00, 4:00 and 8:00 so they are equally spaced around the circle and in between those are the section. The first section and

11:30 there's their machine gun, the next section and the next section and the OC and his radio operator and his support group with infantry and machine gun they are in the centre and the platoons, the 3 platoons they are in the centre and the people in the platoons they are probably, you would be a couple of metres apart and you would have at least 80 people all up generally. If you were lucky you might have over 100, but that would be a rarity.

12:00 The general practice was always when we went to ground at a night, we dug a shell space. That was the length of your body and just so you were level with the ground. You weren't over the ground and that was because a lot of occasions if the nogs knew you were there and they had mortars they would send mortars in to where they thought you were so if you were lying above the ground you were likely to shrapnel quite easily so that was to protect you. It was a pain of a job. Every night you had to build your shelter. I remember one night with 7 RAR we

12:30 pulled up at this place and I was pretty new to the game with them and we had to dig a shell and I was on this bloody ground and it was not quite rock but by jeez it was hard and my shell scrap was 2 inches deep and the other blokes looked at me because they had been under mortar attack before, "You'll bloody dig fast when the mortars opened up." But I had to, after we had stand to. That's another thing. When you form up in this circle you put a picket out straight away on 3

13:00 points and depending on the thickness of the scrub they could go out anything from 10 metres to 30 metres but usually not 30 metres I have to admit. 20 metres or so out just as an early warning thing stop them sneaking up on you. Just before dusk a couple of men, a section get up go out past the gun. There might be 3 or 4 of them go out and they could be 3 metres or 4 metres apart

13:30 depending on the thickness of the scrub and then they walk around to the next gun and at each gun that is happening so you get a spoke wheel happening. That is to clear the ground before you bunk down for the night. They come back, all is clear. At first light, just before first light everyone is woken up. After

enough practice you are awake anyway. Everyone is woken up and you stand up. While this sweep is going on at night time the rest of the camp stand to rifles ready.

14:00 When that comes back in they stand down and the guns are manned. Every 2 hours that changes during the night. In the morning we all stand to. Everyone is fully ready, weapons putting out and anticipating for some nogs before dark. They creep up on you at nighttime and attack when you are unaware and come charging out of the bush with everything they've got. That never happened to us fortunately.

14:30 I guess we had more firepower and numbers generally. So in the morning we stand to for 20 minutes or so. No movement. Same thing sweep. Each section go out walk out past the gun, sweep around come in back at the next gun stand to for a little while. Mount your pickets, have breakfast, fill your holes in and head off for the day.

**Apart from that were there any other protections to keep your camp secure?**

15:00 Well, no you. Yes, there was, I'm sorry. In a section a machine gun every man nearly carried an extra belt for a machine gun. An extra 100 pounds, claymore mines and they would go out at a nighttime. I didn't mention that. They would go out and sit those out in the scrub and they were commanded by a little wire thing. You brought a wire back.

15:30 They were retrieved in obviously in the morning before you moved. We had a little, an automatic rifle, like a semi automatic. Armorlight I had a M60 and the rest of the troops would have had a SLR which was semi automatic again. Not as quick fire power, but give you a hell of a belt if you ever coped one. Some carried a grenade launcher. Only a short one. They threw grenades about

16:00 40mm they would throw them like in a shell. They were fired but they wouldn't arm themselves until they travelled about 30 feet and then they armed themselves and also they would get big shotgun cartridges with big lumps of shot in it. I'm not sure if there were 5 or 7 pellets in it that you would throw out. Everyone carried a grenade. I carried grenade. Everyone is supposed to carry a smoke grenade.

16:30 We were issued, we had 10 mag rounds of ammunition. When I say 10 everything used to change a bit. I had old Second World War Bren pouches so I carried 21 magazines and I only had the Armorlite, so they are a smaller bullet, smaller velocity bullet. Smaller than the SLR, so the magazines packed in, something like 10 in each one. So I ended up with about 21 so I carried nearly twice

17:00 as much as required but I felt more comfortable with it. It wasn't a great deal more extra weight and I was willing to suffer the extra weight.

**Did the weapons require a lot of maintenance?**

No they were quite good. You didn't clean them every night in the scrub. Initially in training you would clean them every night, every day at least. Over there you wouldn't. Unless they got very mucky you wouldn't. You see they would go actually if you didn't go in the mud or the water they would go for weeks

17:30 and still operate okay. The SLR had more gas control on it on the reloading mechanism and you had to be a bit more careful with that but you didn't need to do it every day. The machine gun because gas operation you were relying on the reloading of it not every day either but that was a special occasion when a machine gun was cleaned. Only one would be done at a time and the OC be known when it was going to happen and you would told, "Okay, you can strip and clean that machine gun,"

18:00 and you bring extra fire power to the position where that was until it was done." So those controlled fairly readily. You wouldn't willy nilly clean your weapon because that means if you are under attack and there are several blokes in the action of doing it then it makes you very vulnerable but they were quite good. They didn't need cleaning all the time.

**When you camped how did you go to the toilet?**

In, within the harbour position. This harbour

18:30 position might be. It varied I'm trying to recall I've said what I suggested to you. Probably 40 metres maximum I think in diameter and sometimes closer than that. So you would go back in. Not right in the centre. That's where the headquarters was they wouldn't appreciate you doing it there but between them and the edge you would dig a hole. Generally it was organised that there would be a pit dug for each section but not often. It was you dig a hole, did what you had to do

19:00 and covered it back in again.

**What about other waste? Food and - ?**

That was always contentious. We used to get one warrant officer uptight about it. We'd be in the bush and once you'd been there for 4 or so day you are running short of supplies. You carry 3 days food and with all the rest of the gear you had to carry that was enough. We were told to take 4 days and everyone started to bitch because that extra days rations you were really loaded down.

19:30 4 days anyway you've got to get a resupply. So the resupplies would come in and they were a bugger in

themselves. Choppers would come in. If there were nogs in the area they know you're there so the next day you've got to go like the clappers to get out of that area so you can find another area and approach another site or something so they can't track you but supplies would come in. You don't carry all. You would get ratio packs and we'd usually break those open and some stuff we don't have we get rid of when we go to the bush to lighten our load

20:00 particularly if you have 4 day rationing so you always had to get your bayonet and you had little tins of cheese and you had to stab those up and break them up as much and sort of crush them in and they'd put them in a fire because the nogs knew you were there if the choppers were there so they put them in a bit of a fire and burn everything. This bloke would always instruct, every time he said this, "Make sure your blokes bash up their tins and so forth." The left over. There would be some bastard, everything gone in the fire and you'd hear bang,

20:30 after a little while bang. Someone didn't burst their tins and of course with the heat they exploded. That used to get him riled. I don't blame him but anyway.

**Were you allowed to cook?**

Yeah.

**In a harbour position?**

Yeah. If you were in a small numbers. Say you went out on a standing patrol that wasn't day and night. That was usually a short time so you didn't need a meal. You might put something in your pocket out of the ration like a few biscuits or a

21:00 chocolate bar or something but you wouldn't take a meal with you. You were just out for a period or something. Like when we went out overnight a couple of times we did we wouldn't take anything other than that with us so when you are in harbour position about 90 or 100 blokes hopefully you have a fair amount of firepower and a fair number of troops and the likelihood in the areas that we moved unless there was a big op on like Tet or Coral or something like that you are going to get nogs in small numbers so you are going to out, you have better

21:30 firepower plus you can call artillery up on them so you had the upper hand on them all the time so if they knew you were there you would know they are there. Unless they think they can do some damage which they wouldn't under those circumstances. If we were moving towards a camp and they wanted to distract us they would attack from one side and urge us to go that way while the blokes in camp would pack up and off that way so yes, we did cook in camp. When I say in camp in our harbour positions, yeah.

**What other**

22:00 **techniques would you use out on patrol? Did you set ambushes yourselves?**

Oh yes.

**Can you tell us about how an ambush was set?**

Well when you are in operations you might have a company here and a company somewhere else or it might be a battalion and they are in close by and they have a big contact and they say the nogs are going to this way and that so they shift you quickly into areas that they anticipate they might move and you can set up an ambush and wait. When you are out you might

22:30 in speculation set up an ambush on an area that they have moved through or a track area. So what you would do you'd line up in what you had, what were called your killer group, your early warning group, rear guard and protection group so what you'd do you'd have your main weapons on the front on the flank of each side of those you would have, spread out slightly farther your early warning and they would have a toggle rope or a cord which they would contact. You would have tied on the arm or leg

23:00 of a bloke down the way. So if they knew somebody was coming down this track or other they would let them know someone was coming. You had a group behind facing the back which were the rear protection in case the nogs tried to sneak in on the back of you. You had protection that way. The main fire power you waited until the whatever coming through was in the centre of that and then main firepower opened up on that. If they tried to duck out or whatever these early warning groups either side would try and eliminate that situation. That's sort of the basic.

**Just hold on a second.**

23:30 **You are describing an ambush. Can you do that again?**

In an ambush you have several groups. You have a killer group, if you like the killer group lies in the centre and that could amount to 10 or 12 people lined up on the killer group. On each flank of those spread out a little further you have several blokes, 2 to 3 on each side an early warning group. What they do if anyone comes down the track of the area you are ambushing they are early warning. They have a cord, we would have toggle ropes but

24:00 particularly we would take out nylon cord which is only 3mm in diameter. Tie it onto some blokes wrist

or his ankle in the killer group someone comes down the track they pull the cord and warn them. The bloke with the cord they don't talk but they tap the guy beside them that there is someone coming up the road. There is a group of rear protection behind. What did I say before there were would 12, there'd

24:30 be several to about 5 or so at the back as your rear protection so if anyone crept up the back of you they were early warning. The idea of the ambush was to wait for, when these early warning they would wait until they walked past and when they got in the centre they would open up and when someone had opened up anyone who had visual contact with these people would open up as well.

25:00 **Did you ever have to set one of these ambushes?**

Yes we did.

**Often?**

Often did you say?

**Did you have a contact walk in like this?**

The ones, the ambushes I was on we didn't have any contact. They were needed obviously but I don't recall us ever having any contact. One of the other platoons did they had a contact. What had happened, the nogs had walked in

25:30 on the centre. When I say nogs there might be up to 30, 26 people laying in ambush and you might only get 3 walking through sometimes. And the sergeant was going to fire the first shot. They walked in and he fired and no round up the spout click. Nogs looked into the bush not acting quick enough they turned around so someone beside the sergeant put one right between his eyes

26:00 and then they opened up. That was bad from the sergeant.

**Another couple of procedures I want to go through. You mentioned the 7R [RAR] - you would also be searching camps or villages. Can you tell us how those kind of operations worked?**

Well what would happen is we would told we were going out and what we were going to do, a village search and that was fairly easy work.

26:30 We would go as perimeter security so before sundown that day on the choppers we would fly in around this villages and land so we had a full perimeter so we cut everything off moving in and out. A plane would fly over these light aircraft the army have and they would have speakers underneath them and tell them in Vietnamese, "Your village is surrounded. No one is to move in or out. Tomorrow morning we will come in and search the village and check your papers." So

27:00 the nogs that were in there at the time would try and sneak out of a night time which happened a couple of times. The next day the perimeter set up they would come in and set up a couple of yards with cord on them and they moved the villages into them. They moved the woman into one and the men into another and they kept them close. They don't try and separate them and get them perturbed, get them worried and then they interview each one and check their papers and so forth. While that is happening another platoon or two go in you see

27:30 there could be 2 companies. There might be even more 3 companies or so involved in this. A couple of platoons go through and search while all these people are being interrogated if you like and the rest of us are around the village in a perimeter stopping people going in. One humorous side of that one time we were lined up to do a village search again and the coordination wasn't the best, in so much as the people in the air section that fly these light aircrafts, spotters they call them flew over

28:00 the village and said, "Your village is surrounded and you are going to be searched," and this was the day before we were there. So obviously we didn't go through with that one. Someone stuffed up but does that give you a sort of concept of what takes place?

**Yeah. What did they find? What were they searching for apart from Viet Cong?**

Weapons, food storage for the Viet Cong and people without the correct papers. There were people operating with the Viet Cong and they had the correct papers anyway

28:30 but some of them that were brought in and we'd go to the villages after probably months and months in the bush and they'd want a break and they'd let them go to town, so they'd give them some falsified papers so they were looking for those sort of things. Some of the villages would have had things in them, they didn't actually want them but they were under the threat of Viet Cong. If we weren't there to give them enough protection which happened in early stages a situation. A situation where a villager, the chief and his wife,

29:00 he was slit up the guts, guts pulled out, head cut off and the same with the wife. You don't give us food, this is what we do to you so if we're not there to give them protection things like that happen. Not all villages wanted to support the Viet Cong. Obviously there were some who did but some did it under duress and weren't game to say anything at all so we had to go and search everything out anyway.

29:30 **When your battalion was involved in those searches were you always on the perimeter?**

Yes, always.

**And what were you looking for on the perimeter?**

You were on alert. As you might say standing guard. You are watching for people to come out. There is someone watching from the back in case there was someone going to let you have it from the back but they were coming from the village and trying to sneak out and they would try that at night time. One situation a chap bought a, not bought, but he cut a banana leaf off

30:00 and he was trying to crawl along the ground under the banana leaf to get into the grass so he could sneak out, hoping there would be a gap. In some cases if it wasn't well planned there might be a gap of about 20 metres, but that was about all. They would hope that if they could move through one of these they could get out. It didn't work for him but they would attempt to anyway.

**You talked us through a patrolled search what happened when you were coming out? Can you describe**

30:30 **the procedure for coming out and being taken back?**

Well you would be notified that you would be moving back out which was generally a bit of relief to be moving out and going back to camp. You would have shower so you would go to a designated pick up position. Wherever they found an area on the map that a bit of clearing we would go and secure that position. When we had that position secured we were generally on both sides

31:00 you would be designated who was going first what platoon what company. The chopper would come in and if the area was big enough you might 2 or 3 or 5 landing on the field. There might be 6 choppers because we had the area secured and everyone on board and they carry about 8. Often it was 6, it was cramped, but you could put 8 on and they'd pile on and straight off and the next lot come in and they pile on and so forth until the last lot had gone through. So it was always a bit of an

31:30 anxiety thing to be the first off or the last on because you are waiting to see if there was anybody there that's been watching to let you have the last lot because you've got no protection much.

**Were you allowed to call the choppers in to find you?**

Find us?

**Instead of going to a point to meet them would you ever have to call them in in a more urgent situation?**

Oh for medivacs [medical evacuations], yeah.

32:00 We had at one time we had there was a couple of blokes dead and there was I'm not sure how many wounded. A couple wounded but not seriously and it was an American chopper came in and we called those in just after we hit a camp and cleared that but we had a canopy over the top of us. It might have been 70ft, I'd be guessing. It wouldn't be much more about 70 feet,

32:30 big trees up. A bit of cover on the ground. Plenty of cover on the ground but not thick vines stuff anyway there was a gap in the canopy when we called this chopper in. We expected the chopper to stay up there and winch down with a stretcher we'd put these blokes on. It was a Yank bloke and they were more willing to come into more dangerous areas where our RAAF blokes wouldn't. Our RAAF blokes weren't allowed because they under fairly strict orders. They couldn't

33:00 be supplied with choppers all the time so if the Yanks lost a chopper they could get another one as easy as that. An Australian there was a big bloody hullabaloo if there was a chopper lost or something. So they were under fairly tight orders so they wouldn't come in most of the time. If we were under fire they wouldn't come in. The Yanks would come in and drop ammunition for us and they came in to pick these blokes up. There wasn't fire at the time. So there was a small opening in the trees and this Yank came down and he asked for someone on the ground to guide him down and when he was going down

33:30 he had to move his tail again to miss some branches and he came down again. He came down like this. The gap was just a bit bigger than the chopper. He was amazing this bloke. The amusing part about this was the guy that was guarding him down said, "Move your tail to the starboard." Either starboard or port but I think it was starboard and the pilot came back and said, "Which way is starboard?" And at first I thought how dumb these bloody Yank pilots are. I think what he meant he must have been meaning was this bloke was under him looking at a different direction to what he was so he was

34:00 trying to determine which way do you mean starboard to be if he was looking in a different direction. So I think that was just a precaution and he ended up saying, "To your right," or whatever and the moved the tail about and came down and he was about 6ft off the ground and the boots were sticking out from under these covers these water proof covers that we used to have over the blokes that were dead and we picked them up and pushed them in and this bloke went up

34:30 and guide that in, turned and up he went. That was amazing flying. Our blokes would never have done that. If they had come in they would have winched from the top. Sad part about that sort of thing was one time just before I joined 7R, one bloke was going out on R&R. They were in the bush on operations and it was his turn to go on 4 nights R&R. The chopper came in to winch him. Winched him up, the

cable broke, dead. We weren't impressed by that. We thought

35:00 safety and so forth and checking of equipment should have been a real, so we found no excuse for that. But things carried on.

**Well come back to this in a moment but what was the situation in which those 2 blokes had been killed? You were with 1RAR?**

Just 1RAR then. Each operation is given a name to be identified by and if I went back through some records I could pick which one it was but I can't remember the name of it really

35:30 but we hit a bunker system in the morning and it's just people have different experience. At that stage I was section commander and I had a scout and we had been leading in the morning and someone took over from us, 7 Platoon took over from us so we just hauled up let them past up and walked on and within about a couple of hundred metres we struck this camp. Before we struck it there was a track through the bush. An old double track like wagons had been brought through where

36:00 it was very old. At least a season or two old, at least one season and on the edge of it there were these prints. The noggy boot prints and they were the same prints as the South Vietnamese army so they must have been getting equipment of them, stealing it or whatever and they were fresh. This platoon ahead had walked over this and not seen it and just kept moving on and my scout had moved across the

36:30 track and we were watching waiting for the others to move ahead enough and I spotted these tracks. (Hand signals) Enemy, go to ground and we passed it to the front for those blokes but what had happened after we had gone to ground 2 nogs probably good training on their part. There was activity going on in the camp ahead of us, just ahead of about 30 metres or so these 2 nogs came up the track.

37:00 They had either gone down earlier. They must have known we were in the general area. We could be kilometres away and they were just an early warning just to see if there was any movement. They were coming back up the track and down the line behind us there must have been some noise because I and the scout were watching them and they were looking in the exact direction where our blokes were lying down through the bush. Someone must have made a noise or they were just visually checking but they seemed to be concentrating on that area

37:30 and they kept coming forward and it was either them opening up on us if they saw us so we opened up on them and that warned the camp we were there so they set up and started pushing fire out our way and for a minute or so. Quite heavy, so it was really intensive. Bloody really intensive. They had a couple of automatic weapons they were letting us have. They were trying to keep us occupied so the camp could get packed up and could get out and they were building a new bunker system around there. Trenches and communication

38:00 lines and so forth in it and quite a big area. It was around the perimeter of an opening that would have been ideal to land choppers on it. So if choppers had landed on it and they had this fortified they would have wiped them out boom so it was only half way through construction but the fire power coming forward was really heavy and these blokes copped it. I know we went on the flank of them that time and I went crook on the gunner because we were moving forward and

38:30 I opened up fire to draw some concentration from these blokes to the right and ahead of us that were taking all the fire. And straight away we got automatic fire ripping back and above me the grass was about that high off the ground had all disappeared like a Victor mower had gone 'zzzzzz'. It was the slope of the ground but I thought the machine gunner behind, the noise was that intense, I thought the machine gunner behind had opened up above my head and I turned around to go crook on him and he hadn't fired, it was the bastards in the camp.

39:00 4 inches higher, I would have wore it. Cut the top of my head off, same as the bloke beside me. So some lucky times I suppose so I these blokes in the thick of it on my right they were to far forward without enough cover and this automatic fire that was raking the area all the time just got a couple of them. Cleaned them up. We could see the bloke that was firing it all but he was going biserck with some heavy automatic weapon just raking the area

39:30 back and forth all the time keeping us occupied and what happened in our type of operation. They had stopped normally when you hit something like that you get a mob out and flank them and attack on the other side. They had that happened one time before and they had been attacked and the nogs were set up in a camp system which they didn't know and they attracted them here and they went to sweep on the side but there was a mob of them waiting for them as they come in. Fortunately they got out of it without too much serious consequence so they slowed their

40:00 tactics. They were slow to do a flanking movement then so they were waiting here and we were there for hours and they called some of the Phantom jet fighters in from the Yanks to come in and strafe the area and the rest of them took off so by the time we took over the camp there was no bodies and I don't think we would have shot anyone even the fighters moved in unless the rockets from the jets did but they would have taken those away. I don't recall in that there was any blood or anything. I think they just got out.

40:30 They left some stuff but they carried what they could and went.

**Okay we have to stop again. We have to change the tape again.**

## **Tape 8**

00:41 **Booby traps. Did you ever come across those sorts of things when you were scouting?**

Yes but not much of them. Probably fortunate after I got there the Viet Cong were better armed. They were getting their supplies a little bit better than they had in the early days

01:00 so they more, what would say weapons of more modern style of that period. AK47s and various other things. Prior to that they didn't have much at all so they relied on booby traps that were made up from bamboo spikes and all these other things, pansy pits as they used to call them. Snares that would throw arrows and that sort of thing but fortunately because they were better armed and whether that's fortunate or not there were less of the booby traps than we had struck than what had been there previously.

01:30 The only thing I can recall coming across at times. Not me particularly myself they were picked up by mine detectors. They were mines set in areas where there was likely to be movement. One time I was with APC [armoured personnel] carriers and we went over the mine that blew the track off one. The APC in front of me not the one I was in. A bloke was slightly injured on it. He was leaning over the top, had his machine gun over the side and the machine gun

02:00 went up and smacked him in the face with the blast. Blew the track off the APC. Now there was now time there was a grenade and it was tied up with fishing line but apart from that that was the only one. Pansy pits I've seen the remains of one that had been there for so long that the covering on the top had rotten and just fallen in so it was fairly obviously there. It had probably been there

02:30 for a couple of years. Still could have been a problem moving through in the dark. That was something else. We didn't move through in the night time. If you are in, as you might imagine if you know a country area yourself around your house you can move quite easily in the dark but if you've never been there before you don't know what's there and not safe to do. We had an instance not far from another village out from Baria.

03:00 It was a nighttime and we were down there. There had been Viet Cong movement in the area and we went in and had a sort of a standing base a harbour position in the edge of the village and what had happened during the night there was a bit of fire going on in the village itself and this is when I was probably with, who was I with? I was with, no I was new with 1 RAR and I thought we'd go down there and clean them up. There is more of us than there is more of us then them,

03:30 anxious to get down there and do something but the OC was smart enough to say, "No, we stay here." We went down the next morning and what we found they had a rifle set up on the road leading into their position and they were antagonising the situation trying to draw us in. I would have barged down there and probably copped some of that if I'd been silly enough to be allowed to do it. The OC was smart enough to say, "No we don't do that." So another reason why you don't move at night time. Let me think, yes, one time

04:00 we did. I was with 7 RAR. There is a little village near Nui Dat. Hoa Long. It had been a village that had been moved. An area where there had been nogs around so they upped these couple of villages and shifted these people and built huts and so forth in these area not far from Nui Dat called Hoa Long and there were Viet Cong in there. They had a little depot there for the ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam] troops as well but they still had bloody Viet Cong there so

04:30 I was with 7 RAR they got a message that there were nogs in the town. A couple of them. There could have been a couple of them or there could have been several of them. I can't remember the number and they were going to town to get resupplies so we moved out in the dark. This is one of the cases we moved in the dark. We only had to track about 5km at the time, hardly that and we set a cut off group between the hills and the village and we would probably have been 700 metres away from the village and these nogs

05:00 came out carrying supplies and so forth to resupply the blokes in the hills. So what had happened there didn't get the nogs, we got the stuff, they dropped the stuff and ran but what had happened. I was lying down on the flank where the cut off group was spread out and it had rear protection on it and at about 1:00 in the morning, the machine gunner opened up and he had tracer bullets he was using. So you could see he was aiming and of course they are firing into the dark and I thought he was bloody pissweak [pathetic].

05:30 He was shooting and his shots were hitting the road and it was hard packed road and they were going 45 degrees straight up in the air so no bullets were going past it they were hitting the road and up and he couldn't detect it as accurately because he is sitting behind seeing the flack go that way not realising exactly what had happened so the nogs were able to run away without. I could see it from this side what was happening but couldn't see the nogs. Anyway they disappeared. They didn't catch them but they got the stuff they were carrying. They had a small amount of ammunition and about 2 big bags,

06:00 sugar bags of rice they were carrying so that would have been one of the rare occasions we moved at night time.

**Just with the nogs are they always men or are they also women that shot at you?**

The ones I saw there was only 1 lot that had women in them. They were all men and young blokes. Their ages there, you'll get a kid that looks about 12 and he's 19. Their statue was smaller, the majority of them you would get some exceptions

06:30 but different to what they are growing up now particularly out here the different food they are on and so forth. But they were a very small people. Light build and look young for their age until they get to about 30 and then they age fairly well quickly and rapidly. When they are young it's hard to pick their age at all.

**Were there any feelings in respect of shooting women who might be shooting at you?**

Well you wouldn't know it at the time so

07:00 the ones we went through. There was only one group that had women in it. One was killed and we found out later but all blokes. I assume they were all blokes and more often than not they were all in black. You know the black loose clothes they used to wear. Every now and again you would get some that were camouflage uniforms and nearly always they were North Vietnamese that were brought down there to train them that move with them.

07:30 Rarely would you get the locals that would be in those because a lot of the locals I guess would move back to town. They would be out for the night fighting and sneak back to town the next day for a days work. To some extent that went on.

**The Battle of Coral. Can you tell me the events leading up to that?**

Leading up to it I don't think we were given much warning about what was happening. We were going out on operation.

08:00 It was going to be a big one. We went up sort of north east of Saigon. On the east side of Saigon near the Cambodian border and it turned out much bigger than what we were led to believe or what we expected. We went into the area. What had happened before like we found out later our commanding officer and some other officers from the task force they flew in in choppers a couple of days before. Surveyed the area from

08:30 chopper, said that's where we will put our fire base etc. The Yanks brought in some of our artillery and so forth and there would be craning choppers to drop them off and the Yanks pretty lax a daisy. I suppose their special troops are trained well but the ones I met were very bloody average. They weren't the special trained troops. "Oh bugger it. We don't know where we've got to put them so we'll put them down here." So the plonked them down. Not in the position that was designated where they were nominated they wanted them to go

09:00 they were in another position. So first blunder. They had a tank in there so we go in the first day. We set up a bit of perimeter wire, a thin coiled wire and stretch it out. It was only temporary to start with. We slept the first night at this area that was going to be the main base area. We had a bit of artillery. There was only a couple, a tank and so we dug shell scrapes on the perimeter

09:30 and the next day for some bloody reason. No hang on, I'm getting it wrong. The first day we were in there we went out on the perimeter and put some wire out and so forth and for some reason we pulled out. This was C Company around this area. Support company was there. We were pulled out and moved up through the scrub probably not even 2 km, about 2 kms away. So we were in a harbour position and I could never bloody understand that so that night we could hear all this bloody fire

10:00 going on. Because we can't move back there, they are under fire back there. Hardly any protection. Support company and a few others. There was some of the tankies there not many and they were really thin in the ground. The other company was not in the immediate area but not far from them so the nogs come through and a big stir there. Some of the nogs. They had observed some of the people moving in and observed us moving out so made a good target for them. Had a tank

10:30 there and no Splintex. A Splintex is like a big shell with all these sharp shrapnel in them. You fire them, you might imagine you have blokes coming at the wire you fire this stuff it will mess them up pretty badly. Like a shotgun blast, giant shotgun blast. You fire a shell amongst say 20 blokes coming at you you might hit one bloke if you are lucky but it will go way past them so these blokes attacked and the tank's friggling

11:00 useless. A couple of mates that went to support company, they were wounded. They were shipped out and went home shortly after. One bloke was stabbed to death in his bloody hole and numerous other were wounded. I don't know how many were killed out of it. I just lost count of there. There were blokes killed out of it and so forth and it wasn't a big mob that hit them. They got them unawares. There would probably be, well platoon size about all. They put up a good fight.

11:30 The blokes that I was, the blokes that went back to Perth, they were saying afterwards some of them

had to crawl off back to the centre area to get ammunition. They didn't have enough ammunition to keep these blokes off. So they had to crawl to the centre and bring it forward and help keep supplying the ammunition up. They were short, they didn't have enough. They hadn't prepared their holes or whatever. No preparation. The tank commander who went out to a position like that for whatever reason you would think blokes there,

12:00 experienced trainers or whatever would have stuff like this. They shipped in later but it was a bit late for them. So it was a bad start to Coral.

**Can I just ask before we go on how many of the nogs actually hit the camp?**

That night? I don't know and they don't know either but there would have been a minimum of a platoon but not much more. There were those wounded and they dragged wounded off and so forth when they went and they attacked

12:30 that area later on in bigger numbers and the same thing happened. They couldn't penetrate the wire. Oh they did penetrate the wire after that again but they fought back and they had enough firepower to get them on the run again and there were numerous signs where people had been dragged out. There was a thing often when they went into battle and they had ropes on their legs so that they could be, the enemy wouldn't get them and this is how gruesome I was getting. If I got nogs at one stage,

13:00 I was going to cut their heads off and stick them on a post and that would scare the frig out of them and they would stay right away from us because one of the things they didn't like whether it was the Buddhist or what I don't know but if their bodies are mangled or decapitated they won't go to the happy hunting ground or whatever it is they will have to walk eternity sort of thing. I thought if they are that scared of us they will stay away from us. I never got to doing that but that's the thought I had strongly so they wanted to be and there were stories, although

13:30 I never saw this myself, they claim that went - used meat hooks to drag the corpses out in the legs and dragged them off so they reduced the body counts, better propaganda than us. They do so much damage and they don't lose troops at all. I don't know about our sides. With the Americans, there was some bullshit flying there but with the Vietnamese, the Communists they were strong. They would have hundreds and hundreds killed and they would say, "We lost 6 or 12 in that battle."

**On this first night**

14:00 **C Company was out on patrol or?**

No for some reason. We weren't given a story why this happened. We were drawn out and we set up a harbour position for whatever reason. I just can't see the sense in it at all. We weren't passed on information now the OC probably was. He was probably told we were going to go off somewhere else and do some other thing because they weren't on the base that they initially planned to it might have been going and setting that area up to transfer things. I don't know. I can only speculate.

14:30 So other battalion, another battalion came in after that as well. There were 2 battalions operating there and they hit the wire on occasions after that. Right onto the wire, right up they were determined to get in. Probably one of the things that was favourable too nearly all these troops were fresh troops. They had come down the borderline and so forth and had battle experience which makes a difference but I guess if they were fanatical and I don't know if they all were

15:00 if they were all fanatical but that makes a difference too but they were coming forward pretty strongly but they were pushed back reasonably well with losses of course. We had better firepower I suppose overall than they did. That's what saved the day.

**So what happened to C Company after that night you went out. Did you go back in?**

Next morning, straight back in again. The first, initial stage was over

15:30 at that stage but then the okay we stayed with the area then. There were several days and nights when they were attacked there after that and after that when they were pushed back, pushed off the wire at night time then we would do patrols out from there taking in company size we would go out. Not in small groups, we would go out in fairly large groups like a company. If you went out in a platoon you wouldn't go far from the wire at all.

16:00 **Any fellows sort of get I don't know what the phrase is wire happy themselves. Couldn't handle the pressure of it all?**

Not surprisingly no. In other areas it did. Not so much there. I suppose what makes you feel better there is more of you around and you have artillery there and tanks there eventually and the fire air cover is on

16:30 fairly immediate call up. It's not like a stray one outside. They are going to make a mad scramble to get to you. It was all fairly well anticipated. They were waiting to be called that sort of thing so even though it can be equally or more dangerous when you are out because they are bigger groups you are hitting and they are ready to have a go at you. They were pushing down. They were ready to take Saigon sort of thing and cause a stir but equally and more so dangerous probably but you had a bit more comfortable feeling

- 17:00 because there is more around you. You feel probably falsely a bit more protected. People. 2 cases, not on this instance. It was after Coral I think there was one chap he ended up staying at home but he was a little bit strange. He used to shave his head and in those days blokes didn't shave their heads but he liked it. It wasn't actually shaved. It was cut short
- 17:30 but just about shaved. He was a bit strange and if you ask me to put a finger on it just the way he, his thought patterns were. One day anyway, one day in the bush he came and grabbed my pliers because he was I don't whether to put this on tape either but I suppose it's gone now. He used to use dum dums that cut the funny bullet off and the reason I did that one time in the scrub
- 18:00 I had shot a nog through the leg and he scrambled off through the scrub and we had to track him through the scrub so he could lie doggo and get us as we come upon him. It's not a good situation when you are tracking someone and you don't know where they are and the blood's stopped, and there's no one in the near vicinity and you get a bit edgy. Every bush has got a nog behind them sort of thing so I thought the next time I shot him in the legs purposely. I didn't go for a body shot which I should have done next time I will use something that will stop him because I only had an Armorlite weapon.
- 18:30 It's about a five point something, and it's a lighter bullet than an SLR, a high velocity bullet but if it went through a muscle it doesn't do as much damage. If it was an SLR it would probably knock you down anyway I'll hit him with something that will make him stop so every second one in the magazine dum dum. The first shot was a normal bullet. If I wanted to get an accurate shot off I knew the first bullet was a dum dum, an accurate one I'm sorry. Every second one was a dum dum
- 19:00 and I guess I shouldn't have done that obviously. One bloke did get into trouble over it. One of the machine gunners in 9 Platoon wanted to borrow my weapon. His was down at the armourers getting checked out because he had a couple of stoppages of it and he took it down to get it checked out and he had to go down and pick it up and if you went out of the base you had to have a weapon with you so he borrowed my Armorlite and for some reason it was on the bench and the armourer picked it up and checked it
- 19:30 and when he looked at the magazine there is dum dums in it so he sort of gave him a tut tut but nothing was done about it. Anyway this guy came to borrow my pliers. I used to carry a pair of pliers to do this and he wanted to do the same thing. He thought that was gung ho or something but anyway back at camp he stopped me one time and he came to the boozier and I think he was going to commit suicide. He was acting strangely.
- 20:00 He'd never acted this strangely before. One of the section commanders in 9 Platoon that I had been in before I was made up to section commander he was a different bloke. He used to get all the difficult ones in his section. Now he had been through Borneo too, but he had some insight. He used to get these blokes working. No one else would want them but he used to get them working together okay.
- 20:30 This bloke in the bar that was going to shoot himself, so he went outside and got a bullet and came back in and gave it to him and said, "Don't fuck about. Going to do it? Get out there and do it." He called the bloke's bluff but he was getting us a bit thingy. "Christ, this bloke's going to do it." So he called the bluff anyway so he had some sort of insight to people anyway this bloke was going home on R&R and I had a talk to him and said, "If you don't like it here the best thing when you go back you go and see your doctor and tell him you don't want to come back.
- 21:00 I'm positive if you tell them that you'll never come back." And he didn't shoot himself which was a good thing. Another chap who I admired really. His nerves were shot. I won't mention his name but he was a likeable person and this is well after Coral anyway I had to go forward with a group and he asked me if he could stay behind and I said, "What's the problem?" and he said, "I can't do it,
- 21:30 I can't do it." So I said to a lieut in the other battalion, because our platoon commander - we didn't have one at that stage. Our platoon commander was Tim Fischer [National Party politician] for a while, but he left us and he went to transport after a period so we were without a platoon commander then so I asked this other lieut, "Can I leave this bloke behind? His nerves are shot it would be better if we leave him behind. He's not working properly." And
- 22:00 he said, "No, we can't do that. He's got to go forward. We will help him all we can but he must go." So I went forward. It turned out all right. We went forward and we were under fire and we were drawing back a bit because they were going to draw fire from another area. We were drawing back and there was fire coming right over the top of us and he was sort of frozen up and I was encouraging him, "All right we are going back. Crawl." We were on our stomachs because the fire was coming close to our heads and we were crawling back and
- 22:30 he started to get a bit better when we were going back and out of his top pocket his cigarettes, a packet of cigarettes had fallen out and we were moving back and I said, "Grab your cigarettes, grab your cigarettes." He was so petrified he couldn't reach forward that several inches to get his packets. My, he was a pleasant bloke. I had seen others packed it in and run. They had been a bit piss weak on their mates but he was scared bloody stiff
- 23:00 but he was trying to have a go so I admired him for that. Okay I got him back out of it and I had to reach forward and get his cigarettes and what amazed me he couldn't just reach forward and get them that much. That was the state of mind he was in. A couple of blokes too. Blokes were nervous but they did

their job. They were scared. I remember one time I was bloody scared.

- 23:30 We were moving through an area and meet up with another. We were a platoon and a company was going forward and we were moving out on the side some hundreds of metres in the bush to cover a bigger area so we didn't have to sweep that much and my group was leading and the scout I had then wasn't really good at all but anyway besides that point he had thought he had heard something and I thought I had heard something too. Like someone running through the bush
- 24:00 ahead of us. He's gone to ground and we were in the middle of a bit of clearing a bit bigger than this room and about 3 to 4 times as long and the bloke I was with near me we both went to ground and I'd imagined about 4 or so nogs had been disturbed by our main group and were charging down the bush to get away from them and here we are in the open lying on the deck. Anyone that came out with an AK47 or something, unless we got them first they would rake the area as soon as they saw us
- 24:30 and I could feel my heart going nothing happened at all. If there was someone running through the bush they were running in a different direction but my heart was going 'womp, womp' and I could hear it and my ears were going and I looked at the guy beside me to see if he could see, if he could hear my heart it was just going womp, womp like a bass drum and my ears were going waiting for these guys to step out of the bush. When things happen though you don't get scared because you are actually doing something, it's okay. When it's all over you think, "Christ!" You think a few things
- 25:00 but its this anticipation I was expecting them to burst out of the scrub on the run and they didn't unfortunately but at that time, I wasn't frozen but I was anxious. Really anxious with the heart ticking away. I, it felt so much it was going to burst. I've never been like that in, ever in my life any other occasion, but by jeez it was going. It cooled down quite quickly after, stopped racing like
- 25:30 but it was something I'd never experienced before.

**Can I just ask you about the dum dum bullets? Were they illegal as far as?**

Yeah, Geneva Convention, Second World War stated they couldn't be used and they hadn't been taken out of the things. Saying things now that go on record and people doing a lot worse and if they are going to put me in prison now it's a bit late but I did and

- 26:00 I suppose I cover those thoughts and it's not good the excuses of the nogs and the atrocities they pulled to villages and people like that. Mutilating people to scare them and win their support so I wasn't too concerned about that at all and as I said earlier I had the attitude at this stage of them not really being, I didn't consider. I didn't purposefully plan to do this, but I didn't consider them as humans.

**Going back to**

- 26:30 **the battle of Coral did you actually engage the enemy as they were attacking?**

Coming off the wire, yep.

**Can you just talk me through what was happening there?**

Again when things are happening fast you are not scared and react as you have been trained to react and if there is a pause in it you start to think how long is this going to be and a night that is about 8 or 10 hours seems like 24 or 30 hours or something like this but you are watching for movement all the time

- 27:00 and if you've got movement you are firing at shadows quite a bit but there was a good chance there was a nog there and quite a lot of the time there was, so you were around, if you've got nogs you can be quite confident of that. How many were dragged off, you'd do a sweep out there in the daylight and there would be bodies you come across and a lot of drag marks that were there where they tried to push through and they copped it and their mates dragged them out.

- 27:30 **So they actually tried to climb the wire?**

In some parts they actually got through over the wire and broke through the wire. This is the time Tim Fischer was still with us at the time and we had a sort of behind us we were on the back from the wire probably 20 metres and behind us probably 30 odd metres was what we called a headquarters bunker which is dug in partially and a lot of sand bags so it is rounded over the top of the ground and he was in that area and they were carrying

- 28:00 ammunition forward him and some others and they could see nogs coming past them at one stage. Only a couple got through. They were disorientated. They didn't know where they were going but yes they did penetrate the wire. Fortunately they didn't get into anything there. They were either shot or got back out. I don't know how many would have got back out but you know if they had got in there with the ammunition and put grenades or explosives among them they could have caused a bit of a problem for sure. In the dark,

- 28:30 once they are inside the wire they are walking around like someone else. No one was walking about casual. You are either on the move, or you are on the wire and firing out so they were active at the time and it is pretty tense. You are going through the dark carrying something, not that I was and someone is rushing that you are thinking someone is going back to get a box of ammunition to bring forward so it

gets a bit confusing for everyone.

**So after all this 7 RAR**

29:00 **they were heading home is that right?**

They were home before that yes.

**So this is with 1 RAR?**

Yeah.

**Can you share with me the changeover of going now into the new battalion joining 1 RAR?**

Me actually going into it, the procedure of them taking over was that they had an advance party that came over and they were there for a couple of week seeing how we operate and so forth and they are there when most of the

29:30 1 RAR move off and they leave a few behind and the new battalion comes in and they settle into the position and then the advance party that was there after they have settled in for week or something like that they head back home so all the old battalion is gone so that's the change over procedure. Then they have a few light - an operation out in the bush which doesn't throw them straight into battle. They could strike

30:00 something they usually put them up in the rubber plantations in Bien Hoa and put them through there and you would get contacts up there for sure but nothing big so it is an introduction to get them into it. The change over, the difference between when I came to 7 RAR I came to what I term as a green horn or wet behind the ears. That's how I felt. When I arrived and 1 RAR come, so even the NCO felt a bit wet behind the ears because he was with blokes that had been in battle.

30:30 It was the reverse of what I had before so they looked at you in wonder but, "This bloke's done it and I haven't," and I suppose you all think when you are in battle how are you going to react, how am going to react. What am I going to do? Am I going to be scared? But when it happens you in action you are doing things you're not scared. Well that's the way I found it. You are active. You don't have time to be scared. You just react.

31:00 **So how many fellows like yourself stayed on and joined 1 RAR after 7?**

Just saying the company I was on and guessing the actual numbers that went across I think when I arrived at the battalion there was quite a group of us. There was 9 plus. There might have been a dozen of us I can't say so all those that were there and during that period a couple more came towards the end

31:30 and while with 1 RAR of course we got extra reinforcements on occasions but those that were there when I went and joined them there might have been 1 or 2 wounded the rest all stayed 1 RAR with the platoons we were with so I was with 9 Platoon and I stayed in Charlie Company 9th Platoon when it arrived. I stayed on with them so that was all right for a while. They would 1 or 2 overstrength but that was all right. You never,

32:00 after a while you went to bush with full numbers but you never go to bush with full numbers.

**Your commander is Dicky Campbell?**

Yeah he was our OC.

**Tell me about him?**

A chap that was extremely respected. Everyone liked him and it was something they may have improved on it in later times I doubt it though. He came from the ranks.

32:30 Now if you get an officer that comes from the ranks - he was a private that worked his way through the ranks and is promoted up through the system - he has a slightly attitude or affiliation with the troops. You get a bloke that goes through Duntroon [Royal Military College] spoon in the mouth all the time. Now this is always the case. There is exceptions I have to admit but this is nearly always the case. The chap that has come through the ranks understands the feelings or the communication or

33:00 associating some how with the digger at his level. He earns their respect now a bloke like Neville Campbell if he asked you do something which he did to me you would do because of the respect you had for him. You'd do without question. If some of the others asked you to do it you would do because you had to do it and they had it up here and if you bucked you would be charged and whatever else. You might renege on them perhaps even but with a bloke like Neville Campbell everyone liked him and he was a

33:30 likeable bloke. He wasn't a big build bloke. He was lightish built bloke. He was nearly as tall as I am, I don't think he would be much shorter but lighter build than I am. But yes he was a nice bloke. I respected him.

**And what did he ask you do to that was difficult?**

Not so much difficult I was a scout and I was quite happy with that with 9 Platoon. It came down the

line through our lieut wanted me to take over section commander of 7 Platoon

34:00 and I said, "No I wasn't interested. I was happy doing what I was doing." They asked me twice and I said, "No, I'm quite happy here." And then he came and saw me and asked me and I had to say, "Yes." For what I thought, he was a good leader and I was happy, I didn't want to let him down so I did it but other than that I would have been happy to stay where I was really. I was quite comfortable in it.

34:30 **The battle of - during the battle of Coral, when you were inside the fence were you actually section commander at that time?**

Coral? No I don't think I was. No it was after Coral. I was just trying to think who was section commander then. I was still with 9 Platoon. No I wasn't section commander then. It was later than that.

35:00 **So how does your responsibilities change from being a scout to now a section commander?**

Well I suppose everyone there has got responsibilities. The section commander has got the responsibility of the section and make sure it works and operates and people are doing their job in a manner the way he wants them to do it. The section commander, the scout well I was comfy with that because I was out in front and had to rely on myself. I didn't have to rely on anyone else.

35:30 I felt comfortable with it. It was stressful but I suppose everyone suffers a level of stress. I reported back to the section commander. The section commander I had when I was in 9 Platoon in 1 RAR people like him you have to have some sort of respect of him, in so much as you found you didn't like the job and he wanted out and he actually went and saw the OC, and said, "You know, I don't want to do this any more. I want to go back to private."

36:00 And they said, "No, you are the corporal," because he did all the training with the battalion back in Australia. The others hadn't although others could have taken over I would think but the initial thing he was told, "No, he had to have the job." He purposefully went and got himself charged so he would get demoted because he didn't want to do it. I think people like that who realise and want to come and say, "I can't do it," you have to admire them a bit.

36:30 Anyway he wasn't as confident in the bush as I was and what he used to do was give me the compass and the map so I was the scout with the compass and the map and give me, "Okay we've got to go on this bearing," and so I would follow that through and go there. The thing a scout is, is that your - I think probably and it depends on the persons character more stressed because you are out in the front surveying nearly 360 degrees, watching all the time

37:00 and you were alert and tense all the time. Each man in the line as you go back, one man watches left, one man watches right and about 180, so you are watching all around trying to be quiet and keep contact with those behind when you can. I used to find you would get tense and you would sort of realise it was coming on a bit. Consciously I didn't know but I used to notice it at the end of an operation a chopper would come in. You were on the chopper and you'd get a couple

37:30 of hundred feet up in the air and it was actually like taking a lead coat off. You could actually feel all this stress going 'whooooooo'. You actually felt lighter. It was all this stress creeping up and becoming more and more tense all the time. You don't, I didn't notice it happening but it was happening but with that I still like the job so I suppose I was responsibility, I was actually responsible for those blokes back there but as section commander you've got more responsibility

38:00 for the whole section that you are looking after and the way that's going to operate when you are in contact. You control it. Like that's not eliminating the control of the platoon sergeant or the lieut has, the commanding officer of the platoon. The platoon officer or whatever you like to term him to be. They still have the responsibility when you see when you are in heavy contact but that direction can be lost so each section have to work and try and work as close

38:30 as you can together but work independently to some extent. Not totally autonomous. Under some circumstances because you had no verbal contact with what's going on over there sometimes the noise is too great. You've just to react and do something.

**So as the section commander you were working out field of fire during action and?**

Yeah, yeah. That's not so much working out it just happens. If you've got a rifle group there and there is movement and there is someone coming through you

39:00 don't have to tell them to open up, they will open up so to some extent yes but each one is trained to some extent. They know when they have to fire and when they don't have to fire. If there's something there they have to bloody fire so they don't have to wait for you to tell them. Yeah.

**There is also a weight of responsibility in respect to being?**

Section commander, yeah. Even though there is responsibility as a scout there is less I found.

39:30 I'm freer at the front but I still had more tension. This thing I said about the lead coat taking it off I had this as a scout, but I didn't have it so much as a section commander. I still had it a little bit but not so

much for some reason. Still stressed but concentrating on doing the job.

**So that's why you didn't want to take the job because of that stress of responsibility for others?**

Well I suppose. Yeah. I guess that had a bit to do with it but the thing was I was content,

40:00 comfortable and content with what I was doing. That was the main thing but what you say, yes I have to agree with you to some extent that that is the case.

**Well just pause and change the tape.**

## Tape 9

00:45 **I just want to pick up where you were with the stress coming off as you choppered out of an area. What would you do then when you got back to base to work through the situation you'd been in and to relax?**

01:00 Well probably within a week I would put on about half a stone. Get on the booze. Used to drink quite a bit. A can of beer is worth about 10 cents. We got it tax free over there. The wages you would draw from the pay office. You'd only draw a bit, you'd leave most of your wages in so all I would spend my money on was booze so you'd go back and I had a reasonable report with the sergeant cook, a chap named Ray Thornby.

01:30 He only died a few years ago. He was a bit older than I. He'd been to in the army for some time. He had been a infantryman and that made a difference surprisingly and he'd changed to cooking after some number of years. I got on with him well and near the cookhouse there was a hut off the end of that with trestle tables and that's where we would have our meals and not far from that were our tent lines

02:00 and I would be so boozed I would walk into the bloody, alongside the boozer was the end of these was the meals room and I'd lay on one of these trestles. Just a trestle table, you know the legs fold down and about 200mm wide and I'd lay on that and go to sleep after the boozer closed and Ray would be on doing inspection of the kitchen or whatever and he might be on orderly duty for the evening and he'd, the orderly sergeant goes around and checks everything is okay

02:30 he'd find me stretched out on these tables. He first met me when I arrived and several weeks after and of course he didn't know me personally at that stage and I was a new face. He didn't know whether I actually belonged to the company or not and here I am stretched out on the thing in the meals room which is an open hut so he shakes me. "What tent do you belong to?" I didn't know what tent I belonged to. I knew I was up in 9 Platoon. I couldn't remember this, I was pissed you might mind,

03:00 so arm over the shoulder and along the tent line and look in each tent and we get to me tent, "That one!" Put me in there on the bed and off he'd go. That happened several times I suppose. We got on together not just because of that reason. He was a drinker too. Another reason helped get along with him ex-infantry they always get along together but we used to get sly grog [illicit alcohol] into the place. Now most times we always had beer in the boozer but sometimes there was a drought on

03:30 and we'd have to wait for supplies so we would get a supply off the Yanks and it was this Budweiser. I don't know if you've ever had it but it's the worst bloody beer I've ever tasted. Practically no bloody taste in my opinion but we used to get it off them and they charged us a cent extra and they were making a profit off it so they would come down from wherever, somewhere along Vung Tau there somewhere. They had a couple of depots along the coast. They would bring a supply of this in and where they come into our area

04:00 for C Company there is a bit of a roundabout near the headquarters they would come past in their truck and up to Nui Dat to deliver something, probably food stuffs or something and they would pull up near the grass on the road was a bit longer. We purposefully left it longer and threw a few of these cases in there. We would pay them the money and then they would drive off. We'd take the cases and put them in the rifle pits out the front of the tents. You see behind the wire you had rifle pits and that. One main pit we just stood guard on

04:30 but if there looked like there was going to be action on there were pits all along the people could come forward and go into these pits. We allowed this one to grow over with a bit of blackberry type stuff. When we came back off ops [operations] of a night time we would black out the tent because lights out at certain times. We would have waterproof capes all around the sandbags about this high about 1.2m high and you'd see light through it so we used to black all that out with extra canvas and we would stay up all night having a

05:00 game of cards and hitting the booze and in the morning those that survived the night our cook used to send down a tray of, save us going down to the cookhouse because we used to supply him with a carton of this beer he'd send down a tray of bacon and eggs and whatever else and some of the blokes at that stage couldn't eat eggs at that time of the morning. So they are some of the things that used to go on in part. Not so much one scratches one back and one the other it was just a case okay, we got on okay and

I suppose what helped I pushed a carton of booze

05:30 out of the gun pit. At one time we had about 8 or 12 cases of bloody grog down there and when we came back off ops, the boozer would close about 8 or sometimes 9:00, so if you weren't on duty or whatever the first night back is a bit of a booze up show. I started speaking about the cook so I'm not sure what your question was now.

**When you first came back it was about what you did to restress if you like.**

Well that's how we would destress.

**How would you look**

06:00 **and smell when you came out of the jungle?**

Well a couple of occasions you would notice when you went down into a squat and you might be reading a map and you were, crikey it's a bit rough and another time it was very apparent because your own body odour in the jungle you get accustomed because you are sweating all the time we hit these nogs and they were early warning for this camp and the nogs fired a few shots in. They weren't well trained obviously and they panicked and they

06:30 ran and went back to the camp and everyone took off quickly. There was only a small number there and as this nog went off he dropped his hat and for some reason I picked it up and went and the pong it was absolutely putrid with body odour. He had probably been in there for months and he wouldn't have had a shower for that time but by jeez it ponged and I guess that's how we smelt but we were used to ours and unless you were perspiring and you were sitting in a squat you got it but when you were standing up you didn't notice it.

07:00 The other thing we had our jeans - jeans - our greens changed about every fortnight in the scrub. 10 days actually it was supposed to be. You would get a resupply. The choppers would drop off fresh greens and so forth and we would throw these olds in a bag and someone would take them and they would go back and be washed so we had fresh greens and what we had to do when we went to the bush with the greens we used to have these anti-insect solutions in little plastic bottles and before you went to the bush you had a couple of spares of greens

07:30 and you'd run this stuff all down the seams and so forth which would keep anything like lice or beetles and mites and so forth out of your clothes when you were in the scrub and they all had to be treated and you had a couple of those sitting there in bags so that someone that was on duty in camp passed those on to the dispatch in the choppers so when you got a resupply they would come out and you'd get a fresh set of greens. I think the longest I went with out a bath, a shower that is, is about 3 weeks. You see most operations they could last anything from about 3 days

08:00 to 10 days on average. It was not often you were out more than 2 weeks and you could be back in camp anything from 3 to 10 days again except Coral, which was about a 6 week operation. That was a bit longer but you at least have a tub under one of these canvas shower bag sort of things back in the base. One time we were in the bush and about a fortnight to 3 weeks and we went to camp

08:30 in a harbour position right on the edge near this river. I wouldn't know where unless I looked at a map but at least about 20 metres wide. Fairly broad river so we sat a machine gunner up on the bank at the front and a couple of us at a time, set a section up and laying on the bank with rifles covering all the time and a couple of us would strip off and jump in the water, have a scrub down, out, dress, weapons and all other occasions you wouldn't bathe in the bush at all. That was pretty unusual.

09:00 What you were meant to do if it was bad because we were always pretty tight for water was to get water and clean under your arms and clean your arm but you didn't do that because water was too precious. Of a night time you could lay out your hoochie cover and catch the rain because in the monsoon season you would get at 4.30 every day you would get rain so you would get a water bottle full of water and that was good because you didn't need to resupply so often then and it made life comfortable because you didn't have to travel so fast. As I said before resupply comes in and you go like the clappers

09:30 the next day and wear yourself off and drink more water so you are short of water again.

**The hoochie was a pretty important piece of equipment. Can you talk a bit more about that and what you used it for?**

Well basically it was for protection. It was like a water proof sheet and at night in the wet seasons you would hang that up and tie the ends off to some sort of shrubbery and it was just like A-frame and you laid under that and that protected you from the rain.

10:00 They weren't a good thing to use, because when they are wet, they reflect the light a bit. You know the sheen off anything the moonlight off something like that will reflect. Not a lot but a little bit so anyone that was trying to creep up on you would know your position more readily if you had one so in the summer we wouldn't use them at all and in monsoon time we would lay them out so we could catch water in them which was good. Other than that

10:30 you would lay on the ground and lay on it itself.

**Obviously if you didn't have water, you wouldn't wash at all. What about cleaning your teeth, shaving, they kind of hygiene practices?**

Well it was rare if we didn't shave and it was one of those things and I asked the OC, "Why do we have to bloody shave in the bush?" It's a discipline thing and I suppose it's been proven overtime why they do this I assume that you keep the chaps disciplined and they are more obedient and follow the rules and do what they are supposed to do. You get too

11:00 unruly and too lax and it develops more unruly and more laxness so we had to shave every day while we were in the bush and we would have the blade and as small amount of water as we could. Just soap up and shave off. That's all it was for. It wasn't necessary other than and that's why they did it but there were a couple of occasions when we were short of water and didn't want to call a resupply and we were allowed not to shave but that was a bit of an exception, that.

11:30 **What about cleaning your teeth?**

Well yeah, because we moved in company strength most of the time we had the support there. If you were out in say a group of 5 and if you went out in a group of 5 you only did tail patrols outside Nui Dat several km out so you were close at hand. You probably wouldn't be, you would only be out a day and a night basically. You would be out one day, stay the night and cover part of the next and back in the afternoon and there would be another one out. When you were in the bush in small numbers you would

12:00 out doing a standing patrol away from the mob, you wouldn't smoke or clean your teeth or you wouldn't be cooking at all, and as I said before those standing patrols in short numbers were only for a short time so you weren't there long enough to go hungry. If you were in the company yes we used to clean our teeth and so forth. If you didn't use toothpaste you used the brush anyway or your finger whatever you liked but you did some attempt at hygiene. The thing is if you are in smaller groups if you leave

12:30 too much evidence behind you can smell that sort of thing. If you've been in the bush and you haven't smelt or tasted a toothbrush for months you get the slightest scent of it strikes you quite quickly.

**We haven't gone into much detail about what you ate. Can you just briefly describe what the hard rations you were on were?**

You got a day pack. That covered 3 meals. So breakfast was something like a bully beef which was pretty hard to break. It took a lot of breaking this thing,

13:00 you soaked it in water and usually you didn't have time to soak it for a long time. You couldn't wait around for an hour and soak this bloody stuff, but you would soak or you just crunched away on it like a biscuit or gnaw on it and you'd munch into it so you would have that cereal and there were other things in the pack. That was breakfast and for lunch you would have a tin of something and for dinner you would have a tin of something else and there would be rice or something to go with it. Now in between those

13:30 there were other things in the pack. There were some 3 or 4 of these little cheese biscuits and you'd have a bit of cheese with it. The cheese was in a container, there was a chocolate bar. What else was there? There was some sort of nut type thing and you could have these between meals or you could have these at your meals and usually the case was you would have one of these nut bars or chocolate bars and you put it in your pocket as you are moving through the scrub and when you have a break you might pull it out and gnaw on it

14:00 but there wasn't much eating between these periods so the amount you had wasn't enormous but was sufficient to keep you going quite okay. You got tired because you were moving through the scrub and the heat but it was sufficient to maintain you quite well. There might have been a couple of things, there was other things like satchels of tea, satchels of coffee, sugar, salt. Small quantities in little satchels so sufficient for a meal basically. When I say there was a tin of something there to have for lunch it could be a tin of

14:30 anything from lamb to salmon something like that. Any type of meat. They had a bully beef one that was very interesting, but quite edible. What they used to call the old bully beef. Something like that Spam [tinned ham] stuff, I suppose but they did vary. You got different packs and with that once you have been out there something like 11 or 18 days on a resupply you got extras. These were the Yank packs and the Yanks one used to be pretty fantastic and they got a lot more than

15:00 we did and they would send a Yank pack out and we would take out what we wanted and they had which was excellent little tins of fruit, three quarters of a normal tin and they'd have pears, peaches and those sort of things with juice in them and they were a delicacy. And they had bloody things like chewing tobacco. I tried that one time bloody horrible stuff. As soon as you get it in your mouth it automatically encourages you to spit and bloody dreadful taste anyway one of these

15:30 other things like chewing gum, cigarettes and little luxuries like that as well as food. One of the things that used to be these tins were favourable. If you got one of those particularly before you went out and there used to be a bit of joke. You'd say to the blokes, one bloke didn't like this at all we'd say, "Ray" - and get his attention - "if you get shot, can I have your peaches?" He didn't like this. This is bringing a

oodoo on you and blokes used to say just as a fun thing. Not meaning anything at all

16:00 obviously just for fun. "If you get shot can I have your peaches?" Things like that make you laugh. There was always a bit of humour generally going on with some one.

**Are there other examples of humour in difficult situations that you still recall from Vietnam?**

One bloke I'm just trying to think. Kerry, Kerry something he was in 7 Platoon. He came home he had his leg shot off above the ankle. This was on Coral

16:30 and we'd been taken out in APCs and dropped at the edge of the scrub where it had started to thicken up and dropped at the edge of the scrub and the APC started to move forward and frig me dead we are right on a camp, not so much a camp but a dig in where these nogs were and unfortunate luck we had to land on the spot where these bastards were and they let us have it big time so went for all the cover we could and he was lying behind this mound with his feet sticking out a bit so someone with automatic fire let him have it

17:00 and actually cut his foot off. Okay so the medic gets over across to him and says, gives him a dose of morphine and whatever else he can do for him and he was a section commander at that period to. Who was it, Brian? No, it wasn't Brian Keating. Anyhow, he said at the time when the medic was fixing him it, bent down to fix him up before they could get him out of the place he said, "Oh crikey, when I get back I'm going to - "

17:30 I think it was his right leg that got done. "I'm going to have to met a bloke with bloody his left leg off so we can go and buy boots together," so that is pretty cool under those, he just got his leg shot off. He had the morphine which helped but pretty cool sort of come back for the situation.

**Are there any other contact situations that stand out to you and you might be able to talk us through?**

18:00 Well a lot of them are very similar. Another one, I think I was still in, yes I was still in 9 Platoon. Just trying to think whether I was in 7 RAR or 1 RAR. I think it was with 7 RAR and it was like small groups in the scrub again and chasing small groups and we knew there were nogs in the area. We were a platoon in one area and there was a platoon somewhere else who had made contact with these nogs and we knew they were

18:30 splintered around and trying to move out and so forth and we were doing short small patrols and we were only in small numbers and we weren't far from our main platoon where they were sat down and there must have only been about 7 of us moving out and I don't even think, I'm sure we didn't even have a machine gun with us and we were moving through the scrub and there wasn't any camp there but there were a couple of nogs moving towards us and they went to ground unaware to us. As we started to move towards them, and they opened up and shot

19:00 one guy through the thigh, and practically ripped half his thigh out. He was medivac'd back and of course we opened up and they were gone. There was no way of finding them. He was medivac'd back but he would have been in a bad way for years after. I could tell by the sound of it when he was hit it was a Tommy gun, .45. When I was in the air cadets we would hear - that was the other thing with weapons over there you could distinct after a while what was enemy fire and what was our own. You could hear an AK47 or one of our weapons going off.

19:30 You could hear the difference. This Tommy gun went and I knew dead set it was a Tommy gun which was a bit unusual. It was a .45 and it was a Russian version of the Tommy gun we had back home but we weren't using over there. They were Second World War stuff that he copped through the leg and it tore half his thigh out the poor bugger.

**Where were you during all this?**

I was about 4 blokes back in the line and we had sort of gone to ground because there was a scuffle ahead and then they opened up and he was ahead and then they opened up

20:00 and sprayed the air and he happened copped this bloke and one thing it was in 7 RAR too. Early pieces out. Strung out through the line, you could be 80 metres, what am I saying, 80 blokes and they put you 2m front to back. It's a long line even longer at times and the front lot hit a camp so they all go to ground and they opened up with a 50 cal and you know just sprayed the general area and hit this bloke

20:30 laying on the ground, a month to go to go home and bullet straight through him. He was, what, was about 150 metres back. Now where near up front. Not even seeing anything. Just went to ground like everyone else and he copped it the poor bastard. You never know where it was going to happen or when it was going to happen.

**What was your closest call?**

Well two. I part talked about before with these

21:00 weapons just above my head cutting the grass. Another time had a scout Rod Larkin who was quite good and I can't remember why, whether he was on R&R or what, and we had another scout in and without mentioning names he was no bloody good whatsoever and I should never had him as a scout.

Some of the chaps in the section said, "They wouldn't dare use him as a scout," and I knew he wasn't much good, but what I allowed him to be a scout,

- 21:30 he wanted to be a scout and he come from Vung Tau and he guarded the base down there and he wanted to join a battalion and see a bit of action and he was like all of us I suppose so he wanted to be the scout and I thought, "Okay, we'll teach him a bit, a bit better than what he is." He wasn't a good scout at all. The blokes came to see me and they said, "We don't want him as a scout," and I said, "Well you blokes be a scout," and all of them said, "No," so, "Okay, we keep these blokes as a scout."
- 22:00 It was a very bad decision on my part. Time earlier we walked into a camp with him and lucky for us the camp was empty. It was an old camp. It had been deserted. He didn't even know we were on it. I was aware we were in the camp before he was. He led us into this bloody thing and the blokes wheeled on him and gave him a hard time. Okay, fool me I still had him there and then another time we were out in the scrub a similar thing happens. We are chasing out nogs in this area they were in
- 22:30 and they are in splinter groups broken up so we patrol the area and I think we were in, yeah we were in company strength. This was just after Neville Campbell returned to Australia. His time was up and for whatever reason he came back and they replaced him with another chap. He tried his best but he wasn't as good as Neville anyway we moved in on this camp and this chap's ahead of me and similar thing he walks into the
- 23:00 camp and he is in the bloody bunker system area and he calls to me, "There are bunkers here." Instead of signalling he calls out to me and of course the nogs bloody hear him and fortunately there were only a few nogs there and they heard us so we had to go straight to ground and he came back and went to ground. Some of the blokes are starting to move up with us and went to ground and we went to go forward and throw grenades in to the bunkers. These blokes cover us as we go and they start opening up fire
- 23:30 and our blokes open up fire back and we had to have our hand grenades taped for safety reasons. They had a problem over there sometime, a long time before when 1 RAR did their first tour. Anyway untape the grenades and we get up to between bursts of fire. They stop firing and we get up and run up and drop these grenades in. So we get up and there was enough ground as I said, there was enough slope that we were out of the fire range. As soon as we stood up we were in range we stand up to run forward
- 24:00 and this bloke, this scout didn't have his thing untaped. He pulled it out and was ready to run but the tape was still around the bloody thing so I screamed at him to get back on the deck. We get back on the deck and the nogs are aware we are there all right. They set up a rocket launcher and were lining us up. Lucky we had dropped because he made this error we dropped. If he hadn't of made this error he might have worn this bloody rocket and it hit the tree behind us and we got the back blast of it. The shrapnel off it coming back. So I was pulled out for a while. We finished that off and another
- 24:30 group swept through and cleaned that group up. But then we were, I had shrapnel wounds. He wasn't so bad in so much as he was cut under the arm and cut a nerve so he couldn't move his arm. I had shrapnel wounds right to the back and to the arms so I had to get back and get that stuff out and stitched up. I spent a couple of weeks in camp after hospital and then back with the mob again.
- 25:00 I forget now. I've rambled on I've forgotten what your question is.

**Just what was your close call but that is what I want. A couple of questions about that incident. First of all you wandered onto a camp. These were camouflaged. What were you looking for to see if you were to identifying, if you said the other guy didn't even notice them.**

There were mounds. You see they dig a bunker. They dig a hole in the ground and put logs across it and put the earth back and that was protection on any, the Yanks used to go through at

- 25:30 times with the B52s and saturate bomb them sort of thing so if they had information there was a camp there then they picked it up by whatever detection system they were using. If they knew it was a camp they would go in and bomb it and that would stuff the nogs up. They would have to start again so it would keep them active and from doing other things. So this was this mound and in the growth there is not a lot of them about and they are amongst trees and they are camouflaged and they have leaves and everything. They have been there for a couple of seasons, some of these,
- 26:00 and sometimes partial growth on them not always usually not a lot of growth on them but leaves and things around but the shape of the ground you can pick them out and when you go in there are tracks somewhere that are worn and they are moving all the time. Even if it looks bare ground you double check that. Is that a path or is that natural? Those are about and he walks and he's standing from here to those photos away from a bloody bunker. So
- 26:30 not good.

**What would you do when you found these bunker systems?**

You see what we could have done there was go to ground and surround them partly and have them fully covered. Either opened up on them. You can't go in there. You have to wait for them to come out or you go forward and put grenades in them. The likely thing is you would pull back and call artillery in. Like an ants nest you stir the hell out of them and destroy as much as you can and you are around giving them cover.

27:00 On the situation one time this was back in when I was a scout in 9 Platoon. Was I still in 9 Platoon? No I was in 7 Platoon but we were operating with 9 Platoon and we moved in on a bunker system and there was a chap that was a section commander in 9 Platoon that had joined after I left and he had seen service over there before so he had a little bit of experience behind him. He knew what he was about and this bunker system.

27:30 We had run into a couple of nogs and they had raced back to this camp and we had followed them in to their perimeter and they were in a panic. There wouldn't have been a big lot there. We had shot a bloke and they had dragged him in there and so we knew there was a bunker system there and we called artillery in and we were about even these 2 sections the bloke that was calling them in and you could hear the bloody shells coming through the top of the trees and we were getting the clods coming back on us and this bloke was

28:00 saying, "Drop 10," and he did that twice and I thought, "Shit they are nearly on us," and I could hear him again on the radio, "Drop 10," and we would have worn them if he hadn't stopped but he stopped but by gee we were close to the artillery. The ground was you know vibrating and moving with these blasts and usually when the shell comes in most of the force goes away from you and coming from behind us we were getting some of the stuff we were so close and it was coming back on us. That stirred those blokes up and we didn't have any trouble when we went through the camp anyone that was left there,

28:30 a few were killed and the rest were gone. They had managed to get away.

#### **How would you call artillery in? What would you have to do?**

Well obviously each platoon has a radio so it's usually at the control of the lieutenant but whoever is handy at the time you know his second or batman. It's not always by his side he might be right near you side so you might use his radio. As was the case in this case it was near this chap and he called it in

29:00 and when you call a air strike or an artillery you use exact grid references you don't use a code because the nogs, the theory is if they intercept this information they work out your code so you call the actual grid reference on it. You give them a grid reference and you give them a bearing like 'oscar tango line' and on the grid reference when you give them the bearing they know you are somewhere on that line

29:30 so if your reference is that way, say you could be any direction and they work it out when they radio back. They've got your bearing and they've got your grid reference and you call it on there and they fire a shot and you'll say left 10 or 20 or whatever it is, right 10, drop 10, add 10 and you can be at any angle and they will work out where you are and take the inference from there. You might say I want to go right 10 and they know the bearing you are on and they know which way is right

30:00 so once you give them the bearing and the location you are on it's quite easy. The first one comes in and it is on target what their target is, anticipated and calculated. If it's not then direct, drop, add, left, right as simple as that so that makes it easy for us.

#### **What were the reputations of your own guns?**

In the time I was there we had not problems with them but there was early to that where they had

30:30 a bit of trouble in the camp. It hit the news here recently where they hit the booze outside their camp area outside, it wasn't in their camp it was in operation, a fire base area and they were going somewhere, going outside and getting on the booze. There was another case prior to me being there where the New Zealand artillery the instrument on the gun was not calculated properly

31:00 and they opened up. The artillery was called in and they dropped their bomb on a bloody main section and got at least, I think they might have got a major and someone else to I think. Several officers and a couple of others as well. The calibration was out on it and no one had fixed it so the chap in charge in that was reprimanded strongly but there was nothing major done about him but we were lucky. We never had any problems with them. They were a

31:30 good back up for us to have. We were fortunate we didn't have those problems.

#### **Having heard those stories how much confidence did you have when those shells were dropping right next to you?**

You see I didn't know that information until after. That's the fortunate part about it. We called them in and I wasn't thinking they are going to muck up and drop it in some funny position which they have done in some other wars as well so I wasn't aware of it then. It was only after the event that we were informed about it from people that had been there before.

32:00 That news was past back later and I thought, "Crikey!"

#### **What about air support? Where would that come from?**

Usually the Americans with their Phantom fighters. We would throw smoke, if we were in a heavy contact, the contact was big and we were out of range of artillery which sometimes we were. We try to be in range it was handy but you go out on a big op and the battalion goes out and they would set up a fire base somewhere and put a perimeter protection around it

32:30 and cover the areas that you are searching out. Immediately though the nogs know you are there so that prewarns them but sometimes we weren't within range of them so if we are in a hard spot we would bring in the American fighters and they would come in and strafe the place and put rockets in. They weren't as accurate unfortunately. I suppose it's hard for them because we would throw smoke and that would give us, coloured smoke this is and they would nominate we see yellow or something and we would say,

33:00 "Yes, we have thrown yellow," and we've got to give them a description of where things are on the ground and you see it's obscure to us. We'd say it's 100 yards ahead or something to the right and they've got to try and pinpoint that so they fire and it would be lucky if they hit the target spot on. They would go around it obviously but it gave us support and stirred the nogs up enough but it was more luck that they hit their target and did multiple

33:30 damage really. We had better results out of artillery.

**Can you describe what you would see and hear on the ground when a Phantom strike came overhead?**

You'd hear the plane coming in and sometimes you would see them going into the dive and then they would be below the tree line and they come out the other end. You would hear the roar as they come in and then you would hear if they were using rockets like a rocket fired basically and then the whoomp some seconds

34:00 after a great big explosion and you would see a whitish sort of smoke.

**You were ever around any napalm when that was used?**

No. I'd been through areas that had been napalmed. One camp we went through that had been napalmed probably it is hard to say with the damage and not being used to napalm around whether it was done a year before or 2 years before but it was barren. It was like skeleton trees sitting there. It was on a bunker system so they had hit their target

34:30 quite well and everything was dead around the place and not being used to that there was this plastic sort of smell, plasticised material had dribbled on the trees and gone hard and so being new to it I couldn't say whether it was 6 months old, or 20 months old. I didn't know. We didn't stay there we just moved through it but it had been devastated the area it hit. How many they might of dropped I don't know but the area was about 30 metres in radius

35:00 at least or a bit more when it had hit this bunker system. No vegetation, just barren ground with dead ash and stuff on it.

**We talked to you a bit about sights and sounds and sounds are a really good way of describing what things were like. Were there any sounds that you identify from that time as good sounds? Sounds that brought happy thoughts to your mind?**

Choppers. Choppers.

**Tell us about that.**

35:30 The Iroquois had a particular sound that I can't describe to you and when they were coming in it was either resupply or going back and that was a good sound and when it was going back of course. They never supported us with fire. They had machine guns on them and some of them were set up with rockets and all that sort of thing but they never came to in our contacts we never used them to any, some of them did in other battalions.

36:00 But we never used them. The only time they were of assistance with that one time we were out in the scrub and on, this is with 1 Battalion and we were moving through the scrub in a line and the canopy it was probably 60ft high or something like that but it wasn't really thick. You could see sky through it quite readily and a chopper came across the top and we didn't worry about it the choppers were on our side and it was Yank chopper and they could pick him at the

36:30 base back but we couldn't speak to them on the radio at all and the Yanks choppers have said and they were going to strafe us. They spotted us and we were snaking through the scrub and they spotted us and they came back and flew over us and we just thought it was our blokes flying over us and they were radioing back and wanting information and they said, "We don't know what they are down there. You've got a minute or a minute and half let us know or we are going in," and they were just about to come in and what had happened

37:00 with their radio the RAAF couldn't talk to them on our radio so the RAAF was sent out I don't know where from. Whether they were coming in from somewhere else and they came out and sat on top of us and the Yanks were up here above them and they give them the message by waving or whatever friendlies down there back off. If the RAAF chopper hadn't come in there we would have let him go with everything we had back at him but he might have more firepower than us.

37:30 I don't know what he was armed with so on that occasion our RAAF was of benefit to us and on other occasions taking us back from operations.

**Does that mean that you genuinely or the battalions that you were part of generally had a good relationship with the RAAF squadron in Vung Tau?**

We did but we understood that the Australian RAAF situation where they were tight for supplies in

38:00 vehicles if you like, call them choppers or whatever and the difference with the Yanks. If they wanted something they just throw stuff away. They'd have stuff, the navy blokes everyone will tell you this they would have stuff, instead of repairing it like the Australian navy or air force did they would just scrap it and new one in, scrap it. Didn't worry about it all, didn't have a second thought. Lose a chopper so what but if you did in the Australian Army, air force, there would be so much paperwork and reprimand to go through and whatever

38:30 it was a different story altogether.

**Early on in the war 9 Squadron had a bad reputation with some of the troops. Was there any evidence of that while you were there?**

No not really because we knew that we weren't going to get them at that stage. If we were under fire we were told by those that had been there before us don't expect the RAAF to come in, they won't come in. At one stage we had to be resupplied with ammunition and the Yanks brought it in. The RAAF wouldn't bring it in because we were under fire. The Yanks come in and get as close

39:00 as they can to us and drop it off and the boxes might break open, not the boxed but the metal containers and so forth but they would attempt to. They were very gung ho pretty well all the Yanks. Of the RAAF chopper pilots most of them were pretty straight and very rigidity disciplined. On loan to the RAAF were navy chopper pilots. Chopper pilots that used to fly with the RAAF over there. Different characters altogether. You get up in a chopper and they would give you a bit of a joy ride.

39:30 This sort of thing, "Want to have a look down there?" And when you are sitting in a chopper no doors on and you are sitting on the floor and you are looking down and you grab onto something and, "Christ," but the centrifugal force will hold you there. You can be in a chopper and the chopper can turn like this and you can sit on the floor but the tendency is you immediately grab something and hang on. It's surprising. This bloke from one particular bloke and he used to wear a beard and there were a couple in the navy and he'd give you a good ride. Up and down the thing and put a bit if fun into it but the other blokes were straight laced. None of that nonsense.

40:00 **Do you remember any of their names?**

No I don't, unfortunately.

**One last question on choppers. How did that reaction tie in since the war when you hear a chopper?**

Always been afraid of those memories. Now and then I've been out with my brother and we were at some function. I think there was a show over there by the lake or something or might have been down the coast and we hear a chopper coming and we both looked at one another

40:30 and it was probably in sight distance and hearing distance and we both knew what it was. Here comes an Iroquois through. It's got a sound of its own. Yep.

**All right are you tapping me because we've finished the tape, is that right?**

## Tape 10

00:41 **We haven't got much time to talk about it but we have to bring it up. The R&R time you got, did you go down to Vung Tau?**

When we had leave. We were supposed to get 2 days every 3 months and going down to Vung Tau you were probably get a day and bit. You'd go

01:00 down and say it was a Wednesday you'd get down there in the afternoon. You'd have the afternoon and you'd go into town to the bars and you'd have to be back a sort of curfew, curfew was about 9.30. You were supposed to be back in camp about 8 or 7 or something like that I'm not sure of that and Sunday morning you got a bit of time in town and Sunday afternoon you had to be in the trucks back. We didn't get, every 3 months got you 4 of them. We got about 2 to my recollection.

01:30 Everyone was entitled to 5 days R&R. We got, each of us got one of those if we wanted it but some units spoilt buggers. They seemed to allot them by numbers how many units got it. Some of the smaller units got perhaps tank corps or some supply unit would have a lot less people in it but they would have more bloody R&Rs. So some of their blokes got 2 or 3 R&Rs which seemed an odd thing when we considered

02:00 what we were doing so I got an R&R yes and I got about 2 of these down at Vungers [Vung Tau].

**What did you do when you were down there?**

I went to Singapore.

### **What did you do in Singapore?**

I used to drink a fair bit to you know forget things as a release or whatever so I met some friendly people there. Went there and when we first arrived there

- 02:30 you go to a hotel and of course the cost of living was fairly cheap in those days. I suppose it's pretty cheap compared to here now but it was still cheap and things I can remember. We stopped at the hotel and they bring people in to say, "We will do these things for you?" There was an Australian over there who was a partner with an English person and he had a villa there so he would take us to the villa and give us all a Malay feed and so forth for the day. Play the guitar and take you out fishing so that's something you can do for the day so the people were encouraged to do those things to earn money off you.
- 03:00 We moved around the hotel. There was a swimming pool, bar. We would go into town and look at something different like another bar or some such. So it was mainly, grab a taxi to go somewhere and the taxis were all, "Here's my card. You want go taxi? My brother, my cousin, my great relation will help. One of us will fix you up." You would be cruising along the street and he'll pull over there's one of these wheelbarrow jobs that sell beer get a couple of bottles of beer and pull over making a living
- 03:30 and buy them himself and pass them at the back. So he was making a living out of them. The fares were cheap to us but he would be making a profit. The thing you get into those and you ask your fare first. You would never get in one of these and take me somewhere but so it was a good relaxing experience. When I went through I drank regularly and got back to camp. At first I didn't want to go because it meant losing the group I was with. I wanted to wait until we were back in camp
- 04:00 and I would come in from an op it was a fairly laid back op. We didn't have any contacts I came back into camp, cleaned up, down to the headquarters. I'm trying to think of our air strip name. It will come to me later. Down to Saigon and the Yanks used to go on R&R and have a whole plane load and on every Yank plane they would save about 8 or so seats maybe a dozen at the back for Australians so we would go with the Yanks. That way got back after R&R
- 04:30 and it was like coming, I was like a druggo [drug addict]. I was like coming out of that. I was sobering up and I had to wait in camp for the third day before I went and joined my group in the bush again and the first day I was so crook, not sick crook but I was coming out of the sort of drug state because I didn't have any booze and I thought, "Christ I
- 05:00 was going back to Singapore and I was going to go back to the airport, some else was going on R&R I was going to knock them on the head and grab their uniform and off I'd go." This was my thoughts coming out of this state. Jeez, I was feeling bad, but it took about a day or two to wear off. But while I was there, I suppose you are young and fit and you can absorb a lot and can handle a lot more booze physically than one can these days but yes, I drank a fair bit the same as I suppose a lot did. Not all did but a lot did.
- 05:30 **Would the blokes be seeking out women?**
- Yeah, most would.
- And where would they go?**
- They all had hotels rooms they were booked in that they would go. They suggested various hotels you could stay out and where you had your hotel you went there and you had to be as soon as you got there you had to change into civvies and you wore civvies all the time. You had a fair bit of money with I suppose compared to the local population so they had a
- 06:00 safe at the hotel you would deposit everything there and when you wanted to go out at a nighttime you withdrew so much so you didn't have to take it all with you. Yes, women. They had what they call these bar girls and they were prostitutes that hung around the hotels and with the prostitutes, I don't imagine they are the same here as over there. It seemed to be mainly women who were destitute in a way. There were widows with children to
- 06:30 look after, young women and that's how they made their living so you would buy them drinks at the bar and they would make a profit on that. They would encourage blokes. They were very well, disciplined is not the word but they had a very strict sort of life where they didn't make themselves totally presentable. You would have to go and present yourself
- 07:00 to them sort of thing. They didn't come up to you. They didn't like butterflies that meant if some of the chaps got a bit serious about the girl they were with and wrote to them afterwards and that sort of thing but if you were out with a girl one night and you swapped girls the next night you took another girl out this first girl wouldn't want to speak to you again. Not on. They didn't like that. It was a strange culture in the way that they were operating as prostitutes as we think of it but they had this,
- 07:30 how would you term it? This disciplined manner of a social way they were perceived it quite differently so if you were moving with them you didn't move with anyone else sort of thing and vice versa. I thought seeing that amongst them would be a bit different to the way I perceived it here.

### **Was this in Vung Tau?**

No this was in Singapore. You could go to Singapore, Thailand,

08:00 Japan if you were lucky. That was a big thing with the Yanks so there wouldn't have been many seats. I can't recall. I heard of someone going to Japan but I had been there before and I hadn't been to Singapore or you could come back home. Some chaps came back home but I thought it would be, see something different while I was over there. To come back home and go back there again was not very inviting. I would rather not get back home until I was home to stay sort of thing.

08:30 **I would like to talk about that more but we don't have much time so we might have to leave that. The alcohol was obviously a big part of your de-stressing. Was that a problem do you think?**

It wasn't to me at the time. I could get blotto one day and was fully functional the next day because I was young and healthy. For periods later on yes it was and I suppose I developed that a little bit before then and the army increased it to

09:00 some extent. In the younger days I was had a bad habit of what they call now binge boozing. I'd play football so Friday night I would go out and have a big bang up, drink and then I wouldn't drink for the rest of the weekend probably so I had that mentality to some extent. When I went out to drink, I went out to drink. I didn't go out to chase girls or whatever I went out to drink. Friday night out for a drink sort of attitude so I had

09:30 a slight impression of that before the army which would have been easy to get out of in the army situation so I sort of fell into that again and I would tend to think and I'll go down and I'll have a couple of beers and that was a couple of hours, 3 hours or something. That wasn't a couple of beers I would drink all night.

### **What did you see of other drugs in Vietnam?**

Only saw it once. We were with these

10:00 there was a fire support base out in the scrub. Yanks, these cannons on tracks and we were on the perimeter there one night before we moved on. Got back to camp later and one of the chaps in 7 Platoon days later when we were back in camp had been out in the plantation out near the tents and he was very glassy eyed and the blokes picked it before I did. They had seen it before. "What have you been up to, Smithy?" He had -

10:30 he got cigarettes off the Yanks. They had hemp or what do they have? Marijuana or something, but he had something and it put him in this glazed eyes and a state of airiness about him, and I saw that twice with him and that's the only time I've known any of it about, seen any of it about at all but his nerves were shot as well. That's why he would have taken to it fairly readily. I've heard of it particularly with the Yanks on numerous occasions. Not experienced or saw it

11:00 but I heard of occasion where it was very bad with them, extremely bad.

### **There are stories in the stress of the war and particularly where alcohol and even drugs are being used that men would turn on their officers. What do you know about that?**

We had one case. When Tim Fischer left us in 7 Platoon, we were without a platoon commander for,

11:30 I'm not sure of the time but it must have been a couple of months. It might have been less than that, less than that and then we got a platoon lieutenant and his name slips my mind. I can't recall it to mind. He was quite reasonable. He was new like over there he hadn't been in combat before but he was quite okay. We got on with him quite reasonably and I guess he was feeling his way. He was a newcomer we could term that. He was only there a short time and we left and so he stayed on he went to another battalion

12:00 and some bloke threw a bloody grenade in his tent. They weren't after him they were after the sergeant. The bloke that did it was a trouble maker from all reports not knowing the situation but what came back. The information from others. He was a trouble make and wasn't willing to do what he was told as a normal disciplined soldier was expected to do and I don't know what he was in trouble about he was on the booze this night, and he had the narks up and when he went past the sergeant he had threatened to get him or something but he threw a grenade in there

12:30 and it wasn't the sergeant in there at the time it was the lieut and the lieut copped it and he was, I think he died in hospital. I don't think he killed him straight away from recollection. That's one that I know of. I know there are others. Artillery had one. That's 2 I know of, but there were more than that. While you are over there they don't like to spread those stories about. You don't find out until you get back home and then you find it through the media or other reports. They don't publicise that thing for obvious

13:00 reasons, to have copycats for the situation perhaps or whatever. You don't learn about it.

### **Was there anyone in your own experience that was hated by the men?**

Not over there. There were some that weren't liked as much or respected as much but I can't think of anyone that was hated at all no. The RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major], we thought he was a bit of a pain in the arse, but he was just doing his job. The regiment sergeant had to do things right and you do things this way and you stand that way and this sort of thing but outside that

13:30 I can't think of anyone that I can recall at all.

**Okay. We're just going to stop there for a second and we are going to swap. Can I ask you about Ray? You mentioned him before.**

Which Ray?

**Ray who was a friend who came and joined you. Ray Cox.**

He was killed over there. He came from Goulburn. There were 7 of us

14:00 came in from Goulburn and I knew Ray quite well. We went to school together through Goulburn. Joined the army the same day. He went over with 1 RAR. He trained with 1 RAR here. I went over with reinforcement wing and was with 7. As it turned out some of those blokes we trained with ended up in 1 RAR and all went over there. In fact there is 2 out of our group, 1 went to tankies, 1 got out because of a

14:30 bad shoulder and 1 went to some admin sort of section. He ended up not going. He did his National Service but he didn't go. Ray was, I was his platoon commander and the annoying thing about things was by the time I spoke about him the scout that led us into this bunker system where I got wounded and he got wounded wasn't a good scout. After that I was in hospital and

15:00 that's when Ray copped it. He was put in under the command of, not so much under but with another section commander took over my section while I was in hospital back in camp. I was in camp, back in camp for about 2 weeks when it happened and the section commander was the chap I spoke of that was on the drugs before. He wasn't on the drugs at the time or whatever. That was the only time I saw it happen but I feel bad about the situation

15:30 because a couple of decisions I made. One having this bloody scout that I should not have had that led us into that position. If he hadn't led us into that position I believe I wouldn't have been wounded so I would still be back in the bush. The other one this section commander who took over his nerves were shot and he was the platoon sergeant's pet of a fashion because he had been with that platoon and that sergeant probably all through and the rest of the section commanders were

16:00 all newcomers like myself that had joined the system after them so he was like a teacher's pet sort of thing, favoured one sort of thing. He was in the bush and he got into contact he just went gibbery. He was useless really. He could function otherwise but if he got into contact and I'd seen this happen once before and I regret strongly and that I didn't go to the OC then and say on the side, "You've got to pull this bloke out

16:30 because he shouldn't be there," and I didn't do it and fuck me dead he led this mob into an ambush. Not that he was leading them but under his sort of control. The story I got back was that they were in a platoon group and they were moving, they were going to a sort of standing patrol ambush position in a part of the scrub and other platoons were doing search

17:00 and whatever around the place and they were a standing patrol and they had been down this track several times or had followed on and my perceived, without being there myself what I had perceived he didn't like being in the bush so this track walking through was safer for him. Okay, what I can surmise myself the nogs knew he used this track so they set an ambush up for him. They went in to go to this spot they were going to put a standing patrol up in

17:30 and weren't at strength at the time. From what I'm told they wouldn't have been under strength but platoon numbers. There was a lieutenant with them that had just taken us over not long before but he would given the information where they were going anyway they go to this ambush they opened up the claymore mines, Ray copped it and died straight away. Several others or more were wounded so it was not a good move really and my regretful thing about it is it could have not happened.

18:00 You know anything else could happen at other occasions you don't know but I really perceive that could have not happened and I made 2 major mistakes and had a scout that was no good and I allowed him to stay. That was trouble and the strongest thing I think about it was that was a bad management position on my part. I think that changed everything. That was bad.

18:30 The other thing this section commander. He was trying to do his job I suppose but his nerves were shot. He was really, he was on a patrol. We were protecting an artillery, a fire base before and he had gone out in the scrub and thought he heard a noise so he went to ground and radioed back and we went out as reinforcements to back him up. We'd back him up and sweep and search and nothing at all. He'd heard something in the scrub and panicked and laid dog over there,

19:00 go to ground and no one move and he was a nervous wreck then. He couldn't tell me what he was going to do or where he was going. He was a nervous wreck so that's the first sign I got. I should have done something about it but never did and regret it now. And I've only just used to talking about that. Really I

couldn't talk about it before.

19:30 So it wasn't the best thing that ever happened. So have you got any other questions that can get away from that?

**Can I ask you a couple more questions surrounding that?**

Yeah, okay.

**In respect to Ray was killed - was anyone else killed or injured on that contact?**

No, the rest in it were wounded.

20:00 From the information I got, I'm sure Ray was the only one killed from that. In the whole operation over a period there were others killed but at that time Ray was killed and I guess when that news hit me enough that I didn't perceive the full impact of the other information I got from it. I think Ray was the only one killed but I'm not positive. I'd have to go back and read records or something to say that positively. I found it a bit devastating. I didn't think too much of the others at the time.

20:30 **You used the phrase 'that changed everything'. How did that change everything for you?**

I don't remember using that phrase it changed things. Well it made me I wanted to kill more nogs for sure. I wasn't doing enough of it and I hadn't killed numerous men at all but I would have liked to. The more I got the better I would have felt. There was a sort of hatred building up

21:00 that was getting stronger towards the end. That was then about December. I was wounded on as it turned out Friday the 13th when I copped it. I remember going out in the morning blokes saying, "Friday the 13th," and I said, "That's all bullshit don't worry about that." Frig me dead, didn't I wear it through a silly mistake of my own, this scout.

21:30 **In your future patrols after you received that news and were back leading were you leading the same? Were you leading as normal or?**

The time then I didn't use a scout but some of the time when I did I had him close to me. Now I'm trying to think at the time we had another chap Rob Larkin, and he was a scout and he was quite good. I can't recall back why Ron wasn't there at the time. Whether he was

22:00 on leave or some such and I took this other chap on. I can't remember when Ron's time came. He was still there when I left because I had been there for 13 or so months and I came back 4 weeks before the rest of the battalion because my time was up and I was in half a mind whether to stay, stay for another 3 months. I could have stayed for another 3 months but I didn't know whether to do that but I decided that I used to live in the

22:30 bush a bit and we used to have cattle dogs and things like that and it was a bit like, 'live by the sword, die by the sword'. We had cattle dogs that used to kill snakes and things, chase foxes and kill snakes and all of them as they got older the snake got them in the end. They started to slow down a bit. It's sort of a funny story that sat in my mind a bit. I started to think if I stay I'm going to eventually wear it. Will I stay? I wanted to stay with the blokes. Will I stay? Will I stay? No I'd better go back

23:00 so I half heartedly said, "Yes, I will go back." I don't know if I spoke about it earlier my father giving me, I had to go back and finish my education properly. I don't know if I spoke about that but he left that impression on my strongly. So I quite liked the army generally because of the previous, I used the term as I did earlier 'brainwashing'.

23:30 The training or whatever as I said before I adapted to it quite well. Over there surprising even with the things that went on I was more comfortable than being in the army and the parades here. Didn't impress me at all. It had to be done sort of thing but that was what army was over there and you had a great camaraderie with some of the blokes that you worked with. You relied on one another to a certain extent.

24:00 You had a certain amount, some bloke had quite a good faith in you. One bloke at one stage asked me why was I a scout? Why did I want to be out there? And I had tremendous faith in a bloke named Whitey who was the gunner behind us because I knew if I was out there in trouble he would get in there and give me good a cover as anyone else would do. I had great faith in him so I thought I was pretty safe. You know a few things like that. Some people you could rely on. Some times when you went into a search or whatever a sweep position

24:30 a bit unfortunate the blokes I drew there were several I always had with me because I relied on the which meant that several of the blokes didn't get face as much as often and that was unfair on these blokes but I felt comfortable with them. I had an idea how they would react and the other blokes I left behind I was dubious of them that they wouldn't carry it out as well. So I felt better taking these blokes and I used them more. They did it and didn't complain but it was everyone not sharing the same workload

25:00 and that sounds a slight exaggeration and it is to a certain extent but that went on.

### **How did you return to Australia?**

I come back by aircraft. Went over on a ship and came back by aircraft. When I arrived back here because all the family was here to meet me. I sent a message that I was due to come

- 25:30 home on such and such a date then I think, "Shit, I don't want them all there so then I wrote back and said I don't know when I'm coming home. It will be after that some period." My future sister-in-law worked at Telecom and she got onto someone from someone in Sydney on plane flights and they weren't to divulge any of this information of who was flying in or out and she knew this person fairly closely and she told them who was on the list so they knew I was coming.
- 26:00 My brother did it in a better manner. When he came home he didn't tell anyone. He just arrived at the door. Bang! I'm trying to think how long after I was home. I'm a bit mixed up in thought when I said earlier that he was in the army when I left. He was either on leave or hadn't joined the army at that stage
- 26:30 and when I was wounded over there he come across, he got leave one day to come across to our camp and got on the booze together and ended up staying the night and sneaked back the next day. Got a slight reprimand but they let him off sort of thing. I fronted up to the mess the next morning and here's Ray the cook and he spotted Greg because he was a different face. Had a bloody whinge about these blokes coming in
- 27:00 here, they shouldn't be here. Greg was a bit offended by it but we sat down and had breakfast anyway. I should have, if I'd told Ray who it was there wouldn't have been a drama but I didn't say anything. I just let it go. Ray didn't know the difference. If he had known it was my brother he wouldn't have worried at all. But anyway everything went okay.

### **And what was it like seeing your family? I take it they greeted you at the airport.**

That was quite okay. Like it wasn't

- 27:30 as emotional as I might be appearing now. It was probably for them but no so much as me. I wasn't positive I thought they'll be bloody there I wished they weren't but they were there. It wasn't a big hassle really on my part. I brought back some things I got in Singapore. I had to cart this bloody thing around with me. I bought an amplifier for my brother a bloody big thing to bring back. I brought that back and got that through. I brought one of those air compressed spear guns for myself over there so I had this bulky stuff
- 28:00 to carry through the airport. I had to go through customs with it and they thought I had a bloody rifle or something in this spear gun thing that was wrapped up and that had to be opened and eventually I got through that. Yeah that was all right. It seems silly when I think back. How many of my sisters there? There were 2 sisters, brother-in-law, brother and his girlfriend, my mother, another sister and her husband. Yeah, 2 sisters and her husband,
- 28:30 2 of her kids and I don't know if I could have seen them all at home instead of tracking to Sydney, but that's the way families are.

### **How did you cope settling back into society?**

A bit when I think back and analyse it, a bit strange, but I didn't take much notice at the time. Quite different to get back. To actually go down to a bar, lean on the bar and have a draught beer.

- 29:00 That was amazingly different and free and you didn't have any weapons with you. When you went into the boozier over there you left your weapons in camp you never carried that in the boozier but everywhere you moved about you carried a weapon. Ammunition hanging out every bloody where you know. So that was a bit of a novelty and I know a couple of times I got on the booze a bit. I wasn't causing a problem getting drunk myself. I wasn't a vicious drunk or anything. I remember one night going home and my fiancée
- 29:30 at the time and my mother had to undress me and put me to bed. The insisted I was too drunk so I let them carry on with it. I wasn't that bad enough. They must have thought I was pretty bad but I didn't think so and I used to swear a lot. Terrible. I didn't know I was bloody saying it. I used the 'fuck' word like an adjective practically. Too numerous when I think back on it. I hear other people and I think it a bit disgusting when they are
- 30:00 using it. Over there that's all we used. "How are things?" "Fucking good," or, "Fucking bad," or whatever it was, this adjective we used all the time. One time in the kitchen my 2 brothers are there and Mum is cooking on the fuel stove and she's got her back to us and saying about something or other and I dropped this 'F word' and as soon as I say it and Mum didn't move, didn't hear a thing. Both brothers looked at me and everything went silent. As soon as it goes silent, you know
- 30:30 it's spotted straight away. Nothing was said so we started our conversation again and Mum turns around to serve up dinner and says, "Now Peter, now you're home, you'll have to stop swearing so much," and I nearly fell through the bloody floor. Because it was not the type of thing that we did in the house and my sister said later that for dinner sometimes, and I'd say, "Pass the fucking butter," and I didn't even now I'd said it and Mum didn't, she must have got so used to it

- 31:00 for that period when I was going through that stage didn't blink an eyelid. Just head down and kept eating. Pam would look at Alan and, "What's going on here?" I didn't even know I'd said it. That's how bad it was. When I went out and when I met my wife, not the girl I was engaged to at the time when I used to speak I used to have to stop and think of what I said before I spoke and they would be anticipating this great dynamic
- 31:30 saying or something I was going to do. They were sort of waiting for it and here I am about to say something and I would have to think of what I was going to say and then I'd say it because if I didn't I'd swear so that took a bit of getting over. Outside that don't remember a great deal else. It seemed a great deal more freedom obviously being back out of the army and settling down to the normal pace of life. It
- 32:00 took a while longer than one probably anticipates. You think you go through those things and you think it doesn't affect you and it takes time looking back after you realise how it affects you but it sometimes take a long time to pass through that and realise what's actually happened. You know what action you have been through but what it's done to your mentally and your thought pattern and those things. You think, "I'm okay and the same as I before I went," but you're not. It takes some time for it to seep through.
- 32:30 **The public's reaction around that time to the war did that impact you at all?**
- No shortly before that there was parades in Sydney where blokes had red paint thrown at them and that type of thing, but never struck it in the country never struck it. There was one thing when I went in. There was a chap at the time when I was called up, he had made statements. He was a university student or something in Sydney and he was anti-war and I made
- 33:00 a statement when I was at the station to go to Wagga, there was a reporter there to take photos and see us off and he asked us what we thought of this bloke and I told them what I thought of him. I told them I thought he was a weak bastard. I said it a lot stronger than that. In actual fact, I realised that I was wrong. It was not he that was wrong, I was wrong. They didn't publicise what I said, but they did say I thought he was chicken hearted or something like that statement and afterward that I thought
- 33:30 it's a wonder I didn't get a comment back or whatever it was publicised but nothing came of it at the time. It was the attitude I had at the time. I didn't consider that this bloke was as right as he was, you know anti-war sort of thing. Anyway that was prior but no I didn't strike anything myself. Others might have had but I didn't no. I suppose there was more
- 34:00 perhaps understanding or admiration or something that got through it but not what you were asking.
- You commented earlier in the day about being influenced or sort of brainwashed by the thinking of the day. Was Vietnam now upon reflection was that worth fighting now you look back in hindsight?**
- In hindsight the adventurous spirit I had
- 34:30 was necessary at the time. In hindsight the cost of lives it wasn't, no it was a waste of time. Total waste of time. More political basically. The corruption that's over there with what was his name President Thieu at the time, he was lining his coffers with gold sort of thing and stuff the bloody population, but he came out visiting Australia he even was out when Ray was shot, and his
- 35:00 body was brought back, he was in the country at the time and he went to the funeral but that's all front like the politicians all do. So it was a waste really.
- Were you all, in the early years or the later years affected by the trauma of the war?**
- Well I guess I was, yeah definitely. I probably use that as an excuse I drank a fair bit and that was
- 35:30 probably an escapism as well as having developed the habit I thought I was getting really bad one stage and I rang up Alcoholics Anonymous. Scared myself really, you know, come home here after work and I was working for myself at the time as a building designer and I would have night classes when I was teaching part time. I would go in and do something at the college before I started teaching there full time and I would have dinner the kids were all in bed,
- 36:00 I would sit down and have a port before I retired and wake up about 2:00 in the morning and the bottle's empty. Totally gone. That happened a few occasions with scotch or whatever and I started to scare myself and I rang up Alcoholics Anonymous and I said to the bloke there, and he wanted me to come in, no matter what, and I said I would, but I never went. I got past it. I still drink but not like I used to drink at all which is good. I still enjoy and I probably
- 36:30 really probably could drink less and be better for it. I'm not at the stage now or I have been where I got drunk. My family's home and my future son-in-law and I were out the back and rolled over a bottle of scotch together and staggered to bed. I poured him into bed and another night he nearly had to pour me into bed so we've had turns at that so you know it hasn't stopped but it's infrequent that that would happen now but I probably drink a bit
- 37:00 more than I should it. I enjoy it that's the problem but I've got past this stupid binge drinking except for

those 2 occasions that I mentioned.

**Is a Vietnam vet's family affected by his war time experience?**

I would have to ask the kids that. There has to be some things that do because in a lot of things I'm stand offish in some things so I would say myself they haven't suffered from it

37:30 that I can perceive. Talking to them they might have a slight variation to what I had but I don't think they have suffered from it really. Reports are that many are and they have these strange fathers that are weird and alcos and that and cause hassles and traumas in the family but I've never done that in the family. If I've ever had a problem I would go off by myself

38:00 and get over it. When I say go off I get home at 11:00 or something but if I've got a problem I don't put it on the family at all. That's in the past. That sort of thing doesn't happen now but I don't really think and emphasising what I said you would have to check with them more thoroughly to see if they were but I don't think they were at all and hope they weren't anyway.

**And the welcome home parade**

38:30 **in '87 how important was that?**

Well it wasn't important to me but it was great to go and see some of my mates. That was the great thing about it. I walked past the Town Hall area there in Sydney and who was the Prime Minister at the time? Hawke, he was on the thing to take the salute and I looked the other way. I thought you bastard, get stuffed because while we were over there he was in charge of the waterside workers and secretary and all that and they put on demonstrations and stopped our

39:00 supplies for the troops over there. It didn't worry us one iota, because we got supplied by the Yanks for anything we needed during that period so we didn't suffer but the attitude of having their own people over there, he's Prime Minister, he takes the salute on the parade of the blokes he stopped gear going to. I thought you bloody so and so. That's a thing on that side but the rest I enjoyed because it was good to see the mates so after we had our parade and it was just we've got to persevere with this and then we can go off and

39:30 get together and that was good.

**Given that this is for an archive and for future generations to watch what would you like to say to future generations about war?**

What would I like to say? The unfortunate thing is I don't think they are going to stop. There is a slow movement towards peace and that might come in a couple of hundred years, several generations or a bit closer to it. Look at these small African nations, those are not going to stop.

40:00 I suppose if you have a commitment you've got to carry it out and you've got to do it properly and I made a blunder by making a few bad judgments. When you see a fault I've done that since then, when I've seen a fault acted on it. Not that I have great results in these cases but at least I acted on them. I let those things lie and I shouldn't have done. I can suggest perhaps inexperience, not wanting to make too big a wave, the mentality that you don't dob your mates, all those sort of things

40:30 wrapped in with it but you've got to do your job as much as it may displease some people I believe that's right. You've really got to do it I suppose and I don't suggest, 'okay, people should go to war', but I think there are some situations where people still fight for a long time and they are going to have to or you are going to walked over, taken over. So I don't think I can add more than that really.

**Do you have any**

41:00 **thoughts or comments that you would like to add to the archive?**

I can't draw any more than that to mind unless you can stimulate the mind with a question but not really. The sort of thing. The other thing I would probably add it is and I know people have heard reports about this and talked about it is that even blokes from the Second World War have come bits of zombies. Have been through things that are quite terrible and come back as a near zombie

41:30 give them several years to cool down and get back into the home style again and they revert back to almost where they were so generally the majority will get over it and move back to the. I turned into a killing machine, I suppose. I didn't kill hordes of people but I was turning into that and after I get away from that training that I had there is hope for people in that line.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**