

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Patricia Furbank (Pat or Furby) - Transcript of interview

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### Tape 1

00:38 **Pat, thank you for doing the archive project with us today. Would you be able to just give a very brief overview of your life up until this point?**

My name is Patricia Anne Furbank and I was born in Lithgow, New South Wales in 1942. I did all my schooling in Lithgow. I also commenced my nursing training

01:00 in Lithgow, at Lithgow District Hospital, in 1959 I started. When I finished my training I went down to St Margaret's Hospital in Sydney to do midwifery. I was there for one year and I returned back to Lithgow for a year, just general nursing. Then I moved out to Condobolin, where I commenced work at the Condobolin District Hospital.

01:30 I was there for three years. One year I was a sister and the last two years I was the matron of the hospital. During that time the Vietnam conflict had commenced, and ever since I was a child I was very interested in the armed forces, and while I was there, a letter came out from the government wanting civilian

02:00 general trained sisters. So I applied to go on a civilian surgical team to Vietnam, however I received a letter back saying that could only send one person from one hospital. They couldn't send two and I was unaware that the administration officer had applied as well. So he went and that got me thinking, "Well I've got to do

02:30 something." So I applied to join one of the armed services. I must admit I wrote to the three of them and I thought the first one that comes back I'll go, and I'm very grateful that it was the air force, and I joined the air force in 1968, where I was based in Laverton 6 RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] Hospital in Melbourne. From there I went across to Point Cook, where we did our officer training

03:00 course. From there I was posted up to Number 3 RAAF Hospital at Richmond, New South Wales. I was only there for a few months and I was posted then to Number 4 RAAF Hospital in Butterworth, up in Malaya. It was called Malaya in those days, which I was very thrilled about. So off I went up into Malaysia, commenced working at 4 RAAF Hospital, which was a very

03:30 large hospital. Perhaps I could go into detail later about that. I was very fortunate. I'd only been up there three months and I was seconded to the United States air force for aero-evacuation duties, which once again I guess we'll go into that in more detail later. I served over in Clark Air Base [Philippines] with the Americans. Then I went back to Butterworth and

04:00 I finished my tour of duty there, which was two years. I returned to Australia, was sent back to 3 RAAF Hospital and from there I went to most of the bases in Australia. In 1974 I was posted once again back to Malaysia, where I did another two year tour. When I came back I went to

04:30 Amberley in Queensland and from there I ended up, which is unfortunate but the higher you get I guess, you end up at a desk, which the last four years of my service life was working behind a desk. I retired in July 1983 from the air force. I lived in Hervey Bay. Things were getting a bit commercialised there, so we decided to move down here to beautiful Maxville,

05:00 Stevens Church Hospital. I was there for eight years. I thoroughly enjoyed it but then I was thinking, "Well I've been nursing for a long, long time with not much break." I only had one week between the air force and there, so I decided to retire. I lived in Hervey Bay. Things were getting a bit commercialised there, so we decided to move down here to beautiful Maxville,

05:30 and I did say I retired but since I came to Maxville, I'm the President of the Maxville RSL Sub-Branch, the vice president of the Nambucca Valley Ex-Servicewomen. I'm on the board of directors for Nambucca Valley Care. I'm a silent visitor, which is visiting terminally ill patients, so their carers can go out and shop etcetera,

06:00 etcetera, which I find very fulfilling. I do Meals on Wheels and I had two years as the President of the Frank Partridge VC [Victoria Cross] Military Museum in Bowraville. I guess that's an encounter of my life and I do believe, I have heard people say you never retire, and I certainly believe that.

**Thank you very much Pat! That was wonderful!**

06:30 **Now I just wanted to go back and talk to you about your childhood in Lithgow. Can I first of all ask you about your Mum and Dad, and what their background was?**

My father, Dad worked in the State Coal Mine in Lithgow for many years and then he retired from the mines, and he became the manager

07:00 of the Olympic Swimming Pool in Lithgow. Mum was a housewife and a good Mum. I have one sister and four brothers. I thoroughly enjoyed my childhood. We had a very happy, loving family and I can recall my parents having parties, and things like that. I enjoyed school.

07:30 That's about all. I certainly enjoyed my training in Lithgow, although I would never recommend to anyone to do their training in their hometown. Of course it's different now. We did four years hands on and I often had to cope with seeing friends that I'd gone to school with very ill, etcetera.

**You father worked in the coalmines?**

Yes.

**Could you explain what kind of life**

08:00 **that was at that stage for workers in the mines at Lithgow?**

I think it would have been a very hard life. I can remember one of my joys of Dad working in the mines because they used to go underground and my grandfather was also an undermanager, as they called them, and he often used to take us on a Saturday down the pit, as they called it. That was something I absolutely loved. I used to love going down

08:30 there. Mum would cut Dad's crib and he'd have a crib tin, and Dad always used to save me - if he had tomato sandwiches, they had a special taste from being down the pit, and I know it sounds pretty awful but they were pretty soggy, and they just had something special about them. He always saved those for me and he worked hard, and long hours

09:00 but it never seemed to - I can never remember my father complaining about going to work or anything like that. He also was a pigeon fancier and he trained pigeons during World War II to go overseas as couriers.

**Could you tell me a bit about that?**

Well, of course I can't remember much about that but Dad trained them. I don't know whether you

09:30 realise, with the pigeons, they take them away somewhere, say Menindee for instance and they let them out there, and then they fly home, which is pretty remarkable. So Dad trained the pigeons, which were sent overseas. He never got them back naturally and they were used as couriers in World War II.

**Did he talk to you about that work very much?**

10:00 Yes quite a bit because growing up Dad always had pigeons. He had a very large aviary in the backyard and I guess it was sort of part of our life. I can remember times when we couldn't go outside, because Dad was training the pigeons and I can also remember a time when one of my brothers brought home a galah, and it learnt to whistle the same as Dad, and every time Dad would let the pigeons out, this galah would

10:30 whistle them back. So strangely the galah disappeared!

**So how would he train the pigeons?**

Well they have a method. They send them out and they have a special whistle, and it's pretty hard to train them really because I guess the first time you send them out, will they come back or won't they? But they say a homing pigeon as they call them, really homes

11:00 in on the area and different landmarks, and Dad used to - he'd get them out, and they'd fly around, and then he would whistle them. He had a special whistle and down they'd come. I can remember when they were racing, the anxiety he went through waiting for his pigeons to come home, yes.

**Would he have races with other people in the area?**

Oh yes, yes.

11:30 In fact, Mum has a picture at home of a pigeon called Menindee and apparently Menindee was taken up to Menindee, and let out, and I think it was one of the first pigeons to fly such a long distance, and he came home, and I think Dad won that race. So we had this lovely photo of this pigeon!

**How long would the pigeons take to come home?**

Sometimes days

- 12:00 and I can remember many times they came home, and they'd been hit by hawks, and they were wounded. I can still see Dad sewing them up, just with cotton in those days but they usually survived.

**You mentioned you used to go down the pit occasionally with your father. Could you explain what that looked like?**

Actually it was my grandfather that used to take us down, me especially. I just

- 12:30 loved it. You'd go down in a big cage and when you got down to the bottom, as they called it, it was just pitch black, so you've seen the miners with their miner's hats and light's on, and that's the only light you would have. You'd go down and I used to walk around with my grandfather, and I guess to some people it would be pretty scary, but I must admit I was never

- 13:00 frightened of that feeling. I don't think I'd like to go down now though.

**Whereabouts did you live in Lithgow?**

We lived in Martini Parade it was called, which was not far from the small arms factory [Lithgow Small Arms Factory], which is now called the Defence Force Factory I think. They changed the name but that's where they used to make a lot of the guns for World War II.

- 13:30 So we were in very close proximity to the factory, and Mum often says that times when the air raid siren would go off because it was a target of course, and I can remember growing up every Wednesday morning they would put the air raid siren off, I guess just to test it, and if

- 14:00 it went off during the week you knew something had happened in factory. Someone had been wounded or injured, or something, or there had been a fall in the mine, or something, and no one was ever happy until they heard the all clear on that. I don't know whether they still do it but it was something that I do remember well, the air raid siren.

**What was your house like?**

It was a massive great big home.

- 14:30 We had several bedrooms. We all had a bedroom to ourselves. We had a very large backyard I can remember and Dad was very - we had big fishponds. He had built up fishponds where you could sit underneath. Yes he was very clever. It backed onto the Coolah School, where we all went to school, which was very handy,

- 15:00 although I had a call the other day from a friend I hadn't seen for many years and he said he can always remember my elder brother and sister always being late to school, and he could never understand why because we lived so close!

**So would you climb over the fence to go to school?**

No we had a little gate in the fence. Of course we used to play in the schoolyard a lot in those days.

- 15:30 **You mentioned the munitions factory and the air raid siren would go off if there was an injury. What kind of impact did World War II have on Lithgow and do you have a memory as a child of - ?**

No I really can't remember, because I was born in 1942 but we did have an air raid shelter at home, under the bathroom it was.

- 16:00 Growing up when the place was renovated, Mum said she doesn't know how we didn't all suffocate down there but I think the impact was the small arms factory being there so close to the town because if they had bombed that, well it would have been a big mess I should imagine, even though we were so far from Sydney. Of course in

- 16:30 those days my mother tells me they had no idea that Darwin was being bombed or even when Sydney, the submarines came into Sydney because they just didn't give the news. They only had radios of course. There is another thing if I may, most of the streets in Lithgow were named after military type things, like Martini. I know Martini sounds like a drink and people often

- 17:00 have a laugh when I say, "I lived in Martini Parade," but apparently it was some type of gun, and we had Rifle Parade, we had Musket Parade, and different streets, which related to wartime.

**Had there been many families in Lithgow impacted by World War II?**

Oh yes, I should imagine there would have been. We had a very beautiful war memorial built in Queen Elizabeth Park in Lithgow,

- 17:30 which I can always remember naturally on Anzac Day. We always used to wear little white dresses with a little white blouse, like the Red Cross and there were a lot of families. In my own family I had cousins, who were in World War II and one particular cousin, Billy

18:00 Furbank his name was, nicknamed as 'Nana', he was captured by the Japanese, and he was missing for seven years, and his Mum just didn't know whether he was alive or what but he came home, and he's only in the last - four years ago he lost his life after a big struggle, but he was badly affected by being imprisoned. However, he met

18:30 a nice nurse at Concord Hospital and married her. But a lot of families were affected.

**Tell me a little bit about your school and what kind of school it was.**

Well, I went to Coolah Public School, where I was in the infants and the primary there, good memories, lots of good memories from school. Of course we were always a sporting family. I think we used to play just about

19:00 any sport. Then I went to Lithgow High School, which once again many happy memories, involved I all sorts of sports and what have you, especially swimming, and hockey. I thoroughly enjoyed my - yes I had a good childhood and I enjoyed it.

**What drew you to want to do nursing?**

I must admit

19:30 I had never thought of going nursing, however I'd been up to Bathurst in the train for - I think it was a hockey tournament. I was still at school and coming home in the train I came down with appendicitis very badly, and I was taken off the train, and taken straight to hospital, and to the theatre etcetera. Of course when I was convalescing I just sort of

20:00 fell in love with all the nurses and the sisters. I thought, "Oh wow, this is great!" So that's when I made my mind up that I would become a nurse and I'm very glad I did.

**Could you explain what you had to do for your nurses training when you left school?**

Yes when I started nursing, to start off with I had to have a form signed by my mother and father

20:30 giving permission because I was 16. Anyhow, my father refused to sign it. He had some strange idea that nursing was very hard and a bit tough. Somehow my mother talked him round, which he never regretted after. I started training as a cadet, which you were sort of the boggy around,

21:00 cleaning and all that type of work. I did that for one year and then I started my general training. Lithgow Hospital was way up on the hill, a lovely hospital in those days. We had a very strict, severe matron, who was there the whole time I was there. At the time we all thought she was very, very strict. Of course you couldn't smoke or we were only allowed to have three items on our

21:30 dressing table and all that type of thing. I thoroughly enjoyed my nursing. We were very, very busy. It was hands on. By the time I'd done one year we were into giving injections and more or less running wards. I had a couple of friends that went down to the Sydney Hospital and were senior in years as I was, and they still hadn't reached that type of nursing.

22:00 I think being in the country you certainly received a lot of experience in lots of ways because often you were left to set up the theatre and do things like that. I thoroughly enjoyed my nursing, absolutely loved it. We had lots of fun and from Lithgow when I went down to do my midwifery to St Margaret's, of course it was a Catholic

22:30 Hospital. I was Church of England. I had a bit of a rough time there with not being a Catholic and I know I can laugh about it now but Sister Anne, who was the matron, was very strict. She was only about four foot and everyone was just absolutely petrified of her but she was a good matron.

**In what way did you have a hard time for not being a Catholic?**

Oh jokingly I had a hard time, like I was always sort of caught out.

23:00 There were certain things. Every morning Sister Anne would come through the hospital with the priests and if you came across them, like coming up the corridor when you were going down, you had to kneel. To start with I found that a bit hard but then I just got into the run of things. I got into serious trouble once. We were a bit slack and I thought I'd clean all the

23:30 statues that were all around the hospital. They all had rosary beads, so I removed all the rosary beads and put them in a big bowl to wash them, and that was really sacrilege. I should never have done that. I got into a bit of strife over that and they had special candles that burned forever. They had some special oil but I didn't realise that, so I cleaned them

24:00 out too and put kerosene in, which blackened all the statues. Yes I was pretty lucky to finish my training at St Margaret's but once again, I thoroughly enjoyed it.

**I might take you back to Lithgow Hospital and talk in detail about the kind of training you were doing there. First of all, I wanted to ask you, were you actually living in the hospital or at home at the time?**

No, I was living in. In those days you couldn't live out. You had to love in

24:30 We had lovely quarters, Brook House it was called. The matron was strictly responsible for us, so if anything happened - I recall once instance we had very bad bushfires around the district and my friends and I, most of us were off duty, so we decided to go out, and sort of see if we could help. I can remember

25:00 being lined up in front of matron because when she found out she was absolutely devastated, because she was responsible for us and we were very adventurous. I think I had about three warnings at Lithgow to pull your socks up or - by doing things like that. I found out later that matron really wasn't - I'm very thankful to her because

25:30 she was strict and we learnt how to respect people, and she was a wonderful person.

**Could you explain what your living quarters were like?**

It was a two story building right on the premises of the hospital grounds. The nurses lived upstairs and the sisters lived downstairs. We had two sets of steps. Our bedrooms

26:00 were very nice and compact. We had central heating because it gets very cold in Lithgow. We had a very large common lounge room, where lots of fun was had and of course the sisters' area was off limits to us but naturally if you have a staircase you're not supposed to go down, you go down it,

26:30 and that often happened of course. We were caught going down there. We didn't have meals in the quarters. We weren't allowed to have meals. Underneath the quarters in Brook House was a very large air raid shelter, where they turned it into a drying room because we had central heating and I must admit all the big boilers were under there,

27:00 and it was also a very good canoodling area too in the winter! But I think now - of course Lithgow Hospital, they've got a new hospital there now and about eight years ago I went back to Lithgow for a nurse's reunion. I hadn't been back for about 30 years and it was just like - seeing some of the girls, who a lot of them were junior to me when I was at Lithgow, it was just like

27:30 yesterday, a wonderful time was had by us all.

**How many girls were training with you?**

We only had - there was only two of us in my group. Most of the groups had four or five. I think this is where the training was very good because compared with 30 or 40 in the city hospitals going through all at once, we were sort of -

28:00 I guess we had special training. The lass I went through with, Gay Tweedy her name was, she married and had a family, and lives in Newcastle now but we all keep in touch, which is wonderful.

**You mentioned the matron. Would you be able to tell me who that was and what you know about her?**

Yes the matron was Matron Doris Ashurst, her name was and

28:30 she had trained at Lithgow. She was a Lithgow girl. She went away and did her midwifery etcetera, came back, and I'm not sure how long she worked there but then she became the matron, and she was a very straight lady, very tall, straight, and of course in those days our uniforms used to be starched, and I often used to think that she never sat down because her uniform was

29:00 just the same when she came on as when she went off, as I said before, very strict but she taught us a lot on respect. In a sense she taught us to control ourselves in moments of - I mean when a car accident would come in and you discovered it was one of your best friends, naturally you get a bit

29:30 cut up. That happened to me once and matron just said, "Make up your mind whether you want to continue nursing or - " She made us a little bit tough but I realised later that that was for good really, to control our emotions, that's the word I was trying to find. I'd say she would have been matron for about 20 years and

30:00 I think while I was at Condobolin actually, matron passed away, and I really couldn't say whom the next matron was.

**You mentioned before that it was difficult to work at Lithgow, having grown up there and knowing the people that were coming in. Could you explain some of those episodes that actually happened to you?**

I can recall a friend I played hockey with and went to school with, came into the hospital,

30:30 and she was very ill. She had cancer and strangely enough she had applied to join the air force and she didn't realise that she had cancer. She was very badly burned from the radiotherapy in those days and she often used to say, "I can't understand why the air force haven't answered." And it was very sad.

31:00 We had her for about six months, very terminally ill and that was very sad in one way, and then in the

other it was a relief when she did pass away. I saw quite a lot of my school friends and school friends' parents die in the hospital, and it was very hard when you know

31:30 people. I mean it's hard enough when you don't know them but when you're really involved with people and children, it does make things pretty hard to cope with but I guess after many years - you never get over that sort of thing. Even now, I do a lot of RSL [Returned and Services League] funerals

32:00 and even then if I don't know the person, I still get very emotional about it.

**You were obviously quite young, you were 16 when you go into a nursing environment, how difficult was it for you to adjust to the regime of shift work and so forth?**

I really didn't find it that difficult. I don't know why.

32:30 Most people hated night duty. I loved night duty. I guess to begin with you're more frightened that you'll do something wrong. I remember when I first went into the operating theatre I was absolutely petrified because everything you sort of looked at, you got screamed at, "Don't touch! Don't touch!" When I look back things I did touch -

33:00 when I think back now, you just did it because you really were petrified. They really made you feel very frightened, even if you sort of looked at someone you'd make them un-sterile but you soon overcame that and I guess you treated the juniors coming in just as bad, but it certainly taught us a lesson.

**What was your uniform like?**

33:30 It was blue and white striped, very hard type material frock style with a very starched apron, which came down, and over, which was very handy to put things in the bib, as we used to call it, like your cigarettes, and all that sort of stuff. We wore a little cap on our head. We had

34:00 to have seams in our stockings and they had to be straight, so to overcome that we used to draw a seam on our legs, and always have very highly polished shoes. I think the uniform was something that you got very used to, working-wise I mean.

**Could you run me through what your daily routine was like as a student nurse?**

If you were on a day shift,

34:30 which was usually six till three, we used to be so busy - I can remember I used to go on about five o'clock in the morning. Of course in those days we didn't get overtime and there's no way you could go, and just say to the sister, "I'm going to breakfast." You ate when you could, when the wards weren't busy. We only used to have one sister and usually

35:00 three nurses training, which must have been pretty hard on the sister, busy, busy most of the time. Of course we learnt all the basic styles of nursing; how to make beds and that's something you never forget, how to cover up things you knew the matron wouldn't like when she came around. She wouldn't even enter the ward

35:30 if there was something out of line. Of course then the sister would wear that and then of course we'd all wear that too. Yes, we worked pretty hard and we only used to go out - on Saturday night was the only night, and we'd all go to the local dance, and often the nurses would be on one side of the hall, and the schoolteachers would be on the other. Never the twain shall

36:00 meet! My sister was a schoolteacher. It was pretty hard, hard work but we all enjoyed it. We had lots of fun and the comradeship that I made during my training has never left.

**You mentioned the dances and you also mentioned the canoodling in the drying room. What kinds of social outlets were there for young nurses?**

Well really there was only

36:30 the dance on Saturday night and the pictures. If we were off duty we'd go on a Wednesday, always in a group. The dances - of course you didn't go to the hotels. That just wasn't on in those days. We had a piano in the quarters. There was no men allowed in the quarters of course,

37:00 that was in the quarters! We had a piano. We had radiograms and those sorts of things. We kept ourselves amused most of the time.

**What were the dances like?**

Oh wonderful! I love ballroom dancing. The trouble is these days it's very hard to find someone that knows how to do it.

37:30 The dances were absolutely great. As I said, we'd all go in a bunch and usually that song - I always think of my training, Save The Last Dance For Me. Whoever you danced with on the last dance, you'd go home with as a rule, if they had a car! Otherwise it used to be a taxi or we'd walk.

**What were the kinds of things you were wearing**

38:00 **to these dances?**

Oh golly! I'd say - I'm just trying to think, probably skirts and twin sets I think, when I think back, yes, certainly not slacks because slacks were a 'no no' in those days with us. Yes, it would have been skirts and a jumper or whatever.

**What kind of**

38:30 **music was it that was being played?**

It was the old time type music. You'd have naturally the Barn Dance and the Gypsy Tap, and the waltzes, good music yes, and I still love all that music. I've got it all over there.

**What kind of discipline was there in the nurse's home?**

It was strict yes. We had to be in - during the week we had to be in

39:00 by nine o'clock. All lights had to be out by midnight. The night sister would come and check every room. As I said, we had to have only so many items on our dressing tables. We made our own beds. We did all our own cleaning in the room. There was certainly no alcohol in the quarters.

39:30 Matron used to check the quarters every day except the weekends. If you were in your room you had to stand outside at attention, a bit like the military really but once again, it taught us how to survive I think.

**Was the discipline similar when you went to St Margaret's?**

Yes it was, although

40:00 we got away with a bit at St Margaret's because we were registered nurses. Although we were classed as a nurse down there and our quarters were very old, very old, so we did get away with a little bit there but the nuns still used to come around, and check our rooms. We were supposed to be in by a certain time and things like.

**How different was the work at St Margaret's?**

Oh very different.

40:30 I'd never really had much to do with little babies, children six months and up I guess but never little tiny tots. To start with it was a bit frightening because we used to have 40 babies in our nursery. Six floors we had and we used to work in blocks, as they called it. You'd be on one floor for two months and

41:00 then you'd rotate to other floors. I always seemed to cop Ward Two, which was the public ward and it was always so busy, and we used to have all these babies, and at night the babies weren't to cry. Sister Anne would ring from the convent and you'd be in big trouble if a baby cried, so we used to devise all these dreadful things like -

41:30 buy all these dummies, and put them in condensed milk. I often think, "The mothers! If they'd known!" They used to stay in at St Margaret's for 14 days, which was good for the mother but the little babies and they seemed to get to know the staff. I can remember I had one little Italian baby and I think he had the biggest lungs. I often wonder if he'd grow up to be an opera singer, and the minute I'd walk into the

42:00 nursery he starts [screaming].

## Tape 2

00:31 **Pat I just wanted to ask you, while you were at school, at high school in Lithgow, what sort of opportunities were there for women when they left school?**

I think in those days you more or less had your mind made up what you were going to do. They didn't pressure you. You weren't pressured on doing this or that, or the other. You were left to decide for yourself.

01:00 I think back in those days everything was pretty equal. Being a small town because Lithgow is a city now but it wasn't then the opportunities were there. We were very lucky really because the opportunities were there for the taking and most people from my era got into good jobs, and careers.

01:30 You never had a problem finding a job back then.

**What sorts of jobs were there for people in Lithgow?**

Well, it was quite a big - there was the coalmines. There were several coalmines in Lithgow. Then we had the small arms factory. Then we had the big Berlei factory, the ones that made bras and corsets, that type of thing. Then we had the

02:00 woollen mills, which used to make blankets and you know the kilts, lovely kilts. Oh there was a lot of industry in Lithgow. Going just out of Lithgow there was Wallerawang, which had a big power station. There was a lot, a lot of industry around, plus there were quite a lot of farms around the place.

**So it was a prosperous time?**

It was,

02:30 yes.

**Do you remember if the trade union movement or the Communist Party had any kind of presence while you were training?**

Very much so. The Communist Party - Lithgow is in - well it probably still is. I don't know but it was in a Communist belt. I had a good school friend, whose father was a Communist. I mean to me in those days that meant nothing, absolutely nothing but that came back to me when I joined

03:00 the air force, which I'll relate to you later and the trade union, well we had the Trades Hall. It was called the Trades Hall and there was a picture theatre there, and I guess that was where they had all their meetings, the union people because you always find unions in a big way where there's coalmines, and it was pretty strong.

**How did your father feel about the unions and the coalmines?**

03:30 My father was a pretty placid man, very honest. I guess there were things that he was against, like strikes of course and Dad never - he didn't go along with them having strikes but if they went out, they'd all have to go out because you've heard of scabs, and life can be made pretty miserable. I can't recall them having that many strikes. They could have had them.

04:00 You know, I wasn't particularly interested in that at the time.

**Can you explain what the Communist belt was and what that meant?**

Well, when I applied to join the air force the routine is that they write to you and say you haven't been accepted but you have to go in front of an interview board, which I did up in Sydney, all big time it was. However, I didn't hear from

04:30 them for ages and then they contacted me, and asked me to come back for another board, and I just thought this was a routine type thing. However, I learnt later that because I'd lived in Lithgow and it was a Communist belt, when I was about 16, before I left school I went on a holiday with my friend, whose father

05:00 was the Communist, and somehow they knew that. Then I went to Condobolin, where there was also another Communist belt and then it was incredible really, unbeknownst to me there was a Communist link, and my mother, her maiden name was Hoffman,

05:30 which is German. Mum was German descent and of course that all came into account as well but I had a thorough security check, I guess you'd call it these days. They even went to my father's bank manager and wanted know - I don't know what they thought I was going to do but that's how it came up. I've since learned - I've seen documentaries about the

06:00 Communist Party in Lithgow and the Trades Hall.

**So what sort of activities did, say your friend's father participate in, in a small town?**

I really couldn't answer that. As I said, I really wasn't interested. I didn't know this really until I joined the air force.

**How did people in the town feel about Communists, do you think?**

Put it

06:30 this way, my parents were very strict with what we did and where we went but they had no qualms about me going on holiday with - I won't mention the person's name, but they had no qualms about me going on holidays with them because Dad said he was a good, honest man, pity he was a Communist.

**You mentioned that you'd always been attracted to the armed forces. Can you remember**

07:00 **what particular aspects of that interested you as a child?**

In the old Women's Weeklys, my grandmother used to buy them and they always had a photo of a female in the armed forces. I used to dream and think, "Oh wow, this would be great." And when I was doing my training, actually my friend Cathy Prior and I, took ourselves off to Sydney

07:30 to have - we decided that we'd join one of the armed forces. So we went down to have an interview and of course we were in about our third year of nursing, and the guy that interviewed us just told us to get back where we came from, and finish our training, and I'm grateful he did that! So I sort of always wanted to - I don't know. It might have been the uniform



08:00 that attracted me and of course I used to read a lot too, and I had read a lot about Nancy Wake, who in later years I met, and I still have a great admiration for that woman. I think to begin with it was a big dream and here I am, been there and done it!

**Did the WRAAF [Women's Royal Australian Air Force] have a big role in Lithgow during the Second World War? [break in interview]**

08:30 Not that I can recall, no. I can't recall ever seeing anyone, any female in uniform. Certainly I saw the male species in uniform around the place and my eldest brother was in National Service

09:00 but that's about the extent of evidence of the military in Lithgow.

**While you were doing your initial training at Lithgow Hospital what were you paid as a trainee nurse?**

Oh heck, very little! I honestly can't remember but perhaps if I could relate to something. My first year of nursing, my first

09:30 pay, I put a lay-by on a bible. I'd never had a bible of my own and it was this beaut leather bible with a zip on it, it zipped right around, and it took me 12 months before I could get the bible. So we were paid very little but our board was free board and meals. All that was free and our

10:00 uniforms used to be done for us, so really when I think back, we really didn't need that much money.

**Had you had a religious upbringing?**

Yes. My mother was a very religious person. I guess when we were growing up it was pushed onto us a little bit. We always had to go to Sunday School and to church, which was

10:30 quite a few miles away, and we had to walk, things like that. For a couple of years I sort of gave it a miss but then I realised that I had a couple of experiences while I was in the service and I realised that you need something, something a little bit stronger than just hope or good luck I could say.

11:00 I have faith, a very strong faith. I don't go to church but I still have my faith and I guess I'm a believer.

**How did the doctors treat the trainee nurses at Lithgow Hospital?**

When I think back and from what I've seen in other places, very well. I guess in a way they -

11:30 most of the doctors knew us as we grew up and they were just an extended family I think. Most of the doctors were very good.

**Where would the doctors have trained?**

Oh heavens! I should imagine Sydney. We had a couple that had trained in London. We had a Japanese Australian,

12:00 however a lot of the men wouldn't let him attend to them strangely enough. Well, it's not strange when you think about it, '59 is still the aftermath of World War II but this particular doctor was a wonderful surgeon and a very good doctor, and he was really more Australian than a lot of other people, but he looked very Japanese.

12:30 I think at the time the men just wouldn't - mainly returned men, wouldn't have anything to do with him. We had surgeons, very good surgeons and of course your family doctor was like a big friend. Of course in those days they visited homes. You didn't have to go - on the odd occasion you'd have to go to the doctor but if you were really

13:00 ill at home they'd come to the home, in the good old days.

**How did the Japanese Australian doctor react to men who would refuse - ?**

I think probably with him growing up, he would have been growing up during World War II. I think he just sort of - I guess it probably would have hurt him a lot but over the years - in fact he's still there,

13:30 still in Lithgow. I'd say he's probably retired now but I guess he had his moments, but he hung out and he was an excellent doctor.

**What were the main sorts of operating procedures that were conducted?**

Oh heavens! We did most major surgery. Of course back in those days you didn't have heart surgery. Not many people would go to another hospital to have surgery. They'd have it all done at Lithgow.

14:00 Being situated where we were, we did get a lot of bad car accidents from the Blue Mountains. I can recall a bus going over going up to Jenolan Caves, a tourist bus and they were all brought in to Lithgow, and most survived because you didn't have helicopters, and things

14:30 like that in those days. So yes, we did most of the major surgery.

**What was your graduation ceremony like?**

Oh very nice, very pleasant, of course there was only two of us graduating. It was a small graduation but very, very informal, very friendly and I can remember they had a chap

- 15:00 there, who played the piano, and sang - what's that song, Portrait of Your Life. I've never forgotten that and I often wonder why he sang that song but no, it was wonderful, yes.

**What were you presented with?**

Both of us were presented with a beautiful Raleigh tray that I still use, which is out there, a silver tray. All graduates

- 15:30 got that from Lithgow and another thing, they had a cake, and two little dolls dressed as nursing sister on the cake. Mum has my little one. Yes, so it was very nice.

**How did your uniform change once you graduated?**

Well, at last we got rid of our bib, which we called and we went into a white uniform, white shoes, and veil, which

- 16:00 I loved!

**Was it common that women would go on to midwifery once they finished nursing?**

Back in those days, yes it was, because a lot of the girls went outback, where midwifery was essential. You had to have midwifery. I never intended to do midwifery but two of my friends were going and they said, "You might as well come along." So I did and I was very grateful

- 16:30 I did that.

**When you graduated what were your plans?**

From midwifery?

**When you graduated from Lithgow Hospital what did you want to do?**

Well, naturally I still had it in my mind to join the services but I wanted to get - I realised then. I had matured a bit and I realised that I needed experience.

- 17:00 I did midwifery and then I went out to Condobolin, where I really - the experience out there was wonderful. Of course with midwifery, I would never have survived if I hadn't done my midwifery out there.

**How did you get placed at St Margaret's? What was the process?**

If I recall I think we wrote. There were three of us and once again Cathy Prior,

- 17:30 Gloria Bolt, the three of us went down. I was accepted. I don't know really why because it was very strict. You had to be a Catholic to train there. Anyhow I was accepted. Midwifery is very different to general training because you have the one - the mother and the baby
- 18:00 are so close, and you have them so long, 14 days. I mean now you're in and you're home tomorrow but Sister Anne insisted they always - of course being Catholics they had lots of children, and she reckoned that they really needed that rest, which was pretty right I guess.

**Had you experienced much division between Catholics and Protestants in Lithgow?**

Oh heavens

- 18:30 yes! Naturally we went to a public school, non-Catholic. A lot of my friends were Catholics but there was a terrible bigotry, even with my parents. I can recall when I first started going, the first thing Dad would say, "What religion is he?" Unfortunately for me, it was always a Catholic and there was just this terrible
- 19:00 bigotry, and I think that's why now or even then, most of my friends were Catholics because I think the kids just didn't want that bigotry but it was there. It was there with the adults and I mean there's no way a Catholic could go into another church or vice versa really. In Lithgow the Catholic Church, opposite the Catholic Church was the
- 19:30 Masonic Hall. They were very bigoted against that and the saying always went, the Masons used to say, "Don't park your car in front of the church or it will get raffled." Thank heavens now that's all changed.

**Were the Masons an important part of Lithgow?**

Yes they were. Yes my grandfather was a Mason and my grandmother was in

- 20:00 the Star of the Sea Chapel, they called it, and I can always recall seeing my grandfather in all his aprons, and beautiful, absolutely beautiful - I never understood it until later but it did. It did have a big

following in Lithgow.

**Before you went down to St Margaret's had you spent much time in Sydney?**

No, very little, a day here, a day there. When we were small we used to go to

20:30 Manly for Christmas. I really can't recall that because all Dad had was a motorbike and sidecar but no, I hadn't been in the city, only a day here, and a day there.

**So how did you travel down to Sydney from Lithgow?**

By train but then one of our friends got a car – a little old bomb – and I even used to go shopping in this car in Sydney, heavens above! I mean,

21:00 you couldn't do it today.

**Where would you go shopping?**

Oh to David Jones and you just parked your car. Of course it certainly wasn't as busy as it is now. We used to walk a lot of places. Around St Margaret's, which was in Darlinghurst was a real red light area. I can recall right along – and I often have a giggle now

21:30 when I see these semi-detached homes in Darlinghurst selling for all this money, and they used to be in the red light area. There was a hotel on the corner of Oxford Street and it wouldn't matter if we had a hessian bag on, these old guys would always say, "G'day nurse!" How they knew, I'll never know!

**Were the women training at the hospital warned about the red light area?**

22:00 You mean us? Well, we weren't warned but there were a lot of places off limits around the area. We certainly weren't warned. I mean you wouldn't even say 'red light area' on the premises at St Margaret's, but you just didn't take any notice after a while.

**Can you remember**

22:30 **what the off limit parts of the area were?**

Yes I can. There was a hotel directly opposite St Margaret's and that's where a lot of the seamen used to come for their liberties, they used to call them in those days, and we were banned from that area. However, I can remember the year I was at St Margaret's was the first year they had student doctors and it was always a rush. You had to have so many deliveries

23:00 before you did your finals and we used to barter because when the doctors came we had to really barter, and try to get our deliveries. So we'd have deals with the student doctors. They could deliver the baby, we'd clean up the mess but they had – you see, down there we were paid once a month and I think we used to get nine pounds. So by the last three weeks of the

23:30 month you would be flat broke, so often we used to go down, and pawn our watches just to get a bit of money. Then when the students came, we used to have bets with them and I remember once I got a – it was just like a little bag, a plastic bag type thing but it was for beer cans, and this hotel across the road, I used to go over to the side door, and just put my bag in, and he'd fill it up, and I'd pay him of course.

24:00 However, if I'd ever been caught I would have been in big trouble but it was exciting!

**What sort of things did you do for fun in Sydney?**

We used to go to – that was the days when they had the real night clubs and I guess most of us had a male friend, and we used to go to the night clubs, and certainly nowhere where we had to pay because we just couldn't afford it.

24:30 We'd go to the beach, make up our own fun once again. Yes, there was a lot to do really that you could do for nothing.

**How would you meet your male friends?**

Well, mainly I had a friend who was from Lithgow and so did Cathy and Gloria. They used to come down. There wasn't really anywhere in Sydney where we could meet

25:00 anybody and of course none of us were interested in the student doctors because they were so immature!

**To what point was Sydney experiencing the swinging sixties culture at that time?**

I think one of my big experiences was I was down there when the Beatles came to Australia.

25:30 I wasn't particularly interested in them but we did go to see them and that's about the only – see they didn't have the dances. They didn't have the dances in the hotels in those days and you had to go to a show. One place we did go quite a bit and that was the Tivoli, where they had different shows, for instance the Black and White Minstrels, which I must have seen about 20 times,

26:00 which were excellent. I forgot about the Tivoli. Yes that was a good place to go.

**I realise you were working in a Catholic Hospital but to what extent were you aware of women's issues and the advent of contraception?**

Well, naturally contraception was a bad word. You never used that. I saw through Sister Anne,

26:30 she really protected the women and on several occasions, and I believe on one occasion she was confronted with a husband. He was demanding his wife go home and she was confronted, and he had a rifle, and I mean she was only about four foot. You saw some very - well I used to think very sad cases. I also saw the unmarried mothers go through

27:00 and have their children taken away from them, which was very sad. That always stuck in my mind, especially in the last few years where it has been such a big issue. Those girls used to be with us practically about the last four or five months of their pregnancy and I often used to wonder how they got on when they went back to their - because in those days they never stayed in their

27:30 home town. Yes it was an eye opener for me because those sorts of things never happened in Lithgow, that I knew of happened in Lithgow.

**Were you interested in international news or politics at the time?**

I don't think - no I wasn't, no, certainly not when I was at St Margaret's. I think I sort of started to become interested in

28:00 those types of things when I went out west because that's the first time I encountered pickets out at Condobolin. I thought, "What's this all about?" And that was the indigenous people, because there was a very large population in Condobolin. We had quite a lot of indigenous people working at our hospital and that's when I thought, "Well

28:30 there's more about life than what I've been through." So I became interested in world politics and world news more than anything, yes.

**What was the nature of that first picket that you came across?**

Would you believe - you've probably heard of Charlie Perkins? I think that would have been his first time he ever picketed ['Freedom Rides'], made a picket and

29:00 I'm trying to recall what it was about. It was around the hospital. It couldn't have been about the staff because as I said, we had a lot of indigenous people working on the staff. I think it was just a picket for the sake of having a picket in those days.

**What did the picket actually look like and how many people would have been involved?**

There would have been say about 40, a little bit confronting I guess but once again, in a small place

29:30 you knew most of them because most of their children would be in and out of hospital, beautiful little souls they were! You really got to know the indigenous people.

**What sorts of indigenous health issues were there at that time?**

Very much similar to what there is now sadly, although I think probably a little bit worse in those days. Although, we had a mission and what we called

30:00 a Murri [OK] [?] UNCLEAR] out there. The mission was built up. You know, there was homes built there but the Murri was just where they had their lean-to's and strangely enough there was a lot of - what's the word - difference or bigotry between the Murri and the mission. The ones in the mission thought they were better than the ones in the Murri, which was sad because

30:30 really they were all the same of course. Yes but I had some very good friends amongst the indigenous people in Condobolin.

**Who was in charge or who controlled indigenous health in Condobolin at that time?**

In those days it was just called the Health Department. They didn't have things like the - what they have now - my mind's gone blank.

31:00 they would have just been controlled by the Health Department, yes.

**How did the hospital at Condobolin compare to the hospital at Lithgow?**

It was much smaller and we'd just had a new maternity unit built. Of course Condobolin gets very, very hot. We had our own little x-ray department. Our operating theatre was very

31:30 suspect I suppose because it only had gauze doors in between and came out into the corridor. However, we did a fair bit of major surgery there. I recall once we were having a visit from Sir Roden Cutler [NSW Governor] and at this stage I was the matron of the hospital. We were all that excited he was coming and we thought he'd come in through the nice new part. So when his

32:00 aid arrived, he said, "Blah, blah." I said, "We'd like him to come through - ?" "Oh!" He said, "He can't go through there. He's got a wooden leg!" Well that really freaked me out! One, I didn't know that he'd had his leg amputated but it just freaked me out and really put me right off for the day, and when Sir Roden Cutler arrived, he was a wonderful man, absolutely. When I introduced the staff my mind just

32:30 blanked out and I couldn't remember any of their names! So I was calling them Smith and Jones!

**Was he governor at the time?**

Yes, wonderful man!

**What impression did he leave on you in terms of being a wonderful man?**

Well, they way he reacted to some of the patients. A couple of the old gentlemen wouldn't have

33:00 a bar of him for some unknown reason. I don't know. He was a very gentle giant, Sir Roden Cutler, and I think he could probably adapt to anybody. He had a good answer. He was very gentle. I mean over the years I've come across quite a few of those types of people, who have in some cases looked down on people but he was

33:30 one of the mob, a wonderful man. I have a lot of respect for him.

**What was the reason for his visit to the hospital?**

Actually he opened the maternity unit, the new maternity unit, yes.

**Can you recall when you first became aware of the conflict in Vietnam?**

Yes when I was in Condobolin. I think something came out in one of the papers

34:00 because up in Condobolin there certainly wasn't any demonstrations or anything like that. Of course that was when I was starting to wake up to what was going on around me in the world and I did, I read a lot about it. I guess that's how I became involved to begin with.

**What were your initial impressions or interpretation**

34:30 **of what was going on when you first started reading?**

One thing I couldn't understand, why the people were so anti, probably because when the Second World War was on I wasn't old enough to know what it was all about but I couldn't understand how people were being so anti against the soldiers that were going over there.

35:00 I guess it's a bit hard to describe my feelings at that time.

**You said that you didn't understand how people were anti. What evidence was there to you that people were anti?**

Well, only from the television and what was in the papers. As I said, no demonstrations were held up in Condobolin.

**Can you describe what the television coverage was like of**

35:30 **the war while you were in Condobolin?**

Well, that was the first war that they could actually put on television and I can remember thinking it shouldn't happen. I really feel it shouldn't happen because if a mother is sitting there watching these atrocities you could say, it must be just terrible. Then that's when I really got the feeling that -

36:00 you know, who is looking after these guys? That's when I really decided that I should do something about that.

**Since you first went down to join the services when you were in training, what thoughts had you had about it since then?**

I naturally went back and finished off what I was doing but then I think I decided that I wanted that experience because I guess deep down, I knew that

36:30 if I did go over there, there would be times when I'd need experience. Nursing is a funny thing, if you're in a hospital and everything is there, it's a bit different but I knew that the type of nursing I'd be going in to, where you'd really have to have your head on your shoulders, and be able to think straight.

**What sort of contact**

37:00 **did you have in Condobolin with people who had enlisted?**

None, absolutely none. In fact I didn't have any contact with anyone that had been involved in the Vietnam War at that stage.

**So how long were you working at Condobolin before you enlisted?**

Three years I was at Condobolin and as I said earlier, I

- 37:30 think I said about the administrator, who went over with the surgical team, that's when I decided to apply to the forces. I really wasn't in a big hurry and I'm glad I wasn't because I might have made a wrong decision. I just finished my time there and I had three months at home, and that's when I went into the service.

**Can you**

- 38:00 **explain exactly what the application and enlistment process was, where you went and what you had to fill in?**

The application? It covered all your schooling, what schooling, what experience, where you trained, where you lived, members of your family, all that type of thing. If I recall I think it had if you had a bank account. Of course you had to have a medical

- 38:30 and I think you had to have a photograph, that's right, send a photograph in. I scratched around and found the prettiest one I could! That was sent off and I think it was about a month before I heard, and then the interview started. I had to go up to Sydney for the interview and after the second interview, I received a telegram to say that I was probationally commissioned,

- 39:00 which meant you were going in as an officer for a period of 12 months and if I accepted I was to be up at Central Station at such and such a time, and I went down to Melbourne in the train, and it was Melbourne Cup Day, I remember that, the day I joined.

**How did your family feel about you joining the forces?**

I must admit Mum and Dad really didn't have that much to say. I think if I'd

- 39:30 been a guy, it would have been very different. I know my mother was very anxious that my eldest brother - and I have the younger brother Peter, his name was put in the thing but he wasn't called up for service. Mum was very anxious that they would have to go over there but I think when I said I was going over, I don't think it really

- 40:00 sunk in to Mum and Dad at the time.

**Was there a sense that a woman couldn't be on the frontline?**

Oh yes definitely, yes. It just wasn't sort of on in those days but nurses were different, very different. I don't know why but they seemed to - when they say women can't be on the front line, well a lot of the nurses were on the frontline.

- 40:30 It's just sort of taken for granted that they're different or something. I really don't know but I mean a nurse - I certainly flew into all sorts of places and the American girls were certainly on the frontline, and our Australian army nurses were too.

## Tape 3

- 00:33 **Could you explain the first day after you enlisted where you actually had to go?**

Well, I went down by train to Melbourne. I was met at the station by an air force troop [rank: aircraftsman], I guess he was, driven back to Laverton and of course I had never - I had been on Richmond.

- 01:00 I went to Richmond before I went in just to have a look around. I was taken down to the quarters and greeted by one of the nursing sisters, and explained that I was only - on entry I was a section officer [female lowest rank]. That's like a pilot officer [male rank]. In those days the women's ranks were different to the men. The quarters were very nice

- 01:30 on the base and then I was taken over to the officers' mess, which I was just mind boggled because it was absolutely beautiful. The officers' messes were just beautiful, all wooden panelling and very elite, and absolutely lovely. My first impressions were, "Oh wow, this is pretty good!" The next day

- 02:00 of course I was taken down to what they call L Group to be measured up for all my uniform. In the meantime we wore - before we got our uniform, we wore our civilian nurses' gear. At first it seemed very strange because there was a lot of us and there was really very little to do, because they had their staff at 6 [RAAF] Hospital,

- 02:30 and we were sort of extras. It must have been - well I discovered later on in my service career that it was pretty - you'd really grown when you had a lot of recruits as we called them, coming in. We had initial training at 6 RAAF Hospital and then we went across to Point Cook, which is in Melbourne, Victoria, and that's where we did our officers training course. That's where we learned -

03:00 see when we joined the air force you become an officer first and nursing was your secondary duty. That's where we learned to march, salute, all those sort of roles that you had to carry out later on. At the beginning the nurses weren't that much involved in marching and things like that.

03:30 We learned to shoot but we were always told we were non-combatant and we would never carry arms, however we had to learn how to use one, and fire drill, and all those basic things of being an officer, how to write memos,

04:00 and minutes, and all that type of thing.

**The first base that you went to I just wanted to clarify, what was the name of that base?**

6 RAAF Hospital Laverton.

**And how long were you there for?**

I joined in November '68. I was at Laverton until February '69 and I was posted up to

04:30 3 RAAF Hospital in Richmond, which was the hospital where all the aero-medical evacuation aircraft would come into, Richmond, very busy hospital.

**The training you did in those initial months, were you working in the hospital at that time?**

At Laverton yes, we were. When I went to Richmond I went to a unit called MOSU, which was the Medical Operation Support Unit

05:00 and that's where we learned how to nurse in an aircraft. We had - I think it was six weeks training there. We learned all about the aircraft, different types of aircraft, different types of patients that we would carry, how to nurse them in the air, all the equipment. It was pretty heavy training. We used to go in the

05:30 decompression chambers, so we would know if the aircraft lost the decompression how it would feel and we would know it was going to happen, and all those types of things.

**How does it feel?**

Well, we'd go into the decompression chambers and they're like sort of the inside of an aircraft, and they just take out all the air.

06:00 So what they'd do, we'd go in there and we'd this special equipment on, and they'd slowly bring down the altitude, and you'd do things. You thought you were wonderful. It was in a little way like having a few too many glasses of champagne. Then they would give us a pad and paper, and we had to write down - I can't recall the correct

06:30 words but it was something about a brown fox jumped over something or other [referring to a phrase with all letters of the alphabet], and we had to write that, and you wrote it, and you really thought you wrote it but after when they brought us out of it, you would have had all crosses or squiggles but the reason for doing that was if you were in an aircraft, and the first sign - decompression can happen, and you don't realise unless you're aware of what's

07:00 going to happen. You get light headed and you start to feel pretty good, so by knowing that you had time to get some oxygen, which we had supplies around the aircraft. So it was a very important aspect of our training.

**You mentioned also that you had to learn procedures of nursing in an aircraft. Could you give me some detail on what differences there were?**

Yes. Of course

07:30 when we had the aircraft set up it was just like a ward in a hospital, except in the hospital you nurse flat down on the ground but in the aircraft we were five tiers up. So to start with you had to be pretty agile and you couldn't take a patient, say with a plaster of Paris, if they had plaster on their leg. We always used to have to bi-valve

08:00 it. That means we had to cut it, so if we had an emergency we could just - because you couldn't get a patient out of the exits if they had a plaster on and if you were going into the sea, well the patient wouldn't have lasted long with a plaster. Also you had to learn eye injuries because with the altitude, blood

08:30 vessels burst and things like that. Anyone that has had abdominal surgery you had to be very careful because with the altitude, once again you could get swelling and go into big problems. The IVs, the intravenous therapies, you had to be aware that if you didn't turn them off on takeoff, that everything would run out of it. There were a lot of things

09:00 that were different to nursing on the ground. Say with oxygen, you had to know if you were going to take a patient somewhere, how much oxygen they would need. We couldn't load up 20 oxygen cylinders because we always had to think of weight. So we used to have to work out, "Will we get from A to B with so much oxygen?" Yes it was a very different type of nursing,

09:30 nursing in the air.

**Can you remember the first time you were at Richmond and you actually went up in the air with a patient?**

Yes. Well to start with we used to do training flight on MOSU, from MOSU. The aircraft would be set up or we'd set it up and then we'd have live dummy patients, if I could say, and they would -

10:00 we'd have re-enactments and they'd act doing something or other, and we used to use a lot of mucilage, which they used on all these gaudy movies that they have, where you see someone with a leg off etcetera , etcetera . Some of us became quite good at putting mucilage on and the training was pretty realistic, and very intense.

10:30 Things you learnt there you really never forgot.

**What kind of scenarios were they setting up?**

We always had a psychiatric patient, who you know you'd think, "Oh gee I'm doing well here," and some guy would leap out of litter, and run amuck around the aircraft. We were being examined on all this as we did it.

11:00 They would go down to a low altitude without our knowledge, so we would know exactly how we'd feel when that happened. Our main aircraft was the Hercules [C 130 aircraft] of course, which the only toilet which was onboard was right at the back and you had to pull it down like this, and hope to God that you didn't go into a bumpy area or you'd come off the loo! It had a

11:30 screen, a little screen around it. Later on when you had real patients, that was bit difficult because you'd have all these patients and if you wanted to go to the loo - and of course the crew, if they got wind that one of the sisters was going to the loo, you would get turbulence! And we all knew that! So we had a lot to remember

12:00 and learn about the aircraft.

**I might talk to you about the base at Richmond. What were your living quarters like there?**

Oh very nice yes. Once again we all had single rooms. Richmond was a beautiful base. Where we were we had a big lake, which went around the back of it with swans and what have you on.

12:30 Of course we had our Officers Mess there. The hospital was in walking distance. Everything was on the base. The quarters were very nice. Of course back in those days, everything was done for you. You'd be woken up with coffee or orange juice, or whatever, pretty spoilt really

13:00 when I think back but very nice quarters.

**How many nurses were working at the hospital?**

At Richmond we had about 19 and it was a very busy hospital because we had the routine - Richmond was one of our largest bases. We used to have our normal surgery days and all types of surgery they did

13:30 there. The civilians specialists used to come up to Richmond and then once a week we'd get the medivacs [medical evacuations] coming down from Vietnam, which was very hectic. The aim of the game was to get the boys home to Australia and home to somewhere close to their hometown. So they'd come into Richmond,

14:00 be assessed and then they would be ferried out to different places. The majority of the boys were army, so they would go by - they had big ambulance buses, which would travel to the army units around Sydney, where they'd be flown out to different areas. Yes it was very busy. When we went to Richmond I hadn't had that much experience n operating theatre.

14:30 I mean I could have done a little bit but every sister at Richmond was put through the operating theatre, so we all had that extra experience, just in case, if we went overseas. Yes it was good, very good.

**What kinds of injuries were coming in from Vietnam?**

We had a terrible lot of amputees coming through, the boys standing on

15:00 landmines mainly, terrible, very bad injuries and I think too, when they were wounded in Vietnam - there was only one good thing about Vietnam, and that was that they got them from A to B. If they were wounded they were in a medical facility within an hour, which was good and I would say that probably saved the lives of a lot,

15:30 a lot of our boys. Usually it was to an American unit, where they would be then flown down to Vung Tau, which was our First Field Hospital. That's where the Australian Army girls were. Then we would go up and get them from there, and bring them back to Malaysia.

**So the boys that were coming to Richmond, where were they coming from?**



They were coming

- 16:00 down from 4 RAAF Hospital. All our wounded went through 4 RAAF Hospital, which was in Malaya and they would have prior to that been in Vung Tau Hospital, First Field Hospital. Then we'd bring them down to Butterworth and then home to Australia.

**As a nurse at Richmond were you told**

- 16:30 **about what kinds of injuries to expect?**

Yes. Yes we were told because some types of injuries are nursed differently that we didn't see in civilian life, certainly mine injuries, I mean [land] mines – I don't mean down the coalmine, were very different

- 17:00 and very traumatic.

**What kind of challenge did that pose as a nurse?**

That was a very big challenge because on one hand you had to treat the injury and on the other hand you had to treat the person, and the majority of them were very traumatised.

- 17:30 Also in those days they didn't get a good reception coming back to Australia, which was very sad but it was a big, a very big challenge and one I think we met very well, most of the nursing sisters. Yes it was a big challenge.

**I understand there were protests**

- 18:00 **at Richmond at this stage?**

That's right.

**Can you tell me about what you remember of them?**

I think that's when I sort of really started noticing all these things because we were nursing the patients and then you'd drive out the gate, and there were these people protesting. On all bases all the cars, we had them marked saying RIC, 'R-I-C'. We had a little sticker on our car. We were told to remove those because if your car was down the street they'd

- 18:30 do damage to it. They were nasty protests and they only thing good about it was they couldn't get on the base but that was happening all around Australia at all the bases. It was a sad time I think.

**Can you remember what the protestors were saying or what placards they had?**

Oh yes, 'Murderers!'

- 19:00 and that type of placard. I can remember my mother had a go in with a lady, who had these placards. This was down in Wollongong and Mum was very upset about it, and people just did it. I mean when I think back I think they should have gone and got these people, and taken them in, and shown them some of the boys,

- 19:30 how they were traumatised. That was a big thing with Vietnam, was how they were treated when they came home from Vietnam.

**How often were the protestors outside the base?**

Quite often. They sort of had an idea when the aircraft were coming in and they would be there, same old group,

- 20:00 as we all recall, 'rent a group' [multi-issue protesters], which I think is very sad. They just didn't realise or understand and it's still – even today people still have a go but – ! They've got a few more things to have a go at now though.

**If you were driving out the gate and if**

- 20:30 **someone was being transported out the gate, what would happen at the gate?**

The SPs [Service Police] would be there. Our big bus ambulances were very large and we used to go across to – I can't even remember it now. However, they went very slow and naturally they had big red crosses. You knew what it was but the SPs were always there, just

- 21:00 in case because they certainly didn't want anything to happen to upset the patients.

**What was your knowledge of what was actually happening in the war at the time?**

Oh then? Quite a lot, quite a lot because we had a lot of the – the air force boys would be up and down, going backwards and forwards taking up goods, and we heard a lot about it, yes.

- 21:30 **So what were you hearing at this time?**

I guess we were a bit one sided. We were more or less interested in the medical side of things over

there, the hospitals. A lot of the guys didn't tell you that much. I guess most of the information we got was from the television, you know, how the war was going.

22:00 **What was your perception at the time of how the war was going?**

Well, I just wanted to be there and help these wounded soldiers.

**You mentioned earlier that you did actually go on flights with real patients instead of the mock up patients. Can you describe some of those first flights and where you were going?**

Yes I can. We also at Richmond – they

22:30 did what we called in those days 'Mercy Flights' and they'd be usually civilian people, and we'd go all over the place. Norfolk Island was one place that we often went to bring back a wounded person or a heart attack, or something like that. My first feelings – I was a bit astonished to think that here I am up

23:00 here with a patient, was a bit strange. Not only that, once again we had to always have in your mind that once you're up there, you can't go to the cupboard and get out a bag of intravenous fluid or something. You had to have everything with you. Usually if you were going to pick up – I did many flights into Queensland for

23:30 seriously ill patients that had to get to a large major hospital. We usually had a doctor with us and there'd be one sister, and one medical orderly, and a doctor.

**What kinds of planes were being used?**

We used mainly the Hercules, the Hercules aircraft, a beautiful aircraft. I still get cold shivers up my back when I see them,

24:00 absolutely beautiful aircraft. They could carry 74 litters. We could bring 74 patients and then you could have walking patients. In the beginning the only toilet facility we had was the one up the bag on the palate but later on we got what we called a comfort pallet [enclosed toilet], which had an actual – you could open the door

24:30 and go in, and have a bit of privacy, and we also had a comfort palate kitchen because we had to serve meals during the flight. But around Australia we had one special flight, which we used to do in a Caribou. The main aeroplanes were the Hercules, Caribou, and the Iroquois Helicopter. Later there was the Chinook Helicopter and of course the old Dakota [DC 3],

25:00 which on the odd occasion you would do a medevac in. One particular flight we used to do about once a week was called the Milk Run, where we would go all around out west and pick up mainly indigenous children, and bring them all back. We used to fly into Mascot and they'd be met there by civilian ambulances. Yes, they used to do that

25:30 a lot. I've had some very long, hairy Mercy Flights, as we called them. Often going to them sometimes would be 12 hours it would take to get there, so what we used to have in those days, we always played Scrabble. We had what we called Travel Scrabble, which I've still got but we used to

26:00 entertain ourselves, read and what have you because we knew we wouldn't have a minute to ourselves coming back. When we did those flights we would have worked all day on duty and then matron would come in, and say, "You've got to get on an aircraft at eight o'clock" that night, and you'd be away most of the night but you still had to do another shift the next day. It was pretty hard but I was young and

26:30 pretty adventurous! It really didn't affect us that much.

**Did you have a chance to sleep on the plane?**

Going up. The flights back from Vietnam – I'd prefer to go into that later if you don't mind but they were a 15 hour flight, which is a long time up in the air. With the Mercy Flights it would take a long time to get there but coming home

27:00 it seemed to – it depended how the patient was. If they were really very ill it used to take forever to get home and we used to go straight into Mascot [Airport] as a rule, if it was a civilian.

**How long were you at Richmond before you got sent to Malaysia?**

I was only at Richmond about four months and then I was posted up to Malaysia or Malaya it was in those days, to Butterworth,

27:30 which was on the mainland, and to Number 4 RAAF Hospital. That was a very large hospital right on the beach, beautiful spot. We had a large surgical unit there, an intensive care, two operating theatres. We had a big medical area. We had a children's ward.

28:00 We also used to nurse the Ghurkhas. You've heard of the lovely Ghurkhas because they were assigned in Butterworth and we also looked after the dependents, the wives, and the families of the airmen.

**How did you actually get up there to Butterworth?**

I flew up on a chartered aircraft, which was Qantas.

- 28:30 A whole group of people would go up on posting together. First Class the officers would go. We thought this was absolutely marvellous! We'd fly up and they used to go into Penang Island and then they'd bus us back in the big air force buses over to the mainland.

**Had you ever been to Asia before?**

No. I'd

- 29:00 never been out of Australia. I found it very strange. I found it very difficult to cope with the smell and the odours to start with, and the heat was very hot. Our quarters were beautiful there. We had very large rooms. Everything was in marble - lovely big airy
- 29:30 hospital and as I said, it was right on the beach, and we were separated. The main base was across the highway, which was a bit hairy to get across if you had to get across in an ambulance. I don't know whether you've been there? I think they're probably worse now! They're dreadful drivers and we didn't have a maternity unit at Butterworth. However there was Mindon Barracks,
- 30:00 which was run by the Royal Air Force situated over in Penang. So if we had any ladies, wives that were pregnant on the mainland, we used to have to rush them across by ambulance to Mindon Barracks, which was a bit of a deal because when I first went up there we were on curfew from eight PM till eight AM in the morning.
- 30:30 However once again, the ambulance could go across with one sister during the curfew, which was a bit hairy sometimes but you had to go across on the ferry and it was a bit dicey. I delivered a couple of babies going across there but Mindon Barracks was a beautiful British Army Hospital.

**Why was there the curfew?**

- 31:00 Because of the Communist Regime, which was up there. They just weren't sure where the Communists were at that time. See we were only four hours from the border into Thailand, so yes, that's why we were on curfew.

**When you first arrived what was the type of work that you were doing first up?**

Mainly surgical

- 31:30 nursing. I really liked surgical nursing. On the odd occasion I would go into a medical ward but mainly surgical. They would bring the wounded down to Butterworth and they'd be reassessed, and often operated on at 4 RAAF Hospital. So we were very busy there.

**Could you tell me what it is like when there are**

- 32:00 **wounded coming in, what you're told and what the arrangements are?**

Well, we used to know prior to them coming. Perhaps if I could go into that? Say I was told that there was a medevac due and I would be on the team to go up to Vung Tau, and collect them. So we used to go up. We'd leave Butterworth at four am in the morning

- 32:30 and fly up, which was four hours by aircraft to Vung Tau. We would know - they would send a signal giving us an estimate of how many patients and what was wrong with them etcetera, so we could have some equipment with us. We would then load the patients from Vung Tau Hospital, the First Field Hospital it was and that's where all our Australian army girls were.
- 33:00 We would load the patients on, fly them back to Butterworth and once again transport them. We had to go across this busy highway by ambulance bus, which went very slow. It was set up as same as the aircraft. You're litters were right up. Then they would be assessed through the surgical ward at 4 RAAF Hospital and sometimes
- 33:30 the operating theatres went day and night but it never seemed to - overtime never bothered anybody in those days. We had pretty heavy nursing with the wounded. Usually the sister that went up to pick them up at Vung Tau used to bring them home to Australia, which meant you brought them right through. You had a good follow
- 34:00 up. So they'd be, say in 4 RAAF Hospital for a day and a night, and usually if they were fit to fly we would set up the aircraft to come home to Australia, and we would leave at four PM in the afternoon, and often we wouldn't get in to Richmond until half past ten, eleven o'clock the next day, which was a very
- 34:30 long flight, and I can honestly say, and I'm very proud that we never lost one patient during the Vietnam conflict in the air, which is pretty good.

**Going back to when that first call comes through that there are wounded to be collected and to be evacuated, how did that actually come through?**

That would come through by signal. Now a signal is like say a fax. We didn't have faxes in those days

35:00 and they would send through – we had lists. They were all categorised, say VSIL, was a very seriously ill. You had categories like one, two, three, four. One was psychiatric. Two was ambulant, which means they were walking, walking wounded.

35:30 We often had boys back with malaria. That was a big thing up there. So we would have to assess that, get our equipment ready and go up, and collect them.

**How common was it for you to have psychiatric patients?**

Well not that common I guess. I think I had more psychiatric patients when I was based in Australia

36:00 from I guess post traumatic syndrome [post traumatic stress disorder]. It wasn't that many. We didn't have that many really.

**What kinds of things would you come across?**

You mean wounded?

**With psychiatric patients?**

Oh psychiatric? Well, oh dear – it's very hard to sort of explain. Strangely enough we had more

36:30 females in the time I was in the service, mainly over silly things or they'd be homesick, or things like that. It really wasn't a big thing.

**Would they talk about what had triggered what they were going through?**

Oh you mean the wounded, the soldiers? Oh yes some of them would. Some of them

37:00 would and some of them wouldn't. I mean at that time they really weren't traumatised. That came later. The way I see it, our boys were there one minute and back in Australia the next, there one day amongst it all, and then back in Australia. Whereas in World War II they all came home by ship and it took them

37:30 weeks, and they had a little bit of time to put their life back into perspective. I think that was a big problem with our boys. They came back too soon. I mean you can imagine being in a war zone and the next day walking down the street in Macksville for instance, how different it must have been for them,

38:00 plus the way they were treated.

**Were you aware of that at the time as a nurse? Did people talk about that culture shock of coming home?**

Yes, yes. I think when you're nursing these people and really being with them, and sort of being a mother because some of them were very young, we found that they would talk to a nurse

38:30 rather than talk to a doctor, because after all you've been with them on that flight, and on the flight down to Australia, and you're in very, very close proximity to them. Well, I certainly found and most of the girls found that the boys – and once they sort of talked, and once you said, "Look tomorrow you'll be home" –

39:00 Mum often came into it. They missed their mother so much and I think the nurse sort of edged in there a little bit to most of them, yes.

**Can you remember some of the specific cases that you dealt with?**

You mean war injuries?

39:30 I really can't pick out any special case because most of them were traumatised and had very bad wounds. I guess it's something you put behind you. Seeing someone that has been shot or especially been blown up by a mine, is just so tragic and often

40:00 these things – because they booby trapped so much up there, the Viet Cong. They were just sort of things that happened by someone going to pick something up and they have all these dreadful, terrible injuries. Yes I couldn't pick out one and say – I really couldn't.

**The journey up to pick the patients up, what were you doing at that time?**

40:30 We used to try and make ourselves busy I guess because we were going into a war zone. We just sort of tried to carry on as normal. I can't recall that I was ever really frightened going up there. Later on when I was with the Americans I had a couple of experiences but I think

41:00 we just so much wanted to get up there and get the boys, and bring them back, and start their journey home, and see once again, Vung Tau, they had to get their patients out to get more wounded in. So it was like a shuttle and there were the odd occasions where we had special medivacs. We always had one once a week but sometimes we'd have two or three a week.

41:30 **What would be a special medevac?**

They'd be when there'd been really pretty bad fighting and we had to go up there to keep the hospital free up in Vung Tau. That was when the shuttles would really be on, yes.

## Tape 4

00:32 **Pat, can you describe what the background was like of the other women that were nursing with you in Malaya?**

You mean the Australian girls?

**The Australians yes?**

Their background as far as training?

**Were there similarities or differences to you?**

We were all very much the same really. Strangely enough, we

01:00 were all very compatible. I think most of us came from the same types of backgrounds and when you're living so close, we were all very close, and we shared our families. That's another thing I'd like to say. We sort of all had heaps of mums and dads. One particular family was the Dudley family.

01:30 Their daughter was up in 4 RAAF Hospital with us and they would meet every aircraft that came back to Australia. The Dudley family, 'Mr and Mrs Dud' as we called them, would meet every aircraft to make sure that the girls that came home were well looked after. See a lot of the girls lived interstate and they couldn't go home because we used to often come home to Australia, and go straight back. I was fortunate.

02:00 My parents were down in Dapto, so I could go home at least overnight but the Dudley family were always there. They would be sending us up frozen pies and things like that, and we'd all be one big family. Our communication in those days used to be letter tapes and I think every letter tape that my mother and father got, just about everyone that was around when I was making it would be saying, "Hello Mum and Dad!"

02:30 And we all did the same. We shared. As soon as anyone got a letter tape everyone sat down and listened to it. Wonderful comradeship we had and still have.

**Given the physical and emotional hard work that you were enduring how important was that bond with the other nurses?**

Oh very, very, very important because when you're living in an environment

03:00 so far away from home and at that time we had a lot of trouble with the unions, and the wharfies [dock workers] all went out on strike, and wouldn't load the ships etcetera, and you're so far away. I mean you didn't have mobile phones and things like that, that sharing was wonderful. Of course there was a lot of

03:30 male officers. They were down one end and we were down the other, and they were in the same situation. They'd sit in and share our tapes, and we'd share our tapes with them because we were all single, and it was just like one big family.

**What were the male officer's roles?**

Pilots, navigators, radar [operators],

04:00 just about - I'm trying to think, administration, mainly pilots. We had a lot of pilots because 2 Squadron [Canberra Bombers] was based up there and we had our helicopter pilots, 9 Squadron. Yes, there was about the same

04:30 number of males as there was females.

**Were there any male nurses?**

No. What we had was medical orderlies. Once again, other female officers - only the nursing officers went overseas and same with the medical orderlies. We used to have female - they're like enrolled nurses and they were the backbone

05:00 of our role. They were wonderful. They're not recognised very much but we couldn't have managed without them and most of them were married, and they had their wives up there but there were quite a few I suppose that were single boys, and we were like mothers to them I suppose.

05:30 **Were you able to have any downtime at all?**

Oh yes, yes. We had a wonderful social life. On the base living at 4 RAAF Hospital all the married quarters was on one side of the main road and the base was on the other. That's where all the

operational things went on but all the messes were on

06:00 the hospital side of the base, so we had our airmen's mess, we had our sergeants' mess and we had the officers' mess, which was a beautiful mess. They were all beautiful messes. We had a boat club. They tried to have everything to make the troops happy and we also had Red Cross girls up there, and their role was to look after the wounded, like shopping, and things like that,

06:30 and look after the airmen.

**What did your mess look like?**

Oh it was beautiful. It was a big open mess. We had the parquet flooring and the main anteroom, as we called it was a massive great big room. We used to have films in there. We'd have film nights. Then we had a cocktail lounge and we had a bar, and we had a beer

07:00 garden, and all the quarters were attached to this area, very large area. We had a library. We had a swimming pool. If we hadn't have had to work it would have been like a big holiday really!

**Who took care of the day to day maintenance of these facilities?**

We had mainly army RAEME [Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers],

07:30 they called them. They looked after the maintenance of the hospital equipment and equipment around the base. We also had our engineers and our aircraftsmen [non commissioned lower ranks]. There was someone there for everything.

**You mentioned that there were families on the base. Were there any children?**

Yes we had a lot of children. We had our own school over in Penang because most of the dependents

08:00 lived in Penang. The dependents are the wives and children. They mostly lived over there, so we had our own school, which was serviced by Australian schoolteachers and we would have had about 15 schoolteachers up there. Quite a few of the girls were single

08:30 and they lived in a place called the Runnymede Hotel, which is another area on Penang Island. Of course I didn't stay over in 4 RAAF Hospital all the time. When I finished my tour with the Americans I was posted over to Penang Island. We had what we called the Penang Health Centre and that's where

09:00 it was like our sick parades, with the dependents and the children. We also had a RAAF nursing sister at the school, like a school nurse as such. They were very well looked after. At the Health Centre we had three doctors and five nursing sisters, and about five medical orderlies, and we

09:30 looked after the dependents [families].

**What did the surrounding region look like where Butterworth was?**

Butterworth was a grotty sort of a place really. I can remember my first trip over to Penang. We were about I suppose three miles, perhaps a bit further away from the ferry, which used to go across to Penang and I couldn't believe the

10:00 terrible stench. I thought, "I won't be able to survive this!" Of course the person that was with me said, "That's nothing! You'll get used to that. That's the cemetery." I thought, "Oh my God!" However it wasn't. I found out later it was the prawn factory and I must admit I did get used to the smell. We had an old car up there, which was called a Daf. It had two gears,

10:30 forward and reverse, and it was a very tiny little Dutch car it was. It wasn't strong enough to get on the ferry. They used to have to push us on and push us off but the surrounding area - Penang was a beautiful island, absolutely, more so in those days because they didn't have the big hotels or what they have now. The last time I went back was 1983

11:00 and it was so different.

**What sort of briefing before you left did you receive about Asian culture and the conditions, and climate?**

We were briefed, mainly on our dress. You know, we weren't to wear shorts. I mean even in those days we didn't wear slacks and yet the funny thing, it was the day of the mini, when the mini first came out.

11:30 Mainly about the culture, was the main thing, the different things like - at the hospital we also had Malays, Indians and Chinese staff. The Chinese staff were nursing sisters, locals. They had to employ so many local people at the hospital.

12:00 The medical orderlies were mainly Indian and Malay, and there were different things, like it was nothing to us to call someone like that. You know, "Come here." But that meant something not very nice in their language. Things like that you had to get used to. You never touched any of the little Malay children on the head, things like that.

12:30 **So you were briefed on that by the air force?**

Oh yes. See we would be living there and I guess if we did the wrong thing it would fall back on the air force.

**What was the dress issue? Can you explain that?**

Well as you know, a lot of those cultures are not used to seeing women with bare legs and things like that, and that was their culture. I guess it was more or less not to

13:00 make waves because we were in their country and we had our own radio station run voluntarily by everybody, and there were different songs that we couldn't play. I remember - you may not remember but West of the Wall was one of them, one of my favourites, Ten [Six] White Boomers and Christmas carols we couldn't - but we

13:30 used to sneak them on. Yes there were a lot of things that we had to be careful of.

**Where was the radio broadcast from?**

From Butterworth, the base I mean, sorry, and it ran 24 hours a day, and it was good really because they had a connection to Australia, and they'd often go round families, and get messages, which would be broadcast over the station.

14:00 It was very good.

**You mentioned that there were a few different nationalities working at the hospital at Butterworth. What did you notice about the different medical approaches?**

I think I noticed mainly with the male - most of the male Indian and Malay boys had been in the British Army.

14:30 Of course the British Army pulled out of that area and they were all made redundant, so their training was very good because they had been trained by the Brits. The nursing sisters, most of them had trained. Some of them had trained here in Australia and they were Chinese. The Chinese

15:00 people in those days were superior but they fitted in very well I thought. I got on very well with them. Some of the girls didn't but that's life. The medical orderlies, I really had a lot of time for them.

**Can you describe how some of the girls didn't get along with the Chinese medical**

15:30 **staff?**

I think unfortunately and I think this happens in every type of job or work, some people think they're above other people, and this happened in the services. I mean you were an officer and some of the girls unfortunately thought they were better than the troops or better than some of the Malay workers, yes.

16:00 They didn't come out on top. I mean it was so foolish to do that but some people have it in them. They just can't help it.

**Can you recall any particular incidents of conflict?**

Yes I can. I always recall - I was told by a little old lady actually, who had lived many years up in that area and she said, "Pat when you eat in your messes," she said, "if you

16:30 don't like what you eat and you want to send it back, be very careful." She said, "Because they do things to your meal out in the kitchen." And I've never been the type to kick up a stink of course but some of the girls would do it just deliberately and send their meal back, and I guess they came off - usually the stewards, we had male stewards in the Messes,

17:00 and most of them were pretty good. All of them were really and if you treated them right, they'd treat you right, and you'd get that little bit extra or something but unfortunately these people, we only had about two or three, would just send a meal back, or you know? They had to do it. It was just silly but I hate to think what they ate when the meal came back!

**What was the food like?**

The food was wonderful.

17:30 We ate very [well] in the RAAF. See we had chefs. The food up there was absolutely wonderful, yes.

**How did that food reflect the sorts of foods that were available in Asia and what you were used to in Australia?**

Well, we had Australian meals in the Messes. We were very lucky because we had - they'd bring up steaks on the Hercs [C130 Hercules].

18:00 We ate very well and of course the Asian meals we all just loved, and we did eat a lot of Asian meals. Yes the only thing I missed terribly was milk. We couldn't have fresh milk but that was part of the game I guess.

**Why couldn't you have fresh milk?**

Well we just couldn't get fresh milk up there

18:30 but there was one little café on the island called Kings, where the Aussies always used to meet there and you could get milkshakes there. I don't know what they were made of but they were nice!

**What sort of infrastructure was there in Malaya at that time that was being used for the war?**

Nothing. The Malays weren't involved. Malaya wasn't involved in the Vietnam

19:00 War and the Brits weren't either. We had Princess Mary's nursing sisters there from the British Army but they weren't involved. They never did medevac or anything like that but there was no - I guess the only thing would be the evidence of soldiers around the place

19:30 because a lot of the boys used to come down for R & R [rest and recreation] in Penang.

**Was the hospital on Butterworth a new hospital?**

No that had been there for a long time. In fact the base going back years, used to be Japanese Headquarters in that area. The hospital did belong to the British but

20:00 they were sort of pulling out when we were going up there.

**So what sort of a building was the hospital?**

I know we had marble floors. I guess it was - would you know I can't remember. It must have been brick I think, very airy, verandas went right around, big apron verandas and all the wards you could open the big glass doors.

20:30 It was a very nice hospital.

**What were the facilities and the equipment like?**

Excellent, we were very well equipped. As I said, we had intensive care for patients. We had two major operating theatres. We had a casualty, a minor operating theatre, very

21:00 well equipped and several ambulances there.

**Would supplies come from Australia?**

Yes, yes, mainly from Australia, yes.

**What sort of contact did you have with the locals outside the base or the local scene, or culture?**

I didn't have a great deal

21:30 of contact. I met quite a lot of what we used to call the - oh dear oh dear, I can't remember. I'm thinking of Singapore - they had the tin mines anyway. It's a word I can't think of. I became friendly with quite a lot and they were Dutch, mostly Dutch people. We had a club over on the island called the Penang Club. It was a very elite club

22:00 and the officers could join it but it had the elite local people as members. The Planters, that's the word I'm looking for. They had big rubber plantations and the tin mines. We played golf. We had our own golf course. A lot of the girls became friendly with local people and went to their homes

22:30 etcetera . At that time I wasn't sort of into that then but my next tour up there I was. We always had something to do. It was a place you never got bored.

**What sort of romance was there on the base?**

Quite a lot, quite a lot of romance and I saw quite a few marriages come out of Butterworth,

23:00 although in those days if you got married you had to get out of the service. You couldn't stay in the service and I think our first married sister came up from Richmond with her husband. He was a Hercules pilot and then it started that they could get married.

**You mentioned that there were lots of letters back home. What was the nature of**

23:30 **your correspondence with your parents?**

Well, mainly what you were up to. There were a lot of things we couldn't say back then and when I went to the United States, to the USAF [United States Air Force], Mum and Dad only had an address, which was in the United States, whereas I was based in Clark Field in the Philippines. So they really didn't know where I was.



24:00 We'd talk about - of course I had two young brothers then and I'd talk about what I'd got them, and all this sort of thing, and mainly we had letter tapes. We'd send letter tapes.

**How much would you talk about the nature of your work and its emotional impact?**

Not a great deal. I mean I could have I suppose but I just didn't want Mum

24:30 and Dad to be worried about anything, and I first realised - my first trip home to Australia with the wounded my parents were waiting at Richmond, and my father was very overwhelmed, and I'd never seen my Dad like that, and he just said he didn't - he didn't realise when I went

25:00 what it was all about, and he didn't think he'd see me again, you know? Anyhow, when we got home to Dapto he said, "Come on, I want to take you into town." We went in and he said, "Stay in the car." He came back and he had a Koala Bear that played Waltzing Matilda, which I still have, which has been absolutely everywhere with me, and they just didn't - I don't think they realised until

25:30 they actually saw the wounded coming off the aircraft, and it was lovely - I think the letter tapes, it was so lovely, I've still got most of mine, to put them on, and hear Mum and Dad's voice. Especially Dad saying, "Can you hear me? Can you hear me? Is it on?" And I've still got them. I've lost my father but I've still got them. Yes, it was wonderful.

**26:00 We were talking earlier about the demonstrations and the treatment that the servicemen received. What kind of backlash did you encounter?**

The nursing sisters really didn't receive any. They were really only interested in the soldiers. We still - I mean a car is a car, it wouldn't matter who had it with a defence force sticker on it but they really -

26:30 I never encountered anything personally myself.

**When you were talking about the special bedside manner that was required for these flights, what sort of preparation did you have in training for that?**

Well really you don't get that much preparation. You sort of assess the situation

27:00 and I mean some of the boys didn't want to have anything to do with anybody, and if you pinged on that straight off, then you'd sort of leave them alone. Then there were others that demanded your attention. You more or less worked it out by observing them and just taking your time.

**How might someone demand your attention?**

Very easily.

27:30 As they say, there's always one in a crowd. You'd nearly always have a patient that wanted this, that or shift me, or do this, trying to get your whole attention, which meant he was very insecure and you sort of wanted to give him all the attention but you didn't want to because it would just continue on. But that's human nature. I mean you get that anywhere.

**28:00 How did you have to adjust your bedside manner from being a civilian nurse to being in the Forces?**

Well of course you do find that in civilian life as well. Usually in the hospitals there would be someone pressing their buzzer every five minutes wanting this, that and the other. It is just part of life and if you can sort of work your way around it,

28:30 I guess it comes with experience more than anything.

**Can you describe what the noise was like on the helicopters?**

On the choppers [helicopters]? Very loud but we used to have earmuffs or little earplugs. The choppers were very loud. The Hercules were very loud, continuous very loud noise but

29:00 once again you more or less got used to it. Often the crew and the medical staff, we used to use sign language a lot, and with the patients we'd write things down. It was very difficult screaming into someone's ear above all the noise, so we always had a pad and a pen, and that's how we used to communicate.

**While you were**

**29:30 on the missions picking people up from Vung Tau and taking them back to Australia, can you describe exactly what the layout was of the helicopter?**

Up there we didn't do it in the helicopter, in the Hercules aircraft. We had litters, which are stretchers. Litters is just a service name and they had special stanchions as we called them, in the aircraft. Everything would be taken out of the aircraft. It would be bare

30:00 and we used to put these stanchions up, and the litters on top, and they'd be five up. That would be - just looking in this room, it would be about that height and to nurse the top patient you'd have to climb.

They had little steps about that long and we used to have to climb up there to – we used to climb all over the aircraft, so you had to be pretty fit, and a bit agile

30:30 but we had special flying boots. I guess you sort of adapted to climbing around the place and see you had – different patients you'd put in – if you had someone that didn't need constant care, you'd put him up the top. You had your patients all set out. If you had very seriously ill they would go down the back of the aircraft with plenty of room and you'd have to work all that

31:00 out. Of course we used to give out meals, sponge the patients, give out medication, just the same as in the hospital.

**How many patients might be on a Hercules on one trip?**

A Hercules could take 74 litters, which is a lot, a lot of patients. Often we'd have up to

31:30 about 50 and then we'd have ambulant patients, which sit along the – I don't know whether you've ever seen inside a Hercules but there are those – like baskets, wicker basket seating, and they would sit along there for the whole trip.

**You mentioned that when you were flying from Butterworth to Vung Tau that**

32:00 **you were flying into a war zone. Can you describe what you saw from the air?**

Well, we used to fly – we didn't see a great deal. In that area going into Vung Tau, the enemy were around and they often used to say at Vung Tau – they always seemed to know when something was going to happen there

32:30 when the local people didn't come to work, something was going to happen. Strangely enough that used to happen in Butterworth. Before a medevac came in we'd get these people they used to call the Swinging Sisters and they were Indian women, and that's how they'd cut the lawns. They'd have these big knives and they'd swing them like this, and they always used to come

33:00 the day of a medevac. How I don't know or why I don't know but we always sort of knew that something was in the air. It was incredible really, especially watching women cut the lawns and the lawns were just like our lawns, the way they used to cut them.

**So at Vung Tau what sort of events would occur that would stop the locals from – ?**

I guess if there was going to be a raid or

33:30 the VC [Viet Cong] were very close, or things like that. They were under threat, the First Field Hospital at Vung Tau, Back Beach they used to call it. That was the name of the beach and they were in a war zone.

**So were there ever times when you couldn't fly in?**

Not that I can recall, no and I can't –

34:00 I certainly on any of my flight had any flack as they call it, going into Vung Tau.

**What were your impressions of what the landscape looked like from the air?**

Well, you see these – I had seen photos of paddy fields and things like that. That's just what it was like, the paddy fields and the palm trees. It was quite pretty, a pretty place around that area.

34:30 **Can you describe what Vung Tau looked like?**

Well we only went to the base and I never went into the township of Vung Tau, so I couldn't describe that but I guess it was – the villages had kampongs the same as they did in Malaysia.

**What did the base at Vung Tau look like?**

Just like any ordinary base,

35:00 except on the bases they had artificial – how can I put it – airfields I suppose. I guess the reason for that was if they had to move quickly or something. It's a bit hard to describe that because each base seems the same.

**So can you describe for me then once you arrived at Vung Tau how you would retrieve**

35:30 **your patients?**

Right. We would arrive in and they would naturally be there to meet us, and we would go up to the hospital, assess the patients, and we always tried to take food, nice food up to the Australian girls, like frozen meat pies, and things like that because they didn't get many niceties up there. We had a very good liaison with the sisters

36:00 up there and then we would get the patients ready, load them onto an ambulance bus, and take them down to the strip, and load them on the Hercules, and fly home.

**Where were the patients when you first assessed them?**

In First Field Hospital.

**In what sort of a room or ward?**

In a ward. If they had VSIL

36:30 patients, they would probably come out of intensive care. It was just like an ordinary ward in a hospital.

**What was the role of the Australian army women at that base?**

They were there to – sometimes they got patients straight off the battlefield, to use that expression and they had

37:00 big theatres up there, and they'd go through the triage, where they assess the patients, who is bad, and you've probably watched MASH [television series], have you? Well that's exactly what they do. They had quite a lot of sisters up there and they worked very, very hard, the nursing sisters up there, and they just nursed, and the same as we

37:30 would have down in 4 RAAF Hospital.

**How long were you operating on these flights?**

My first time, before I went over with the Americans, it would have been four or five months I suppose, yes.

**How did it come to pass that you were transferred to the US evacuation?**

I was

38:00 seconded over there by our air force on exchange, no it wasn't an exchange, just the Australian girls would go over. We had one Australian sister over there, just about for a couple of years during the conflict and one Australian medical orderly would go over. So there would be two Australians over there at the same time. However, you very seldom saw the Australian medical orderly.

38:30 We were sent there just to do aero-medical evacuations. Clark Air Base was massive. It had about three High Schools. It was just a big city. It had schools. It had motels. We lived in what they called the Bachelor Officer's Quarters [BOQ], which was a six story building. The Australian nurses were on the sixth floor

39:00 and you couldn't miss it for quids because the door was just covered in red kangaroos! So everyone knew where the Aussie girl was and the hospital, it was a six story hospital, a massive hospital. I was seconded to the 902nd Squadron, which was aero-medical evacuation. They had 902nd, 903rd [Aeromedical Evacuation], 57th Squadron [Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron] and all they did

39:30 every day was go to Vietnam, and bring back wounded. That was three squadrons and that was their whole role to do that, and then they would take the patients from Clark to other areas around the world.

**How did you feel about leaving the RAAF Base and going to work with the Americans?**

At first I was a little bit – I guess I could say frightened.

40:00 I think my main problem was that Mum and Dad didn't know where I was. They knew I was over there somewhere but they didn't know where and while I was in Clark Field we experienced a couple of very large earthquakes, and I thought, "Well if I'm buried under this building they'll never know where I am." I think

40:30 that was my main fear but I enjoyed it, thoroughly enjoyed it. The experience was really wonderful and the American girls were tremendous. In fact coming up this year there is a big reunion over in the States in October, which some of our girls are going across to. But it was very good, a very good experience.

## **Tape 5**

00:33 **Pat before lunch we were talking about the evacuation procedures. I wanted to talk to you about what happened on the journey from Malaya to Richmond.**

Right. As I said, it used to take about 15 hours. We'd load all the patients on and it was always rather exciting, mainly

01:00 that the boys were coming back to Australia, and also that we might have the chance of seeing our family. We'd sit down on the airstrip in Butterworth and as I said, it used to be very hot up there, so we'd have to have everything open, like the back down, while the aircraft got revved up, and got ready, and off we'd go. To start off with we'd just – naturally everyone is strapped in on takeoff

- 01:30 and then as soon as we got up to the right level the staff would get out of their seatbelts, and we'd go around, and check all the patients, mainly the IV therapies because before we'd takeoff we'd turn them off, and we had to make sure then that they were turned on as soon as we got up to the right level. Then we'd commence our nursing duties. We
- 02:00 had the same notes and the four hour medications. Everything is exactly the same as it would be in a hospital and it wouldn't be that long really before it became dark, and we'd serve out a nice hot small meal for their tea, which would be prepared,
- 02:30 nearly the same as they do on civilian aircraft. We had a nice galley and we'd settle them down for the night. Those patients that were ambulant, we'd let them stretch their legs one at a time and sometimes the crew might let them go up on the flight deck, depending what their injuries were. Usually the majority of them would
- 03:00 sleep during the night. If we had two sisters, which if we had a big load we always had two sisters, one sister would try - we always kept one litter high up for someone to have a bit of a rest but I must admit I don't think I ever went to sleep. It was a bit difficult to go to sleep because you had so much on your mind but it was nice to have a rest. In those days of course, we could go up
- 03:30 and have a - if we smoked, have a cigarette on the flight deck but we didn't do that very much because the patients couldn't smoke, and of course in those days just about everyone smoked. So we'd come over Australia. We'd start coming through Derby just as the sun was coming up and it was just so beautiful. The sky was red and it was just wonderful. So we'd tell the boys
- 04:00 that we're over Australia and it was amazing to watch the transformation on their faces, and they became quite happy, and I guess they felt very safe. That would be I'd say probably about five-ish in the morning and we wouldn't get into Richmond 3 RAAF Hospital until about 11 o'clock, and that was always a wonderful
- 04:30 feeling when we sat down strapped in to go into Richmond. However, when we got into Richmond we usually had about another four hours work to do because we had to offload all the patients. You can imagine the documentation. Each patient had all their documents and we'd travel with the patients up to the hospital, where they would be offloaded again, and it's a thing to think of, they had so many times being
- 05:00 offloaded onto - well from when they're injured, they'd go to a field casualty area. That's one. Then they'd go to a field hospital too and then they'd be loaded onto another aircraft, and off again at Butterworth. Then on again at Butterworth to come home to Australia and then in Australia, off again. So it was a lot of movement for those that were badly injured.
- 05:30 However, they all took it in their stride and I must admit it was more than once I saw tears in the boys' eyes as we landed at Richmond. After we handed over the patients we then had to re-set up all our equipment because we never knew when it would have to be used urgently again and you never left your equipment - just leave it
- 06:00 because the next person, although you were supposed to check it before you took it on a flight, some people might have been in a hurry or something, and they'd find there wasn't the right equipment. So that took - I suppose the handover, about four hours. When you think you hadn't had any sleep - usually when you did the Vung Tau run you were pretty excited, so you didn't get much sleep. So when you got home you could have been without a good sleep
- 06:30 for about 36 hours. My father could never understand because he'd always want to rush me off to the pub and I'd be so tired but anyhow, I always used to go with him. Then if possible we could go home for a night's stay or a weekend, or something. The interstate girls that just couldn't get home as I said, the Dudley's would take them to their home and look after them.
- 07:00 On the odd occasion you might have been allowed to take a week's leave in Australia, depending on what was going on, which was great. My parents were there every time I came home. Mum and Dad were always there waiting for me, which was great.

**You mentioned the equipment onboard. I wanted to talk to you about that in detail. Would you be able to run through what would be a typical checklist of what you needed?**

Yes. We had special

- 07:30 equipment. Now there was an item we called the nurse's pannier and that's where we had basic type dressings, and IV fluids were all kept in pockets in this. I do have photographs that you can have a look at after. We always had oxygen that we'd take onboard with us, extra
- 08:00 besides the oxygen that was onboard. We'd have the nurse's drug kit. That's where we had our scheduled drugs like morphine and pethidine, and the head nurse would be completely in charge of that, and that was locked all the time. Then there was the doctor's drug kit, which he was solely responsible for. We had special
- 08:30 litters. An ordinary litter it just the canvas type stretcher but we had things that we called the Pavy

Frame, where if patients had perhaps bad burns or spinal injuries, we'd put them on this special frame, which we could turn them over and back again. They were specially built for aircraft. It depended on

- 09:00 what the injuries were, the type of equipment. We always had a sucker, which we could plug in. We had special power points in the aircraft, in the Hercules but we could also use it manually if someone was choking or something like that. We had a lot of chest injuries we used to have and we had special equipment for those.
- 09:30 That was about – oh we had special sphygmus to take blood pressure because we couldn't carry mercury on any of the aircraft, because if it had broken mercury would eat through the – so we had special sphygmus to use without mercury. As you can imagine it was pretty hard taking a blood pressure using a stethoscope with the noise, so
- 10:00 feel had a lot to do with – I mean a good nurse can usually tell a patient's well being by feeling their pulse and if their blood pressure is right up, things like that. You became very observant. All our equipment was at the back of the aircraft, always at the back. We carried things like special wire cutters for
- 10:30 patients that had wired jaws, except when they were going to fly they'd take the wires out and put special, very thick rubber bands on, so if we had a crash landing or were in an emergency, we could cut the wires or the rubbers, or if they had a drink, and they were choking.

**Why was it not a good idea for them to travel with the wires?**

Well,

- 11:00 it would have been easier to cut the rubbers than the wire. As soon as they landed they'd put wires on. Always carried plaster cutters because we travelled a lot with patients in plaster of Paris and as I said before, they had to be bi-valved, they called it, where you'd slit right down. So if you were in an emergency,
- 11:30 like a crash landing you could literally get the bandages – they were bandaged and just break the plaster, so we could get the patients out if necessary. So there was lots of things basic, which we carried on every flight and then you had the extra special equipment for different injuries.

**What kind of procedure did you have**

- 12:00 **in case of an emergency like a crash landing?**

We were put through very stringent crash landing procedures in our training and we often had mock crash landings. It was something I think we all sort of dreaded. I actually was involved in a crash landing in Tokyo when

- 12:30 I was with the Americans. They couldn't get the wheels down and we just had to go in, and land. That was pretty frightening because once again I thought Mum and Dad wouldn't know where I was if we did really crash but we went through in our training very – and it was really, we were brainwashed about that type of thing.

**What were you meant to do**

- 13:00 **in the event of a crash landing?**

Well each member of the crew had a role, like the head nurse, head flight nurse. She would more or less say, "Those patients will go that way and these patients will go that way." The medical orderlies knew they had a role to do and we also worked in with the aircrew. Of course on all our flights the captain of the aircraft

- 13:30 was the boss, so what he said went, more or less.

**Could you explain what happened with the crashlanding in Tokyo?**

Yes. It was in a C-0118 [Liftmaster, DC 6], they called them. It was an aircraft smaller than a Hercules and a little bit bigger than a Caribou, and we had about 20 patients onboard.

- 14:00 We were coming in to land at Tan Son Nhut it was called – no, no, no sorry! That's Saigon! Yokota, that's where there was a big American burns unit and nearly all of our patients had had burns, and the captain just announced that we'd have to circle to get rid of the fuel, to remove any sharp objects,
- 14:30 which meant the Australian dog tags were quite sharp, so I had to remove them, which I didn't like doing, and I had my boots, so we had to take our boots off because when we went in we had to go down the chutes. I think we circled for about an hour or so to get rid of the fuel and then he just said, "We're going in." And we went in.
- 15:00 The strip was foamed. You've probably seen that on the movies where they foam all the strip. Anyhow, we went in. It was pretty rough. Most of us were badly bruised but we all got down safe and none of the patients were any worse for wear really. But it was a bit frightening and strangely enough that was the only time I came across the Australian medical orderly, and he was on the same

15:30 flight. So to me that was great because we were both there together.

**What would you do with patients if you were coming in for a crashlanding? How would you placate them or reassure them?**

You'd certainly make sure they're secure and you try very hard to reassure them, and really that's about all that you can do because you know you have to be strapped in

16:00 for your own safety, and also if anything happens to you, what would happen to the patients? That's something they sort of drummed in, "Don't be a heroine because if something happens to you, well the poor old patient might die." Once again experience, we learned how to cope with those situations. I mean it wouldn't have been any good if we went hysterical or anything.

**16:30 What were you trained to do if you had to evacuate a plane?**

We had different evacuation procedures. If we went into the sea for instance, a Hercules we were told would sink within eight minutes. So if you had an aircraft full of patients it would have been pretty difficult to get them and you would have had to choose those

17:00 patients that you thought may have had a chance. Of course you had to get them out through rather small areas and thank God it just never happened.

**Did you think about that at the time?**

Yes, yes we did. A couple of times when it was a bit rough it would go through your mind but I guess if it happened - I mean people have certainly got out of Hercules

17:30 aircraft but you wouldn't have had much time. I guess you put it out of your mind really.

**You mentioned earlier that there were procedures in place for nursing in the air and it was difficult over the noise to do a lot of these things. How difficult was it with movement and turbulence?**

Oh well,

18:00 we always knew. We wouldn't have to be told if it got really rough to sit down and strap in but often we had to attend to patients. We often used to get home from a flight pretty bruised around the place because we had to climb and sometimes it was rough. We always carried anti-air-sick pills with us just in case! Once again,

18:30 it was one of those things.

**Did people get motion sickness?**

Yes a few times, more so when you're lying down. You can imagine in the turbulence the aircraft going up and down like this, and for the patients up higher, more so than the patients down below. If we knew it was going to be rough - the pilots usually knew and we'd just give them anti-

19:00 airsickness pills., and hope they wouldn't be sick.

**How large was the crew?**

We used to have a pilot, a co-pilot, an engineer, a navigator and a loadmaster. That's five, five aircrew. The loadmasters were like your second hand. They were just absolutely wonderful. They

19:30 ran the back of the aircraft as such and if you got into strife we always used to call the loady, as we used to call them, and we had communication with our earphones, and speakers. We could speak to them.

**Were you always wearing those earphones?**

Not all the time. I personally found them very difficult to wear. I sort of felt that my eardrums

20:00 were going to burst but if we got into situations I always made sure I had my earphones on.

**You mentioned before that patients if they were well enough were able to go to the flight deck. Could you explain how you got to the flight deck and how that was laid out?**

Well, if you can just imagine in a civilian aircraft, where the flight deck is sort of behind those curtains or the door, well our flight deck was nearly the same

20:30 on a Hercules and you had to climb up steps, and then you'd up get onto the flight deck, which was full of instruments. It was pretty amazing really. We only used to let the boys - say someone that had had malaria and they were coming home, that were pretty stable, and they weren't likely to fall over or something. The pilots used to let them go up there, only

21:00 under supervision. They couldn't just get up and go.

**Was there much room to move around?**

Not a great deal, no. There would have been I'd say down the aisle – both sides of the aircraft we had the aisle and we'd come around the back. It would have been from here I suppose to there, about three feet and remember

- 21:30 that there'd be people sitting there too, so it would be cut down depending on how big they were with their knees and feet. We didn't have much room at all to move around in, so I was nice and thin in those days! You had to be!

**Could you explain some of the procedures you would have to do mid-air?**

We did normal dressing that had to be attended to.

- 22:00 We had to be very careful with patients that had ear problems. As you know if you've been in an aircraft, usually on landing you get terrible pain, you can get terrible pain in the ear. Often we had patients with tracheotomies. You know, we had to watch them very carefully. Just the routine – of course we had to give out bedpans

- 22:30 and urinals as well, which was pretty difficult because the patients, they were very heavily strapped in. So they found that very difficult. I'd say that would have been one of the worst parts of it, having to do that. A urinal OK but a bedpan no! I mean it's bad enough on the ground in a hospital bed but that used to be a bit difficult.

- 23:00 We did have little courtesy screens we could pop around someone if they required it.

**You mentioned that the patients were strapped in. How were they strapped in?**

When I first started medevacing patients they had a litter strap, which came – there was a big belt in the middle and it came up both ends from the feet up, went in, and then down here, and went in, and the only trouble with that was

- 23:30 it was very bulky, and also the patient could undo it. It was just like I suppose – a little bit like our seatbelts in our cars. They could just touch something and release it, and everything would come off, which would mean that the top ones would fall down on the ones below. So they brought in – we just used to have two straps round the feet just below the knee

- 24:00 and just across the chest, and the buckle was underneath, so they – or out of their reach, so they couldn't undo it.

**Did you have some patients who were distressed by that?**

Oh yes, yes because it must have been very difficult. I mean even when we were just having a bit of a snooze on the litter it was very strange being strapped in and

- 24:30 with all the noise going around, you couldn't see much. It must have been stressful for them but we tried our hardest to pacify the patients. Sometimes it used to get very, very hot. We all had little cane fans. In fact I've still got one out on the veranda. Every patient would have one of those. It used to

- 25:00 help sometimes. But mostly they were pretty good.

**Were there medical emergencies in air that were quite serious?**

Oh yes, once again it depended on the condition of the patient. If the patient was really very seriously ill they wouldn't be moved. They'd be kept at 4 RAAF Hospital but they did like to get them home as soon as possible.

- 25:30 The main sort of problems would be with our chest patient. We always had them on what we called a Heimlich Drain, which can block up and we had to watch all the time to make sure these things didn't happen. We had patients also that had large abdominal operations. We used to have what they called medevac drains, which was a little bottle with two little ears on it and

- 26:00 often the suction would go out of that, which could cause a bit of a problem. So really you had to watch everything all the time, literally.

**And the doctor onboard what was his role?**

The role of the doctor, he was there in case of a bad emergency. Most of our doctors were very good. They used to help us lift and do things like that but they were there really if we needed them,

- 26:30 and they were wonderful really, and we had a lot of civilian doctors, who were on the reserve, the specialist. We often had a specialist with us. There was the odd occasion when you didn't have a doctor but that didn't happen very often. You always knew that there was someone else there that could help you.

- 27:00 **Were there any times that operations were done mid-flight?**

No. We did have some equipment but it never – they tried to get somewhere if possible and as I said, we never lost one medevac patient during the Vietnam conflict, which was pretty good I thought!

27:30 **You mentioned that as you came in Derby the sun would be rising as you travelled across Australia. How much could the patients see from where they were?**

Very little. We only had little portholes. That's all we could see out and the patients really couldn't see it but I think from the way we told them what was out there they still got very excited about it,

28:00 and there was definitely a red glow you could see, which was beautiful really, for all of us!

**How often were you doing these runs yourself?**

We had a team sort of set up and as I said, they used to come down every week, and then every fortnight.

28:30 I did quite a few. I really can't remember how many but when the list would come around it was up to the matron. She would sort of pick people and off they'd go, and there was a group. There were two nursing sisters that were sent up from 3 RAAF Hospital. They were sent up there solely to do medivacs for six

29:00 months, only six months because when you're flying all the time things sort of happen to your body. Your metabolism gets changed a bit, so they started that and then it got a bit much for the girls. That's all they did, so they decided then that everyone could share it and that's what we did.

**What kinds of health issues were there for the staff who were doing these flights?**

29:30 Usually when you're flying - your eating habits for instance. You really didn't feel like eating on the flights because there were some pretty nasty wounds and things. So you sort of put off eating, going to the loo. You'd put that off for as long as you possibly could and different little things

30:00 would affect, especially the women in the air. So it was a good idea to have a lot of rest prior to a flight.

**What was the relationship like between the nurses, medical staff and the crew?**

Oh fantastic, absolutely because we knew we were a group together and we

30:30 all knew, all the nurses knew the Hercules crews, and we were just like a big family really, yes. It was a very wonderful situation.

**Were the crews based in Malaya as well?**

No. The Hercules crews [36 and 37 Squadron were based at Richmond, not in the hospital] were based in 3 RAAF Hospital, not 3 RAAF, Richmond Base, yes, on the base. They used to come up,

31:00 fly up and down.

**Once you were back in Richmond having done one of these evacuations, how would you then get back to Butterworth?**

Sometimes we'd fly back by Hercules. In the beginning when I first started doing it, we used to go back First Class Qantas, which was absolutely wonderful and we were really treated very well but towards the end of the conflict

31:30 we'd usually go back by Hercules, which we didn't mind!

**When you had those times in Australia whether it was a day or a weekend, did you talk to people much about the Vietnam War?**

Not about what we were doing, no. No we didn't. In a way you really didn't have time. You were too busy pigging out on all the lovely fresh food and

32:00 just meeting your family. But not very often did we speak of it. In fact we didn't speak of injuries or anything like to anyone but to civilians we just didn't talk about it.

**Was there a reason for that?**

I don't - I mean we weren't told not to but I think we just

32:30 felt it wasn't a nice subject to talk about, unless it was another nurse perhaps you might have a chat.

**What were some of the worst injuries you saw?**

I think some of the worst were caused by landmines. They were very horrific, absolutely because you can imagine the boys would step over them and of course they'd

33:00 just blow up. So we had some horrific injuries and they usually caused amputations. Yes they weren't very nice and a lot of injuries as I said, chest injuries, we used to get a lot of chest injuries, and abdominal wounds, and of course severe burns was another thing,

33:30 which wasn't very pleasant.



**What had the burns been caused by?**

Well usually – say if they were in an army vehicle that had been bombed or blown up, aircraft crashes, helicopters going in. When the boys were injured they'd have what they called Dustoffs

34:00 and that's when the helicopters would go out to pick them up, and we had a lot of our RAAF medical orderlies on those RAAF Dustoffs. They were a very important part and saved a lot of lives in Vietnam. If I could just relate recently or last year, I went down to the Vietnam Veterans' Rededication in Canberra and a whole group of

34:30 RAAF nursing sisters met, and it was absolutely wonderful. We went to the dawn service and you know in Anzac Parade, we were up near the War Memorial, and it was misty. Just as they started saying the Ode, two choppers as we call them, we could just hear them in the background and they came straight up Anzac Parade, and it was the most eerie feeling. It just brought back a lot of memories

35:00 and there was a lot of men around us, and I don't think anyone had a dry eye. The choppers meant a lot to the army boys, well anyone that was wounded because they knew if they heard the choppers coming they'd be rescued and those that went out on the Dustoffs were very brave. Yes pretty wonderful.

**How dangerous were those missions?**

Very dangerous

35:30 because they were going out right into the – if someone was shot or trod on a landmine, the choppers usually went straight in to that area, which was under fire and they were really very brave. That particular reunion down in Canberra, a lot of the crew were there and it was really just wonderful

36:00 to see them all, and have that comradeship because they were very brave guys, absolutely.

**Do you find that there are particular noises or smells that remind you of your - ?**

Yes, yes there is, certainly aircraft noise. We often have a lot of helicopters around here, I think

36:30 mainly looking for what's growing around the place but I can hear them from a long way off and it just gives you a strange feeling I guess, and if I'm down at Mascot, and I see a Hercules I get all – pretty emotional. Of course there are certain smells that I never forget and I'm aware of. In fact after I

37:00 got out of the service a couple of times I picked up what patients had by the smell and I knew it was such and such. So that came in handy a few times but different things you never forgot the smell of, like gangrene for instance. You just never forget it but you can't do anything about that.

**You mentioned**

37:30 **that you were seconded to the US Base. How did that actually come about? Were you interviewed?**

No I wasn't interviewed. On my interview to go into the air force I was asked what my feelings were towards Americans and at the time I hadn't had a great deal to do with them, and my feelings weren't –

38:00 I just sort of didn't like them. The ones I'd met I didn't like and I said that at the interview. The next thing I know I'm being sent over there. Maybe it was for penance! I don't know but that attachment was absolutely wonderful.

**What was it about the Americans that you hadn't particularly liked?**

I always found them prior to that a bit loudmouthed and not

38:30 knowing much about the rest of the world. That certainly was proved to me when I was over there. They really didn't know much about Australia or where Australia was. It was incredible really and the service people, they really lived in their own little – well it wasn't a little world, it was a very big world. Often I was classed as a New Zealander, even though I had Australia

39:00 across my shoulders. Little things like that but they did not know in those days much of what was going on outside of America, which was a shame.

**Could you explain how you got from Malaysia to the Philippines?**

Yes. I left RAAF Base at Butterworth on a Caribou and I flew up to Vung Tau,

39:30 and then we went we went up to Nui Dat. These were all army camps. Then we went through Cam Ran Bay and quite a few, and I flew up on St Patrick's Day it was. I always remember that. We sort of milked [regular flight] all the way up to Tan Son Nhut, it was called in those days, the big airbase there and it was absolutely

40:00 massive. The Australians had the Wallaby Unit it was called and I was taken there, and it was very Australian. There was cane furniture around and ashtrays really overflowing, and Post pictures around the walls! It made me very homesick! However, I was taken over to the Americans and I flew from Nui

Dat, not Nui Dat -

- 40:30 Tan Son Nhut, across to Clark Field in a Starlifter, which was a very large American aircraft, a C141 they called them, and that's what we did most of our medivacs in from Clark. I arrived there and I was shown quickly around the base. Midnight that night I was put on alert to go on a flight
- 41:00 and there by going on alert you had to actually be down in the operations room and I was a bit - it was a bit - everything just seemed so massive, and all this equipment. Another problem over there was the drug names were different to ours. They are all the same these days but in those days they were the same
- 41:30 drugs, but the Americans had different names for them. So that was a bit hard to learn and a lot of their equipment was the same, however they - like say a tracheotomy, they called it a 'tray', and for a couple of days I had no idea what this tray was. I thought, "Well I better bite the bullet and ask!" And that's what it was! It was a tracheotomy.

## Tape 6

- 00:32 **Pat when you went to you interview in regard to be seconded to the US Evacuation Group, who were you interviewed by and what sort of things did you talk about?**

Well actually when I was seconded over there I didn't have an interview. When you're in the services you're just told where you're going and that's what happened.

**So how did it come to be that you were asked about your opinions - ?**

- 01:00 That was on my entry into the service. That's when you go before an interview board and you have a senior RAAF nursing sister, a psychologist, and administration officer - who else was on it? An engineer I think. They had about six people on the interview board and

- 01:30 they ask you questions. I guess one of the main questions I was asked was how would I feel being on a base just with men and I was the only female. Well at the time I said, "Oh pretty good!" Of course that did happen to me on a couple of occasions, which didn't make any difference

- 02:00 really!

**What sorts of questions was the psychologist interested in?**

Later in my service life I ended up on these boards. He'd ask questions like, "How would I react if a plane crashed and we were in with the enemy?" And questions like that, which I must admit I couldn't answer because I had no idea

- 02:30 how I'd feel in those situations but I think they have a trick list. Well they did have a trick list and they would go on how you reacted at the interview, how you would react to certain questions, and things like that, pretty intense interview. Of course they wouldn't say at the end, "Well you're in!" You had to go away and wait till

- 03:00 the telegram, yes!

**When you went on that first trip over to the Philippines and you were doing that milk run, what were your impressions of Vietnam?**

Well we only went into bases and as I said earlier, most bases were the same. I guess my impressions were really

- 03:30 it was just the same as Vung Tau. I'd been up and down to Vung Tau. I couldn't see any difference, except when I got to Tan Son Nhut it was massive, a very large base and there was just aircraft, thousands of aircraft all lined up. Yes it was pretty - very impressive really but then when I got to Clark Field I felt the same because it was a very large base. I mean you had to get taxis

- 04:00 from A to B and we found that if I wanted a taxi, I'd never ring up myself. I'd get one of the American girls to ring up because the taxi drivers wouldn't pick the Australians up, because we didn't tip! That was incredible really. But it was a very large base.

**Can you describe what some of those cultural differences were between the Americans and the Australians?**

- 04:30 Yes, their meals for instance. In our quarters, the bachelor officers' quarters there was a very large restaurant. We also had a 24 hour cocktail lounge, which was down in the basement area but I found it very hard with the meals, like having very sweet things for breakfast. I had a big problem with eggs.

- 05:00 I love eggs but I had a lot of problems with over easy and under easy, and I ate some pretty funny eggs when I was over there, something I don't think I'd ever get used to. The meals were good. They had a

lovely Officers Club. The entertainment was just absolutely wonderful, like they had people like Sammy Kaye. You might not know him but they had that band and the big bands. Yes,

05:30 it was really wonderful.

**So how did their facilities compare to what you'd been used to?**

The rooms, the quarters we had was just like a big motel room. It was full self-contained. Of course we didn't have that in our air force but over there just in the hospital alone they had over 1,000 nurses

06:00 working and I can remember I met the director of nursing from the hospital, and she said, "Well honey how many sisters have you got?" Or nurses! 'Sister' to them was a nun. I'll tell you a funny little story in a minute! And I thought she meant in our service and I think we only had about 90, and I said 90.

06:30 She meant how many did we have at 4 RAAF Hospital, which we only had about 20 compared to their just 1,000 working at the hospital. So you can imagine the size of the place, thousands of people worked there.

**What was the funny story?**

The funny story? I'd been on a flight with the Americans and they used

07:00 to go out, the airmen - not the airmen, the officers and the troops would all go out together. We were in one of the clubs and I'd been dancing, and jumping around, and having a few drinkies, and this went back to the table, and one of the guys said, "Oh my God!" He said, "I can't believe these nuns from Australia!" He really thought I was a nun!

07:30 Of course we were 'sister', you see? That was quite funny really, yes! Yes, they had funny ideas on our speech, like 'tomato' and 'tomaydo'. They always used to get the Australian girls to read the menu on a flight, so we'd say, "Whad'ya want? Tomato juice or - ?" Things like that they thought was very funny.

**Can you describe**

08:00 **for me in detail what it was like going on that first evacuation trip as part of the US Team?**

I think I was a little bit frightened because we'd go in and we used to go over to Vietnam, fly over, and go all around Vietnam picking up injured, and fly straight back to Clark

08:30 Field, which was pretty heavy going. I found it very difficult to - and on the American aircraft the head flight nurse was the boss. She was the Boss Lady of all the aircraft. The captain had no sort of say. So she could put people on and people off, and whatever but they were trained for that. We never once had a doctor

09:00 on board with us when I flew with the Americans because a lot of the nurses used to specialise, like they'd become anaesthetists and they'd specialise in burns, and different types of things, whereas we sort of did everything but they had their specialists. Yes I was a bit frightened and I was very glad I recall, getting back to Clark

09:30 Airbase, and back on the ground again because it was the first time I'd nursed patients in a Starlifter, and they are a massive aircraft, and it was just like a big - I remember when the Jumbos [Boeing 747] first came out, people thought, "Oh this is big!" Well, the Starlifters were about twice that size and they were unreal really but I soon settled down. I mean

10:00 you were so busy you really didn't have time to worry about things. We flew - I went naturally to Vietnam but I went to Tokyo, Japan, Korea, Washington, Alaska. I flew patients all around these places, which was pretty good really. I was very

10:30 honoured and very lucky to have received that posting.

**What was the procedure then for leaving the Clark Base and going to collect the injured?  
What would happen?**

Well as I said, we'd go on alert and they had four squadrons, and that's all they did. I was with the 90 Second Squadron. We would get all our equipment ready.

11:00 The aircraft would be set up. Then off we'd go over to - usually straight across to Cam Ranh Bay, which was the main place where we'd land and from there - of course they also carried American personnel, who were going from this base to some other base. They also carried them. So you were getting people on and putting people off, looking after

11:30 the wounded, and each stop you got a few more wounded. By the time we got back to Clark we were very full. Then they had all the big ambulance buses there and they would transfer the patients, and go up to the base hospital, which was a very large hospital. The patients would be placed into a bed and often they were just there in transit.

12:00 They had a renal unit there. They had a small burns unit. Usually the next day most of the patients that could travel would be then loaded into ambulances and taken down to another aircraft, and flown home

to a base, the same as we did in Australia, only the distance was far more over there. I

12:30 think the - I remember we took a load of Korean wounded. Actually they weren't wounded. They had leprosy and I can always remember, I'd had an interest in leprosy way back in my nursing, and I knew a fair bit about it, and the American girls were very frightened. They wanted masks and gowns, and everything

13:00 because they thought they'd get leprosy but of course you can't. You have to live with them for years to get it but these Koreans, they were just beautiful most of them and see some places, if they went back, and they had lost a limb they weren't wanted in the community, places like Korea, which was very sad. I remember they used to light up a cigarette as you were taking off and do all these dreadful things,

13:30 the Koreans but it was very satisfying because I must admit that until I went over to the States, to the USAF, I didn't know that Koreans were even up in Vietnam, but they were. But we had all nationalities being flown all over the place.

**So where were the Korean leprosy patients collected from?**

Vietnam.

14:00 I'd say they would have had leprosy and they were sent over there, and of course they hadn't been treated, and they just got worse, and so they sent a whole mob of them back.

**What were you able to do for them on a flight?**

Not much at all, just to sort of pacify them. There was nothing much we could do about their -

14:30 I suppose you could say they weren't wounded as such. There was nothing much really you could do except have a laugh with them and pray for them I guess.

**Where were they being delivered to?**

We used to fly into - Tagoo was one place, in Korea. On this particular flight we were supposed to go into

15:00 Kimpo, however a mob of Japanese students had hijacked an aircraft and they had landed at Kimpo. We couldn't land there, so we had to go to another base, an American Base. So we went into Tagoo, which was up near the DMZ [demilitarised zone] line. That's where the fighting was still going on then and I've never been so cold in my whole

15:30 life as I was in that place. They didn't have women in the camp at all and there were three flight nurses, and the crew. We all went into the one barracks and it was freezing. So we decided to go out somewhere. The boys discovered there was a bus going into town, so we got on this bus and it was quite funny. It was packed absolutely and we were

16:00 standing up, and of course no one knew we were women because we were so rugged up! When word went through the bus I've never been offered so many seats in my life but it was snowing and when we got back from where we'd been out to dinner, it had snowed so hard we couldn't find our barracks. Everything just looked the same. We finally found it of course but it was really

16:30 very cold, very freezing, absolutely. So we used to take them and then they'd pick them up. I've got some photos in there actually of the Korean we collected. Yes that was just one place and all the burns patients used to go into Yokota in Japan. The Americans had a large burns unit there.

**What were**

17:00 **level of injuries like to the US soldiers compared to the Australian that you'd seen?**

Well the Americans, they were in mass really. There were so many more than our troops, very bad injuries, much the same I guess as ours but in much larger numbers. They had a lot of paraplegics.

17:30 That was another way we used to nurse them too, with that special Pavy Frame. The same injuries but in a much larger number. Unfortunately we did carry a lot of boys that had been addicted to morphine

18:00 and that was hard because you knew they were in pain but you couldn't give them morphine anyway. Quite a few of our Australian boys were too but they were detoxed, as they say these days. We got them out before they had too much you know what I mean? They were only addicted because of their injuries. That was the sad part of it.

18:30 **How would you be aware that someone had a morphine addiction?**

Well, you certainly learned observation with anyone that takes drugs and of course you'd always have them wanting - you could practically time your watch to when their buzzer would go. In those days we gave it every four hours and

19:00 you could guarantee three and a half hours the buzzer would start going. Of course now they have control of pain, which is so much better and they don't get addicted but when you think people are so

busy, they really in some of the big hospital when they have hundreds of wounded, they really haven't got the time to sit there, and hold their hands, and they're just so busy, and it's one of those unfortunate things that happen.

19:30 **So how would you deal with someone who was demanding morphine?**

If you knew and we usually – you can tell, they wouldn't get it because they usually – I know this is a bit hard to understand. If a patient knows he's going to get something every four hours he will have pain, even if it's just up in his mind

20:00 or her mind. We carried a lot of American servicewomen as well. So you sort of knew that they could do without it a little bit longer but it's human nature that if they knew they were going to get it, they wanted it, whether they had pain or not, and that's the unfortunate thing about drugs like that.

**We talked earlier about the cultural differences in**

20:30 **terms of the food etcetera and when you were operating with the RAAF, obviously the fact that you were Australian, and you mentioned flying over Derby, that obviously provided some comfort. How did you cross that barrier with the Americans?**

Well, for me that was a little bit difficult because I certainly didn't know where we were crossing over or what but it just didn't seem the same. Like

21:00 I'm certainly not knocking the Americans but our patients were our patients and they had a name, whereas the Americans, they were numbers. It just didn't seem to me that it was the same because there were so many and I can understand that. It would have been very hard to them to do what we had to do.

21:30 Like we were one flight and on one day they would have had about 16 flights over, and back, so it was very different in that way.

**How common was it on the US flights to lose a patient?**

I think when I flew with them we lost about two patients but see they used to have horrendous injuries and they had the same thing. They had to get them out of their hospitals

22:00 to take more wounded over in Vietnam and I think that was probably the reason, that they maybe they moved sooner than they should have but they had to be, and there wasn't much you could do about that.

**Coming across a greater volume of injured,**

22:30 **how did that change your attitude to the war?**

That really didn't affect me that much because I knew it was happening. I was involved in it and I guess when you are involved in it in that way, I'm not saying I'm pro-war or anything like that, you do understand it a little bit. Of course we all hoped that it would end sooner

23:00 than later but there's not much you can do about it. But it really didn't affect me that much, no.

**What was the fit out of the Starlifter like?**

Very similar to the Hercules. It was certainly more modern. They actually had aircraft seats for the ambulant patients. It was like

23:30 a big civilian aircraft really, except half of it was for litters, very large and they had comfort palates for toilets, and kitchens, and they had special crew for the kitchens, like a catering crew, whereas on our aircraft we did everything. Of course it was a smaller aircraft. They used to sometimes have 80 walking patients

24:00 onboard, so they really needed a special catering crew.

**You mentioned that on those US flights the head nurse was the person that ran the show. How did that impact the operations compared to on your flights, where the captain – ?**

I thought because she had so many people to look after, I thought it was a good thing

24:30 over there, because – well she had and usually it was a major, who was the head nurse. We usually had a major, a lieutenant and the little old section officer, me. The majors were very well trained and they certainly used their rank. On a couple of occasions,

25:00 I saw a few arguments between the captain and the head nurse but the head nurse always came out on top because she had the authority.

**What might those disagreements be over?**

I think sometimes, which happens in the services, jobs for the boys as we call them or freebies. A mate of the captain would probably want to hitch a lift from A to B, so the

25:30 captain would say, "Oh yes, we'll land at such and such a time, hop on." Of course he's have to get past the head nurse and I often saw even - it didn't matter what rank they were, unless she said yes they couldn't get on, which I thought was wonderful! I can understand that it didn't happen with us because the captain was the boss man.

**That route that you were taking on these flights, was that designated?**

Yes.

26:00 Yes there was an area in Clark Field, which was called the Medevac Operational Room and you could go there anytime day or night. I used to spend a bit of time there and when someone was wounded in Vietnam it would light up. They had a big map, a big glass thing on the wall and it would light up, and you would actually see them coming in. You wouldn't see the aircraft but you would see dot, dot,

26:30 to rescue him and he would be taken to a field hospital, and they would mark down, and then half an hour later all his injuries would come through etcetera, etcetera, and then you'd start planning how he was going to be moved to get him home to America, and things like that. It was all done 'pre'. I guess that was progress with all that. They didn't

27:00 have that in World War II but you see, one hour it used to take to get them into a hospital.

**Can you describe what this equipment looked like that they would use?**

I really can't because I was more interested in what was going on with the patient than I was with the equipment around me and I guess in those days it probably would have been classified equipment.

**So what sort of a team**

27:30 **was making decisions about the care of this person?**

Well they'd go into a field hospital over there and there would be doctors and nurses, and they would assess the patient, and send messages, signals they used to send, and it was all done mainly through signals, and then they'd have a person called the - say if it was at night, she would be Nurse of the Night, the 'NON'.

28:00 Then we had the NOD, who was the Nurse of the Day and it was her job to configure aircraft, to work out how many patients were coming, to be picked up tomorrow, and what equipment had to go. It was a pretty big job and that was all done just by seeing this little spot on the thing. It was really unreal.

**Were you aware if there was a**

28:30 **particular military offensive on, if that would impact how busy you were or the amount of patients?**

Oh yes, yes that used to happen. That even happened over in Butterworth. You know, they'd send a signal and say, "Be prepared." So on several occasions we would empty out the hospital, the surgical areas and make sure we could cope with the wounded coming down, and that happened on all the bases.

29:00 Let's put it this way, an aircraft didn't sort of land. I think that only ever happened once to me up in Butterworth but that was a Malay Air Force helicopter that picked up a lot of wounded from the border. That's a different story all together. But we always knew when there was something going on and the

29:30 Americans knew. If we were supposed to say, go into Cam Ran Bay, the captain often announced over that we couldn't go in there. We'd have to go somewhere else and if they could, they'd move the patients from there by ambulance but usually if there was something going on they couldn't do that.

**When you were doing these evacuation flights was there a higher concentration of the wounded in a particular base or hospital?**

30:00 Well it really depended on what was going on in the area. Most places - they used to have casualty stations, where they'd take the wounded. Say in that area, they'd have a casualty station. Then they would move them from there into a field hospital and it would just depend. Often the field hospitals were sort of in the centre and the casualty stations

30:30 were around, and they'd get them to the field hospital as quickly as possible. Then they'd get them out of there as quick as possible, back to Clark Airbase if they could.

**Were there civilians in these hospitals?**

No.

**You mentioned that there were a lot of American servicewomen. What was the nature of their involvement and their injuries?**

Back in those days the American -

31:00 they certainly weren't in combat but they were in administrative jobs. I think they had them working on aircraft and they certainly wouldn't have war injuries as such. They wouldn't have been shot by the enemy but they would have been hurt falling off a ladder or something like that, what happens all the time around the place. But we carried quite a few

31:30 female service women because in those days they had a lot more in the American services than what we had and they were more involved. The Australian girls didn't go overseas up until about 1980 I think, the RAAF officers started to go over to Butterworth but now they're in everything.

32:00 **How did you perceive those American women to be treated in the services?**

They were treated pretty well. You mean like harassment or - ?

**The level of what they could contribute to the services and respect for that?**

I must admit I only once noticed disrespect towards a female by an American

32:30 servicemen but he seemed to be very immature and unfortunately there was a lot of racism when I was over there, very sadly, and I don't think that will ever change in the States. I really don't. Apart from the American servicewomen I think they were treated then better than they would be now.

**How did the racism**

33:00 **manifest itself in the day to day - ?**

Well I noticed it on one occasion. I had a Negro medical orderly. He was my right hand, very tall, handsome, Greg his name was and he was a sergeant. As I said, we all used to go out together. Anyhow, we were out one night at a club and everyone was up dancing,

33:30 and we were the only two sitting at the table. I said, "Come on Greg, let's go up and have a dance." He said, "No I can't!" I said, "Why? Are you crippled?" And he said, "No I can't, because you're white." And I sort of hadn't noticed prior to that. I mean to me he was just the same. I didn't sort of notice. Anyhow I said, "Well I'm game if you are!" Anyhow he did and

34:00 everyone left the floor, and I thought, "Oh hello, I'll probably be sent home," but I wasn't, and I just felt sorry for him. It was very noticeable and yet he was with this group we were with. He was good enough to work hard but that's how they were treated.

**Was there segregation that was evident on the base, informal segregation?**

No, no there wasn't, no.

34:30 Of course we also had - one of my head nurses was a Negress and she was unreal - she was fantastic. She was brilliant. She was a good nurse and she was brilliant. I never noticed any racism towards here from any other girl. It just seemed to be the men, which is sad isn't it.

**So that incident in the night club when**

35:00 **the male orderly Greg, didn't want to dance with you for those reasons, who was going to react badly to that?**

Well I guess everyone that was in the club really, those up dancing. The rest of our crew were all up dancing and I mean I didn't even think about it. I just didn't think about it and I felt very sorry for him when people started to sit down,

35:30 which is pretty awful. However I made him stay there and we finished the dance! I must admit I stayed in contact with him for many, many years and over the last few years I've just lost contact. So yes, that happened but that happens everywhere.

**What sorts of people would frequent these nightclubs in the Philippines?**

Oh on the bases -

36:00 see it was very dangerous going off the base. If we went off the base - have you heard of Angeles City?

**Can you explain it to me?**

Angeles City is a place in the Philippines, a very dreadful, debauched, horrible place but it was just near the Clark Airbase and if you went out to dinner there, you went under armed guard. So we didn't go off the base very often. We didn't have to because there were clubs on the base. Everything was there,

36:30 all the entertainment, everything was on the base.

**So did you have much contact with the locals?**

No, only the ones that - we had room girls in the quarters, who - how can I put it - conned me terribly! See they were paid. They were paid by the - I guess the United States.

37:00 However, the one I had, she said that she had a family of 20 and they were all dying, and she didn't have

any money, so I got conned beautifully there. Most of the girls used to get warned but I wasn't warned. I don't know how that happened but that was the only contact we had with them, lovely people.

**How did they seem to be responding to the American**

37:30 **presence in the Philippines?**

I think they were so used to them. See the Americans were there during World War II and Clark Airbase, they were there. It's only in the last five years that they've moved out of the Philippines. Well they had to because of the big volcano [Philippines. Mount Pinatubo]. It apparently came down and just covered Clark Airbase. So the Filipinos were very used to the Americans, the American

38:00 Joes, as they called them.

**Overall how did the attitudes of the American servicemen seem to be to you compared to Australians in their approach and attitude to the war?**

Pretty much the same I think. Of course the Americans, they're very military.

38:30 Most Americans go through some form of military training through their life and I'd say more Americans in a way, a little way, a little tiny bit, were a little bit blasé about things but a lot of our boys became that way as well. So I'd say they were pretty even on that.

**You mentioned that some of the**

39:00 **servicemen had obvious morphine addictions. Were there other drug related issues?**

No, none that I was aware of.

**What was the availability of alcohol like on the base?**

There was no - well certainly for the officers, in our quarters we had a 24 hour cocktail bar, which was a beautiful cocktail bar and I mentioned earlier about the earthquakes,

39:30 when we were down in the KC Lounge, we called it, that's the name of it, the only time we knew we were having earthquakes was when all the bottles would shake. I hate to think if the quarters had come down! So the availability was there and they had clubs for all the service personnel.

**Was there much division between the hierarchy**

40:00 **in the US military?**

And the troops or the officers?

**Between the officers and the troops?**

In all services there was that - you're not supposed to socially be with the troops as such. That used to be. I think that may have changed now. Everyone had their own clubs,

40:30 like a sergeant couldn't go into an officers' club and an officer shouldn't go into a sergeants' club or a sergeant go into an airmen's club because that's supposed to be a place where you can completely relax, and not have any problems but when you start mixing things up, that's when arguments would start. The usual story!

## Tape 7

00:32 **Pat you mentioned earlier where there was an episode where some Japanese students had hijacked a plane?**

Yes. That happened over in Korea. They hijacked the plane I think it was in Japan and the plane flew to Kimpo in Korea, and we were on our way to Kimpo to offload our patients but we couldn't land there. We had to go up to Tagoo and

01:00 land there. A couple of weeks ago they had a newsreel of this on the telly, a documentary on these kids hijacking this plane. It was good! I could say, "I was there and I went there!" Yes, very interesting!

**What were their reasons for hijacking the plane?**

I can't recall now. I think they were just rebelling and remember back in those days a lot of planes were being hijacked.

01:30 **Were there many security scares outside of wartime that you had to deal with?**

Not necessarily security scares, no, no. We, as nursing sisters, we weren't really involved in those types of things unless - I mean naturally there were a few scares, things going on around the world



02:00 but nothing to worry about, put it that way.

**You mentioned that you remember your first evacuation with the US. Could you actually explain point by point where you went in Vietnam?**

Look off my head I couldn't. My log is just in there if you'd like me to - ?

**No that's OK. I'll have a look at that later but do you have**

02:30 **a memory of some of the places that you went?**

Well, se we only flew into - they were all airbases where we flew and they'd have the patients there. We really didn't go off the bases in Vietnam. We would just be in and we would wait on the strip, the airstrip, and they'd bring the patients to us.

03:00 **When you flew over Vietnam were you able to see what the landscape was like from the air?**

Oh yes, you could see. I think I said before, it was just paddy fields and palm trees, very pretty, pretty area but that's all we could see.

**What kind of evidence of the war could you see from the air?**

I really can't recall seeing any,

03:30 only on the bases. On some of the bases you could see where bombs had been and the evidence wasn't really - well put it this way, I certainly didn't see any.

**When you were flying in on these flights were there any occasions when you had to divert because of the enemy?**

Yes there was, a couple of times that happened.

04:00 We always knew where we were going but if we were on our way, say to Cam Ran Bay or Nui Dat, the captain would announce that we weren't going there. We were going somewhere else because of enemy in the area. Of course they didn't really know where the enemy were but they had some idea that they were around.

**Did you ever have a**

04:30 **feeling of being unsafe when you were on these trips?**

No, no I didn't.

**Was there much communication between the pilot and the nurses onboard in terms of what kind of activity there was?**

Only to the head nurse. He would tell her and then if she thought necessary she would then pass it on but see it was up to her to say

05:00 either we would go in there or we wouldn't, so he had to pass it on to her.

**You mentioned earlier that there were different names that the Americans used for different drugs and different pieces of equipment. Can you think of any other examples? Were there different procedures that they used?**

No, nursing is practically the same world over, perhaps different ways of doing things.

05:30 A nurse could really go anywhere and nurse people. The only problem would be language barrier I guess but if they could get in and go ahead, and nurse people, they could do it in the way they're taught to do it. Basic nursing is worldwide, so there was no

06:00 real problem there, only sometimes with the way - they were the same but it was the way the Americans pronounced it or if you were over there, it was the way we pronounced it! But our equipment was nearly all the same.

**You mentioned that the Starlifter was a huge aircraft. How different was it for you working on that craft as opposed to the - ?**

Hercules?

**Hercules.**

It was a fair

06:30 bit different because even though the aircraft was very large, the turbulence in a Starlifter was far greater than in the Hercules. I think probably because it had such a big volume inside. If you hit - like in a Hercules, it had to be really pretty rough before you had to strap in but in a Starlifter, just hitting a little bit

07:00 of turbulence was petty rough, very rough in fact. In fact I know on one flight, one of the American girls with the turbulence, she just went up and cracked her skull on the roof of the aircraft, and I think it was because it was such a big volume of space.

**What kinds of evidence did you have in terms of bruising and injuries of this kind of turbulence?**

Oh gosh! We used to have

07:30 sometimes seatbelt bruising because you always had just a lap strap and bruising from parts of the aircraft, the litters, the stanchions, yes, not badly. I mean you soon got over it. I can't recall any broken bone or anything like that happening.

08:00 It could have very easily but see, we knew how to climb and like monkeys I suppose! You got to know the best way to do it.

**If you had a patient high up, what would you be carrying and how would you be doing it?**

Well they had what we call stanchions. I've also got photos there. I'll show you. There was a little step. You could pull it out and there'd be this little step. It was

08:30 about that long and about that wide, and that's how we used to climb up all over the aircraft. We used to have little pillboxes, so if you had two patients up high you'd put all their pills in and it closed. It had sort of little compartments in it. We all carried those for that reason. If you had to do

09:00 dressings and usually patients up the top you didn't have to do dressings. We'd usually put the patients up there that didn't need very much attention as such. I mean you wouldn't put someone up there that occasionally had to use a bedpan. So they were - I mean they were sick but they didn't need heavy nursing.

09:30 **You mentioned that you flew to the States on some occasions. Could you explain some of those journeys and where they were to?**

I think one of my nicest journeys - I flew to Alaska. We only had four patients onboard and they were four American boys, four Alaskan boys, which served in the United States,

10:00 and they were just going home to their families. That was one of the nicest trips because they were getting well. They didn't need heavy nursing and it was lovely to see them so excited about going home, and the lovely thing, when we landed their families were right there, which was fantastic. We spent a few days in Alaska, which I couldn't believe

10:30 because we arrived about four o'clock in the afternoon and we went straight to the officers' club, and we came out about two o'clock in the morning, and it was still daylight. It was daylight 24 hours a day. It was unreal but in the quarters they had special blackout curtains. In the quarters you thought you were in the dark. And I flew to California,

11:00 up to Washington, a couple of flights I did across to the States. Yes it was good.

**What kinds of planes were you using on these flights?**

We used to use the Hercules and the Starlifter. If we only had four patients that aircraft was full of other service personnel, you know going on posting or coming

11:30 back and things like that. The aircraft were nearly always full of someone or something. We never sort of just had four patients in a Starlifter. Yes it was good.

**Were you able to see a lot of the States when you actually landed?**

Not a great deal. I went to San Francisco

12:00 and some of those touristy places. I didn't see a great deal I guess. I saw enough, put it that way because I was getting towards the end of my time and I longed - I was getting very homesick, and I just longed for an Aussie voice, and wanting to get home. I remember my flight out,

12:30 my flight on the way home. It was once again on a Starlifter and we got into Tan Son Nhut about four o'clock in the morning, and the Australian Base wasn't open, the unit, Wallaby Unit, and I stayed with the Americans until they opened. They took me down there and the first thing I heard was, "G'day Sis! Want some coffee?" And I could have kissed

13:00 this guy, I really could have! It was so lovely to hear an Aussie and to be back with them. I enjoyed my attachment over there but it was great to get back.

**When you were in the States did you see any evidence of the anti-war protests over there?**

No, no I didn't. I think we were sort of kept away from all of that.

13:30 I mean we knew it was there but I didn't see any evidence of it.

**What kind of attitude did the Americans have towards you as an Australian and Australian involvement in the war?**

Oh a wonderful attitude! They really did welcome us and looked after us. In fact

14:00 I've got a cut out I'll show you after about an Australian, who was over in the States a couple of years ago and he was talking to a group of people, and these particular men had been medevaced by an Australian nurse that was on the flight, and he just couldn't speak highly enough about her. This was an article that was taken out of the paper

14:30 and we had a very good relationship. In fact, some of the American girls used to come across to Butterworth for R&R and we made some pretty good friends.

**When you were on secondment in the Philippines were you the only Australian?**

Yes.

**What was that like?**

A bit odd, a bit odd to start

15:00 with I guess but we blended in and in the end you just didn't notice it really. It's a bit hard to explain. When you're the only person of a certain nationality I guess, amongst everyone else. Of course in a way the Americans are pretty close

15:30 to us in their speech, more so these days than they were then. No that didn't worry me.

**What did they know of Australia?**

Very little, absolutely very little. In fact most of them that I had dealings with didn't even know where Malaya was. I found that very strange because when we were going to school we learnt about the rest of the world

16:00 and not much about Australia but the Americans at that time were very - I don't think they wanted to know about the rest of the world then. It's very different now of course.

**What kinds of things could you do in your time off when you were at the Philippines?**

You could go - you couldn't go far because it was pretty dangerous off the base.

16:30 A lot of the girls went into Manila that were on the exchange like I was. I never had any desire to do that. I was more interested in going out and being Nurse of the Day or assisting up there. Shopping of course was a big thing, especially on trips when we went into Japan.

17:00 I found Japan fascinating absolutely, a wonderful place to shop and the first time I had a hotsi bath [very hot Japanese gas fired bath]. Have you ever heard of the hotsi bath? They tried for ages to get me into a hotsi bath and I said, "No, I'm not having one." Anyhow, they finally got me in there and I sort of stood in this room, and this very, very massive Japanese lady came in, and within seconds I was

17:30 stripped, stripped bare, and hauled up onto a table, and she came over, and got up, and walked on the back of my back, and I could hardly feel her, and I really thought I'd be crushed! Then they put you - you've seen those saunas where your head is just popping out. She put me in one of those and I really thought I was going to be cooked to death, got me out of there, put me in a very cold,

18:00 icy cold bath, which I couldn't sink. I tried to sink and I just couldn't sink. Anyhow, then she got me up, back up on the table and massaged me all over, and rubbed me with oils, and stuff, and when I had finally finished, that's the best I've ever felt in my whole life! But that was an experience!

**Whereabouts would you fly into in Japan?**

We used to go into Yokota, was the main

18:30 base. USAF have a base there and that's where their big burns unit was.

**Was there much evidence of the troops having R&R at some of these places where you were?**

Not a great deal, no. Of course over in Butterworth a lot of the troops used to come down. There was certainly evidence there

19:00 but not a great deal in the other places because see you were sort of surrounded by military personnel and seeing military personnel in the streets didn't sort of bother you. You just took it for granted.

**Did you notice a difference in the Australian experience of Vietnam and the American experience?**

In what way?

**In terms of how they**

19:30 **perceived the war or what their role was?**

That was something we really didn't discuss, no. We just didn't discuss that.

**Was there any discussion of the war at all?**

Do you mean when I was with the Americans? No. No there wasn't.

20:00 Of course when you're involved in something you usually don't talk about it. Even back in Butterworth we didn't sit down and discuss it very much because we knew what was going on, and we really didn't need to.

**Once you left the States where did you go from there?**

I went back to 4 RAAF Hospital and I finished my

20:30 tour there. I did two years there and then I was posted back to 3 RAAF Hospital, where I did another two years. I went to Wagga from there. We had in Australia our hospitals and our base medical flight and I was posted down to Wagga, and that's where there is a training base. That's where we had all the young apprentices,

21:00 the 15 year old Argentine Ants, as we used to call them. If you don't move they'll eat you! I was at Wagga for two years and then I was posted back to Malaysia for another two years. The air force was very good to me. I had some very good postings.

**So, once you were after the States were you in Butterworth for a while longer and then back to Richmond?**

Yes. Yes I was in Butterworth -

21:30 **- for another two years. So while you were at Butterworth what kind of knowledge did you have of the peace talks in Vietnam?**

We certainly were very interested in all of that. Of course the conflict really didn't end until '75, although in my last tour up there, I went up in '74,

22:00 some of the girls went up to Saigon - the closing of the - you know, when we were pulling out. There were hundreds of babies, which were just left. So the air force flew in and brought a lot of the babies back. When they came back we didn't have little baby litters or anything, so they brought them all back in

22:30 cardboard boxes would you believe but there were hundreds and they were flown back to 4 RAAF [Hospital], and then they were taken to Singapore, and handed over to the civilian authorities.

**Whose babies were they?**

They were orphaned children. Of course the pull out was very traumatic, as you probably have seen on documentaries. The Americans were pulling out

23:00 and of course a lot of the Vietnam people had worked for the Americans, and they were all trying to get out. Of course all these places were desert and all the orphanages, they just left them, and that's when they brought all the babies out. In fact Qantas was also involved. I think they flew a couple of aircraft in brought children out.

**What was the last trip that you did into Vietnam?**

23:30 I went up and I just picked up about four or five patients. They weren't badly wounded. That's when they were clearing out everything and moving out. Things started to close down. We still had air force troops up there of course. That would have been my last one there,

24:00 into Vietnam.

**What year was it that you left Butterworth?**

I went up in '74 and I came back in '76, and I was posted to Amberley, up in Queensland. That was an operational base. Most of my career was spent on operational bases. That's where you had the aircraft, except for Wagga. It was a very

24:30 busy base up there. I got involved with the combat survival courses, which entailed navy, air force and army sent out on combat survival. They had to survive and I use go out as staff, just to make sure that they did survive, and I'd be away for about two or three weeks out in the boondocks [remote areas]

25:00 looking after these people. That's when they learned the - what do they say - the man from the mice or whatever. The bigger they are the harder they fall. That's pretty true. I saw some pretty big guys really broken on those courses and then they started sending females. I was on the first one that they had two - one navy girl and one air force girl, and I just prayed that they'd

25:30 make it, and they both did because I knew if they didn't make it, they wouldn't have females any more.

So they were pretty tough but they were very interesting. The first time I ever ate turtle was on one of those because they had nothing. They had absolutely nothing to survive. They were dropped out of helicopters up in the bush, way up behind Townsville and they had to survive.

**What thoughts do you have now on what**

**26:00 lessons you learned from your experience in dealing with Vietnam patients?**

I think I was always a compassionate person but I think coming out of that experience I became more compassionate and more understanding I think, of people. Seeing

26:30 people – how can I put this? More understanding of say, psychiatric patients. I must admit throughout my training and my nursing I rarely had anything to do with those sort of patients, and seeing – not often but seeing young men just crushed was very sad, and I

27:00 had a better understanding of these types of people, and I became quite involved at Amberley with counselling sessions with some of the troops. Of course these things could happen too on a base. It wasn't just in wartime but I think you do get a better understanding of how the mind works and what happens

27:30 to some people.

**What was particular about the Vietnam War that had in your experience, the most impact on the troops?**

I really can't say what would have the most – I have a lot of friends here, Vietnam veterans. In fact there is one fellow here, who I actually nursed

28:00 over in 4 RAAF Hospital, he's a very good friend of mine and sometimes the boys a very different. You can see at times they're sad but you never sort of ask why. I think they all came back and as I said, with the way they were welcomed back was very bad for them,

28:30 until they had the big welcome a couple of years ago. But I mean that took 20 years and even returned World War II men wouldn't accept them, which meant a lot to some of those guys. Even today there is a lot that won't have anything to do with – won't wear their medals or you know, which is very sad because what they did, they should be proud of, because they were over there for Australia.

29:00 But it was one of those wars that should never have happened really, like most wars.

**What is your view on the Vietnam War in hindsight?**

Personally I think it shouldn't have happened because when you think they were in there for – I mean it just didn't start in 1965. The

29:30 Americans were in there in 1962 and we also had quite a lot of Australians up there then, and nobody knew of course. It was just one of those things. I mean I'm very sorry it happened and I guess it shouldn't have happened but when you look back now, and when you see sometimes – I do watch a lot of documentaries, and

30:00 the lass that was badly burned, and who came out here, and lectured, it's sort of – if that hadn't have happened, her word wouldn't have been spread. I mean she did wonders just surviving, let alone coming out and facing people. Some good came out of it and I guess some bad. It shouldn't have happened

30:30 but I really can't say what my feelings are. Of course if it hadn't have happened I wouldn't have got all my experience I guess. Maybe that's being a little bit selfish but I'm very much against any war and as you know the Gulf War, I know quite a lot of troops that have gone over there.

31:00 In fact there was a male nursing officer, who had his photo in the paper the other day and he was one of my junior sisters when I was at Laverton, and I just felt so proud to see him, and those sorts of things. I mean it's something you never forget and the comradeship is just wonderful with most service people.

**In hindsight**

**31:30 what is your view of Australia's involvement in particular in the Vietnam War?**

I think at the time Australia – I think they were very worried about Communism and I mean they weren't far away. When you look at the map Vietnam is not far away from Australia, a lot closer than to America really. If you look at it that way

32:00 the soldiers that went over there were there to protect Australia from them coming down. That's the way I look at it.

**You mentioned that you don't believe the war should have happened, in what way?**

Well I don't think any war should happen. I really don't. I think over there –

32:30 I don't want to get too political on this. I think I might just leave it at that. I don't want to go into that really.

**Did you have a view on conscription?**

Did I have a view on? At the time no I didn't. I thought, "Well they're young and they're strong, and why not?" But I certainly feel different about it now. I think it's very unfair because

33:00 there were a lot - well they missed out. I feel that their names didn't even go in the hat, put it that way and I'd hate to see it happen again. The only thing I'd like to see would be some of the young people go through some form of defence force training, male and female.

33:30 Maybe that will come one day. I think that would be very good in many ways but I'd hate to see it come back in. I really don't think it would ever happen.

**What do you think young people could gain from some training of that kind?**

I think self-discipline is one thing and I feel that discipline is

34:00 lacking in many places now. They don't get disciplined in school and some form of training, where they might even learn to respect themselves. I'm not talking about all the young people but there are certainly a lot that could do with some pretty hard discipline. That's the way I feel.

**You mentioned that you were involved in some counselling while you were at Amberley.**

34:30 **What kinds of issues did you find were coming up for Vietnam veterans?**

Oh actually it wasn't Vietnam veterans as such. It was just airmen, airwomen on the base. They have their problems the same as everybody else but when you're in a tight knit community, I think it's picked up and noticed early, so

35:00 you do have the opportunity of nipping it in the bud, and perhaps saving careers of some of them. I hope we did. Often it would be people being homesick or heartbroken. That happened a lot and things like that. You really got to know - I guess when you're on a base - I mean we had over 3,000

35:30 personnel there, they were all away from their families, you become mother. A lot of them come to you with any little thing but some people - I mean it's the same - unfortunately there is a group of people in all our lives, who just can't make it or can't cope and luckily these

36:00 days there's someone there to help them. I certainly don't believe in all the counselling that goes on these days. I can't understand. Don't think I'm hard but if something happens to a child at school, why the whole school is counselled? The way I see it they're taking away people's way of thinking and people won't be able to breathe their own

36:30 way, and I think they're doing it too much. That's my belief.

**You have spoken about the way the Vietnam veterans were treated when they came home. In your view how much support was there from the Forces themselves to help the men?**

To begin with not a great deal because I don't think they really realised the problems that were going to come.

37:00 Of course when it was realised, they had all the support. The Vietnam veterans did a lot for themselves. They fought for better pensions. They fought for people to help them but they did it themselves and they really set up - there's the Vietnam Veterans' Association, which no doubt

37:30 you know about, which is very strong, and now they are a tremendous lobbying group, very strong. Of course now they're taking over the different RSL [Returned and Services League] positions, which once wouldn't have been heard of, but the new RSL State President is a Vietnam veteran.

38:00 Here in our own sub-branch here, the whole executive are Vietnam veterans. Being a female it's even better still for me because I'm the President but we have a lovely - I don't know - you really don't understand until you - if you were in a group of people and you just sort of become one. It's really a wonderful feeling, wonderful

38:30 comradeship, and I know any time I could pick the phone up, and ring any of the boys, and they'd be there to help, and vice versa.

**Did you ever have any contact with any of the patients that you helped after the war?**

For a couple of years there were a couple that I did correspond with. It was a little bit hard to - we all liked to follow up on cases and I have

39:00 come across, when I went up to Maryborough in Queensland, there were two taxi drivers up there, who I had medicated home. They remembered me. I didn't remember them because we were just the one and they were 50 odd, and I became very friendly. They came up to the hospital and re-introduced themselves to me, and I became very friendly with their families,

39:30 which was lovely to think that these fellows had remembered me. That's happened on a few occasions, which is a good feeling.

**You've got some beautiful medals on your jacket.**

Yes, yes, I'm very proud of them.

**Could you explain where some of them are from?**

OK my first medal here, that's Associate Member of the Royal Red Cross. That's an Imperial

40:00 Nursing Medal only given to military nurses, by the Queen. I received that in 1980. That's my Vietnam Medal. This one here is my Active Service Medal, Australian Active Service Medal. The end one is for my services in Malaysia. I'm very proud of those medals. It took a lot of fighting and a lot of years to get them for the girls but we finally made it, and we're really in. Of course the other ones are all RSL Active Service.

**The Vietnam Medal, what was that awarded for?**

For the services given during the medivacs.

**Does that medal have a name?**

No, just the Vietnam Medal.

**The Vietnam Medal.**

41:00 **Pat thank you very much for being involved.**

It's my pleasure.

**It's been a wonderful day for us, so thank you.**

Thank you very much.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**