Australians at War Film Archive

Keith Payne - Transcript of interview

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Some parts of this interview have been embargoed.

The embargoed portions are noted in the transcript and video.

Tape 1

00:30 All right, my name is Keith Payne, born in Ingham 30th of August 1933, the son of Henry Thomas and

01:00 Ramilda Maria Payne. At that time I was the youngest of four children born to the family at that time, but the family did increase to a 13 bracket which was the pretty standard sort of a family back in those days now, in the country anyhow. City people didn't. Well they had a lot more to do with their time I suppose than rear children. And

01:30 I was educated at Ingham State School initially during the early part of the war years. Then we moved out to Trebon, changed schools there to the Trebon State School and subsequently came back into Ingham, probably in the late '40s we moved back into town. Father got another job back

02:00 in town so we moved back into town and into initially the family home. So we moved about quite a bit at that time because of work mainly and father just coming out of the military and re-establishing himself. From there I did an apprenticeship as a cabinet maker until I fell out with the boss and decided that it was time

02:30 I moved on, so I joined the regular army. Prior to going into the regular army I'd already joined the regimental cadets, and the regimental cadets of that time was greatly integrated with the then Citizens' Military Forces, now the Reserve, and we did all the training that the CMF [Citizens' Military Force] did, only they got paid and we never.

03:00 So having finished that and decided to join the regular army, I pulled the pin and [left] and went to Brisbane. And my boss cancelled my apprenticeship indenture, so I came back up again and had a few words with him. And he decided to change the indentures, and so I subsequently was enlisted into the regular army. From there I

03:30 did my recruit training and then my formal infantry training and everything prior to embarking for Korea in the middle of 1952. I served with the 1st Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment for the ensuing nine and a half months while the battalion was in Korea. When the battalion left to come home, I

04:00 only had a short period to go so instead of going back into another battalion and upsetting the organisation there, I completed my time at 28 Brigade Headquarters in the rear echelon area, which I was pretty thankful for because I'd done my time in the line. And having completed that I came back to Australia

04:30 and was posted to a cadet unit in Townsville, remained there until 1955 and then transferred as an instructor to Wacol. It was during my period at Townsville that I did a

05:00 driver max course with the army and met someone that distracted my attention somewhat and was to be my wife for the next 50-odd years. So from there I went back into the regular battalions again, back to 3 RAR [3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment], did a training course leading up to deployment into

05:30 Malaya. We went into Malaya and did operations on the Malay-Thai border and against the Indonesians

during the confrontation along the [Malay] Peninsula. From there it was back home. National Service had now started for… the second bracket of National Service had started, which saw our young men now deploying into Vietnam. After doing a

06:00 warrant officers' course I was posted to Skyville, which is the Officer Training Unit, to train the National Service people that had been selected to do officer training. Having trained them for a while I managed to escape Skyville. I went into the 2nd Battalion

06:30 of Pacific Islands Regiment doing operations along the Irian Jaya border against the Indonesian uprising during…in that particular area. Having completed that little part of the operation, I came back to my own barracks and took over as the transport officer until I was called home to finally do my

07:00 little stint in Vietnam. I did a training course in Australia prior to going to Vietnam. On reaching Vietnam I was assigned to Mobile Strike Force and I served with strike force for the next seven months before illness and everything saw me transferred back to Australia.

07:30 I was then posted to the Royal Military College at Duntroon, instructing young men to be officers in our regular army, and it was around this time that I was starting to get a little bit tired of not going anywhere. Things had changed drastically with the change of government and government policy, so

08:00 I elected to take to my discharge, and by doing so I applied for a job X, prior to my severing my operation with the green machine [army]. The job X I was given was here in Mackay as the warrant officer looking after the then still CMF

08:30 at Combiatan Barracks, a mortar platoon in Cerina. Having finished all that and got out, I then shifted off to Oman. I was leaving our green machine and I got a call and asked if I'd like to go to Oman and I thought, you know, "Well that's interesting. Where's Oman?" But however I subsequently left our army and

09:00 went into the Sultan's armed forces in Oman, along with a lot of British officers and everything because Oman was a British protected, British mandated territory, so I was very much tied up with the Brits then. I started to get ill and things weren't working too well for me, so when I came home I

09:30 tended to not go back. I finished my time. I said, "That's it, I won't be going back." From there I went fishing for a bit. I took out a pro [professional] fishing licence to sort of settle myself down and I made a go of that. I tried not to spend any of the money that I'd saved or anything so, and then I took

10:00 up… We were… What was I doing? Yeah, I was doing a lot of renovation work on homes and everything else like that until illness struck me down. And I then had to go to the Department of Veterans' Affairs and say, "Well." you know, "I can't work any more." So after some

10:30 tedious applications and running backwards and forwards, I was subsequently made a Totally and Permanently Disabled soldier. Having done that, we, my wife and I, settled down nice and easy and we came into our present residence some 10 years ago.

11:00 So here we are today heading for our 50th wedding anniversary in December and living the life of Riley [living well] except for all the complaints of the body.

That's great. Thanks Keith. That's a really great summary. I'd like to go back to your childhood now, if you could tell me a little bit more about growing up in Ingham and your family?

Well the childhood days of course, as I

11:30 mentioned, we became a very large family. Prior to the war things were very, very tight. We were in the Depression years and father was always working, which was pretty damn fortunate. And the other very fortunate thing that happened at about that time was our very location

12:00 of Ingham. Ingham was then a very, very small country town on the railway line. You couldn't get into and out of Ingham in the wet weather anyhow, so the only means of access was the railway line and that used to flood as well, so we were a pretty isolated sort of a little borough. And of course it was still very much a bush town.

12:30 You didn't have to go far to catch fish. We used to just potter down around the creeks and everything around Ingham and we could always catch a few fish and everything. And certainly there was wild pigs not too far out in the bush, and we had scrub turkey and wild pigeon and everything else like that, so we were able to forage. During the

13:00 Depression years we were able to upkeep and sustain the family, from the land as well as what father brought home in the way of payment. Of course we had a big vegetable garden and everything that the boys all had to dig and grow lettuce and all the vegetables in season to help with the

13:30 larder. And things in those years were vastly different to what they are today. We never had fancy things like washing machines and radio. That radio. That Stromberg-Carlson radio, little bakelite, well was quite a big bakelite piece of equipment

14:00 that was put way up on a shelf because it was too high tech. It had two knobs on it, I think. Three knobs, one for adjusting, one for volume, I think, yeah, and one other, on-off switch. Three knobs. And it was put way up on a high shelf so Father could reach it. Mother couldn't even reach it. She wasn't high tech enough to turn this radio on, this magic piece of gear.

14:30 And of course initially we were running that off a battery and then when power came on, a big day in the home town. The power station kicked in on line and power came on and then we had big troubles with that radio. We were now getting more power than we needed and everything, but we overcome the problem, or father overcome the problem.

15:00 **Do you remember what sort of programs you were listening to?**

Yeah, we used to sit there and listen to the old Don Bradman [cricketer] do all his things. And, yeah, we got the news and the weather. And of course, you know, it was only to be used when father was home. So, you know, we were pretty restricted in the listening period, though the girls later used to get up on stools and turn

15:30 it on and used to get – What were they? – 'Dad and Dave' and 'Portia Faces Life' [radio soap operas] or something. I don't know what the girls used to listen to, but cause we were all, I was at school or out in the bush and so, you know, it didn't worry us, but the… yeah, we were pretty primitive. We had a copper boiler

16:00 that we made out of a 44 gallon drum. I think every house in town had one of those, or if you were real fancy they made a brick concrete one and put the copper boiler in that. And they were mongrel things anyhow because you couldn't get the copper boiler out to clean it and everything and that was the boys' job, clean the boiler and cut the wood and light the fire. And the girls had to help with the washing. And we did all the

16:30 hard yakka [work] and of course we had wood stoves in the house and they had to be fuelled, so every now and again, we had in those days, we had an old T-model Ford. And I first started to drive on a T-model Ford when I could barely reach the pedals, all three of them. And it had another little thing you flipped forward like a handbrake, which was a top gear in actual fact.

17:00 The three pedals, you had a clutch, a brake, you know, and a drive pedal, right. And then this handbrake thing. So we'd go out in the scrub with the crosscut saws and the axes and everything and load up with timber and come home and saw it all up and cut it all up and stack it all up and the girls used to cart… We'd cart it upstairs into there and the girls would

17:30 burn it for us and we'd go crook at them quite often [yell at them], you know, "You're burning too much wood." And that was basically the life, and life went on.

How many boys as opposed to girls were in the family?

We had seven boys, six girls.

So dinner time must have been interesting?

Well yeah, you know, we had a big long table and

18:00 had long stools, you know, not enough room for a rounded table or a lot of chairs. There was two chairs at the table, one at the head of the table and one at the other end and that was Mother and Father. And Mother, of course, sat in the one that was closest to the stove and the serving bench and everything else and Father sat up the other end and, of course, various meal time regulations. You didn't talk at the table,

18:30 you watched your manners and you sat up straight, and you did all those sort of things that families did in those days. And after the meal it was clean up, wash up, wipe up. The girls washed up, the boys wiped up. It was just a routine that went on and on through the family, you know, through the years. So we were a pretty happy bunch. There was

19:00 a lot of fights amongst the kids and everything, but dare any outsider try and pick us, you know, it was one of ours because it was just all in. You try and touch one of the Paynes, you got a hiding. That was the end of the lesson.

What was your mum like?

Mum was, Mum is, a very short woman of pretty solid structure.

19:30 And Mum was part Italian so she was very confused in her days I suppose because of her religion. She was brought up, her mother was Catholic and grandfather was Church of England and there was a bit of confusion reigned supreme

20:00 in those days. And I recall later on, somewhere about the end of the '40s, the priest dared to tell Mum that she wasn't married because she wasn't married in the Catholic Church. They were very funny in those days. And so the old man, my Dad,

20:30 found a bloke with his collar back to front and snotted [punched] him down the street and it turned out to be the wrong priest, but however the message got around, "Keep quiet." Yeah, so, but Mum was a pretty gentle sort of a soul. She was, well she's still alive, in her 92nd year, so

21:00 she brought up the family during the war years. She was a very protective mother and a very hardworking woman. And to bear all those children… And she lost two. Two of the boys are gone. All the rest of the family's alive and she suffered that loss and now she's suffered the loss of my Dad. But still alive, so…

21:30 Yeah, growing up in those days was one big ball. It was, especially when father went away to the war. I can recall that he put all the fishing nets away and it was all legal in those days. You know, well we made all our own nets and everything then and, you know, we'd save up money and have a look at a creek, throw a fishing line across and say, "We'll put a net here next weekend." and next weekend we did.

22:00 We'd sit down and start and one would work one end and the other one. There'd be singeing ropes during the week. Bugger the school work. That went by the board. The net comes first. After all the house chores were done, the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and ducks were fed, the wood was cut, everything was done and then we made net. And Father, when he went away in

22:30 '41, he put all the nets and everything away and naphthalene and everything, cause they were all linen nets in those days and we were too young to handle them, you know. And he hadn't gone out the bloody door I don't think. I don't think he'd gone out the door and all the nets were out and on the pushbikes and away we went, so we had a jolly time feeding the family during the war

23:00 years while he was away and everything. And, of course, we had a little BSA [Birmingham Small Arms] .22 that we were supposed to hand in. There was the .303 rifle that came out of the Boer War that we were supposed to hand in. Nobody was supposed to have weapons in those days, but we managed to forget about handing them in, and so we

23:30 still sustained the family with pigs and a couple of shotguns. We had a couple of shotguns, so with ducks and birds and all the rest of it we were doing quite all right. We thought this was cause we never had the restriction of Father. The only restriction we had at that time was ammunition for the weapons, but that problem was quickly overcome because the Americans were going backwards and forwards and they were camped just outside

24:00 of Ingham, so we would negotiate with the Americans for some of our goodies for their ammunition and all the rest of it and pinch their pushbikes too, because we couldn't get rubber for our pushbikes so we used to pinch them, acquire, relocate all the tyres off the American pushbikes onto ours and away we'd go again. Yeah, it was

24:30 pretty good times.

What was your father like?

Henry was, when he… He was two men, Father. He was very… well one of the things that he was always throughout his life, he was very, very conscious of his responsibilities,

25:00 both to his families and their family, and his unemployment. Family first, everything was for the family. Prior to the war he was a pretty happy-go-lucky sort of a fellow as well. And the war years did change him and he was… For a while, he never drank, Father, so that was one consolation.

25:30 And he never smoked until the latter end of his life as well, so he became very bitter towards the whole lot of the system, the government and everything in their treatment of the veterans and everything else like that. And I think I've got a little bit of that from him as well because I see things now that tend to upset me, what the government don't

26:00 do for the veterans. Anyhow so, but he was two blokes, two different sort of blokes. And towards the end he seemed to stabilise in life and after his retirement and he enjoyed the last years of his life, he really did, yeah.

Do you remember in Ingham when war broke out?

Certainly, God yeah! All these blokes were going

26:30 away. War was on. "We'll go to a war! We'll go to war!" Dear oh dear, cause I had uncles and everybody that were all going, and Father couldn't go for a while because he had the family. And he was a little bit older and they put him aside under the Manpower Act for a while, but then he subsequently, when the Japanese came into the war and things started to

27:00 look a little bit bad to our north, they said, "Righto Henry, you can put on a uniform." so away he went. We lost one of the uncles. He was killed in the Islands and fortunately the others came home in all different physical states

27:30 after their campaigning. Yeah, I remember the war years all right, yeah, by God.

Do you remember the very day it broke out and how the news was relayed?

Yeah, well, you know, war. We were just, you know, to me when the outbreak of war, 1939, I was only six years old at the time and I've got a very small recollection of, you know, the

28:00 Kaiser, the Germans, box heads and all the things that they were talking about and everything. And I remember the uncles and everybody getting down in our back shed because some of them did belong to the, then the militia. Prior to World War II it was the militia, and they were doing a bit of rifles and have gymnastics down in the shed and everything and saying, "We're away. We're going to do sting."

28:30 and everything, you know. But, of course, a young bloke, I thought, "Oh well, here they are playing around again." Like bloody guns and everything, which was pretty normal in our sort of area anyhow in those days and, of course, when Japan came into the war, well I remember that quite well because it was some three years after and I was just that bit older and I could understand a lot better about the Japs

29:00 coming into the war.

So you were saying that you remember when the Japanese came into the war?

Yeah, well, you know, the first thing that was very significant from my memory was everything that belonged to the Japs, was made in Japan, was either broken or thrown away or planted or something, you know. It was

29:30 a period of very much apprehension in North Queensland. Of course, about this time we started to get the Americans coming in as well and our own troops were all training up in the north in the Atherton Tableland and everything and all coming through Ingham and so, you know, the war was getting closer and closer to us at that particular time. And

30:00 we had great times with the soldiers on the troop trains. We'd fruit in season around the place, mangoes, pineapples, custard apples and all the tropical fruit, oranges and lemons and everything, we'd sell to the Yanks and half the time they never got paid anyhow, they never got their product.

30:30 We'd take their money and say, "The train's going." or… and they never got their fruit. Anyhow, but we always gave to the diggers [Australian soldiers]. The diggers got all the free stuff, which was only justifiable I suppose and, you know, we had lots of things that come to memory

31:00 about that time. I remember an American Negro, black African they called him, American African or something they call them now, cause in those days and, by gee, right through until not so very long ago, the American Negro was pretty downed on by the whites. And I noticed on a couple of trips to America recently that in the southern states there's still a little bit there, you know.

31:30 It's not very Australian to do those sort of things, you know. But anyhow, one of them jumped off the train. There was a little shop across the road from the station and he was heading in that direction to buy something, I should imagine, or something, and an American MP [Military Police] yelled, "Stop!" And he kept running and, of course, there was stacks of them running at the same time, you know, and the American pulled out his

32:00 pistol, went phu phu and dropped him – not very nice – and he remained in Ingham. I didn't ever get to know him, but I used to see him around the streets and that because he… they never put him in jail. They put him in hospital and he had a pretty good time for probably a couple of months around Ingham, you know, everybody looking after him a little bit. And

32:30 the white Americans used to frown on it a bit, but you know, well we never took any notice. He was just a nice little, old bloke. Well he was probably in his 20s or things like that.

Where did he live in town?

He was based… He was in the hospital, recuperation ward in the hospital, and then after that he went to the showground. There was an Australian

33:00 transfer station, I suppose, for soldiers in the showground so he was there for a bit too before he went away to the American Army again. They probably give him a hard time then, I don't know. But I also remember a fellow we used to call old Andy. Prior to the war, probably about 1938, 1939 when

33:30 there was still swaggies [swagmen] on the line and everything else like that, there was a little bridge about half a mile out of town and we used to go out that way with our shanghais and everything and break into everything we shot at. And, you know, our favourite things were cups on telegraph poles and things like that. They all got busted and repaired, made work for around the place. The liney [linesman] got plenty of work

34:00 from the Payne kids I can tell you, with their shanghais. However there was a couple of swaggies and we used to call him old Andy, walking around with a beard and everything, you know, and his swag. And we got to know him pretty well and he came back again the following year. I think it was about that time they were chasing the cane up around,

34:30 and the fruit, on the Atherton Tableland and doing odd jobs picking here there and everywhere. And then the war broke out and course the following year Andy never came so, and then would have been a year or two after that, a troop train was coming through and all these diggers on board, and

35:00 I'm getting a bit sentimental, and old Andy as we used to call him, cause he used to always call us nippers: "Come on nipper." you know. And giving out a bit of fruit and this bloke says, "Hey nipper, how are you going?" And we're looking around, "Who the bloody hell? That's old Andy!" Cause he always used to get under the train, you know, would get underneath around the wheels and everything, right out of town, until they got to the grade and

35:30 get off and jump up in the bloody what's-a-name, in the carriage. So anyhow and we're looking around. He said, "I'm over here." and he was a bloody digger, yeah. So and we saw him there and we never ever saw him again so we don't know what happened to old Andy, but he wasn't real old any more. He had a shave and his hair cut and he had a digger's hat on and he was only about 22, yeah, so there's the difference of appearance.

36:00 **How did the town change with people leaving?**

Probably, what was it, it'd be about 1943 when the Japs were in New Guinea and they'd bombed Townsville and they'd bombed Darwin and a lot of people were now moving out of the north in a hurry. And

36:30 we bought our own, the big family home at that time, right then. Yep, Mum bought it, 600 pound, a big old Queenslander, yeah. And she paid it off during the war and the old man said, "What the hell? How am I going to pay for that?" you know. But she'd made a deal with Mrs Kemp next door and it was all all right, you know, so we moved into the big house. I think she

37:00 must have paid 10 pound deposit or something, yeah, so we acquired the big family house, probably the only way we could have acquired a big family house with a big family and everything and the low wages and everything in those days. So to buy a big home like that wouldn't have been within Father's financial bracket

37:30 because of the family that he had to support. Anyhow, so Mother did quite a nice little bit of negotiating at that time. But your question was, "How was Ingham in those days?" People moving out. It was becoming very concerning. The people were leaving and those that were remaining were basically

38:00 the people that had husbands and fathers and sons and what have you. Like ooh, so we were becoming a town very smartly of either very old men and women, a bunch of children, and women with children, and no young men in between, you know, that military age bracket in between.

38:30 And the town was being run by a very old council and everything else like that. And the families were being managed by the boys of the family and the older girls and everything. And the concern, of course, was whether the Japs would in actual fact get there. But we always took the attitude,

39:00 "Well look." you know, "They've got to get through all these….." Cause there were all these Americans and all these soldiers of ours, you know, and little did we realise the number of Japs. That was another story and, of course, it was around this time too, the Battle of the Coral Sea was taking place. And we had a small air emergency landing strip in Ingham and we were getting fighters and everything coming into there that

39:30 had been engaged in the battle. And we'd go out and service the aircraft and reload them with ammunition and everything. Everybody sort of mucked in and did a whole heap of things towards the war effort. And everybody had a victory garden, of course. You had to have your victory garden, grow your own vegetables and give to the soldiers what you had left over and all the rest of it. And the army

40:00 pretty well survived in the north on victory gardens for a while. I'm pretty sure of that, you know, because, especially during the wet weather because the transport couldn't get through to give them their supplies and things like that so. Yeah, it was a pretty tormenting little period. And my father came home on leave

40:30 before he went to the islands. And well he'd been to the islands and he came home on leave and then he went back to the islands. Before he went back to the islands so, we cranked up the old T-model Ford [early car]. And we couldn't get petrol in those days so we got some shellite and power kerosene and mixed them all together,

41:00 and a bit of methylated spirits, and we had a lot of backfires in the old T-model Ford. And of course we pinched some petrol from the American vehicles around the place, just to make sure that the old T-model did run all right. So we went up to Mount Fox. Father said, "Okay, take youse all up to Mount Fox, up in the mountains and we'll find a place

41:30 and if anything happens, this is where I want youse to all come." So the boys had the responsibility of, up on the Fox, building a shack up on the Fox.

Tape 2

00:31 **So your father took you to....?**

Yeah, well of course, and as I mentioned, it was the boys' task to build a bit of accommodation or something up on the Fox and to have the vehicle ready to evacuate the family if necessary, and of course we had to have, take old Billy Morton with us. Old Bill was a mate of my father's

01:00 and Bill was a World War I veteran. He was a saddler, a damn good saddler too, but he was blind. He went blind in his latter years and we nearly lost him going up the Fox. We burnt out the clutch on the T-model Ford going up and down the hills and we all bailed out in the cutting and old Bill was half deaf and blind and he was just sitting there,

01:30 and the dicky Ford's taking off back down the hill and the old man chasing it to get on board it, yeah, so we nearly lost him. But we got things going and the old man was a pretty fair bush mechanic and he ripped the clutch out of the old T-model Ford and took off his belt, his leather belt, and put it around the gears

02:00 and what have you, around the drum, and away we went again. But we had our task all laid out for us and we had a cache of food and, you know, milk and things like that that we got around the place because that was pretty hard too because it was rationing in those days.

02:30 And because father was in the grocery business and he knew all the grocer shops around the place, we got a lot of things that were left over and of course we never, ever used our sugar rations and that was no… We either sold those or traded them for bread and things like that and of course meat, we never worried about meat anyhow. Howard Kirkwood had plenty

03:00 of cattle so we used to help ourselves to that one and then we always had pig and fish and everything else like that. So we were trading a lot of gear and the sugar, well we had a sugar mill around the place and those days they always used to shift it in sugar bags, so a sugar bag would go missing now and again. Survival they used to call it. But most people in Ingham

03:30 never bought that because they'd just go up alongside the truck, stick a knife in, walk along with a bucket and fill her up with sugar. Never wasted it though. Always somebody else there ready to put, you know, take the rest of the bag, yeah.

Ingham was quite a multicultural town wasn't it?

Yes.

At the beginning of the war was that an issue in Ingham?

Yeah, very multicultural and probably

04:00 because of the sugar industry and when they stopped bringing the Kanakas over – the islanders over from Vanuatu and Peru and places – to cut cane and everything. And back in the latter end of the 1880s and well into the 1920s

04:30 they brought a lot of… There was Italians, Sicilians, southern Europeans who were now probably refugees from the First World War. There were some Balts, Hungarians and all sorts of people. But basically it was the sugar industry that brought about this multicultural society

05:00 in this little borough of Ingham, right. And that's probably… See, my father was English. My grandfather was Welsh. My father was born out here. His eldest sister was born in Wales, but Mother's father, who was a Pom,

05:30 married an Italian girl. And back in those days that was very frowned on, plus the fact that there was this church business that I mentioned before, right. And then along comes Father, who's bloody Church of England, and Mother's with this… halfway through a Catholic business and halfway through a Church of England. And plus the fact that she's half Italian. And it was definitely all frowned on, you know.

06:00 In those days you didn't marry outside your race or something, you know. But it didn't bother our family in that little borough called Ingham. It was a little bit of a rabbit warren anyhow, right, and yeah, so. And today Ingham is still a very multicultural little place. Everybody knows everybody if they've been there long enough, you know.

06:30 **Were Australians suspicious of the Italians because the Italians were in the war? Was there that kind of suspicion going on?**

Yeah, well, the First World War? First World War, the Italians were on the right side of the business. In the Second World War, initial stages, they were with the Germans. So Mussolini [Benito Mussolini, Prime Minister of Italy] was with the Germans and I can remember that quite well because some of my

07:00 uncles were interned during the war. Others went into uniform, Australian Army uniform, and went away and did their thing. So you had a bit of a mixture here – some who were interned because they

were Italians, and others who were Italians but were serving in the military forces. And it was just a mess. And I might add that the multicultural

07:30 system... Just after the war when I went into my apprenticeship, I went in with Messina & Son, who were an Italian family. And the son, Gino, who only passed away not long ago, he was in the Australian military forces as a sergeant interpreter and his father and his uncle and everybody were in the internment camps

08:00 that he was the interpreter for. So he was on the outside having a jolly time and they were on the inside. And a lot of the people in Ingham who were interned, and when they came home later on, rather frowned on Gino when he started to run the factory and everything else like that.

08:30 It was only for the father that they bought off Messina & Son because of... Gino had also married an Aussie girl in Melbourne, who he met in Melbourne during the war, but that marriage didn't last anyhow. But once the father went out of the business and everything, so consequently the business went down the drain because the Italians

09:00 were very much like that. They said, "No, no, no. You did the wrong thing, Gino." You know, "We're not going to buy your goods." That's the end of that lesson, so of course I'd left by then and, you know, I'd gone away into the army myself when all that happened, but yeah, it's...

So it must have been confusing as a boy, to have some uncles interned and some uncles fighting for the...?

Well yes and no.

09:30 You got over the shock of all that nonsense, you know. As far as, you know, we were concerned, they were away in a camp and everything and course they were having a pretty good time, too. They were fruit picking down in the Riverina area and everything. A lot of them ended up settling down there and buying farms and all sorts of things, you know, the people that were interned. So

10:00 they didn't have it too bad because they basically, the people that were guarding them or supposed to be guarding them, the people that were looking after them and the people that they were working on, on the farms and everything, knew that they weren't enemy collaborators or anything. They just happened to be Italian. So once Mussolini surrendered and Italy changed flags

10:30 course they all got released and some of them came back and went into uniform to fight the Japs. So she was a little bit of a mixed up old sort of a business, yeah, and really there was no animosity, you know. Well it didn't, it certainly didn't reach our little borough in Ingham. There was no animosity against anyone or anything, you know,

11:00 because we all knew each other and we were all interrelated somewhere along the damn line anyhow. It's almost like Norfolk Island, yeah. But it was a good growing-up period in Ingham, you know, we had our floods, big floods, floods, dear oh dear. We don't get rain in the north like we used to get rain. My God, every year, floods, floods, floods, floods,

11:30 floods. Course it was good for the kids, when you're a kid, you know, but later on when you've got the responsibility, as still a kid, looking after the family and everything else like that and make sure that the house keeps working and yeah, hard days, hard days, but good days.

What was your concept of war then as a kid? What did you think was happening over there?

We knew that there was a lot of soldiers

12:00 being killed because, you know, every now and again Mum would say, "Oh so and so was killed and Mrs so and so's son has been wounded." and you know, so, "Gees, here we go." you know, all of these sort of things were happening and we knew that it wasn't very pleasant, you know. We knew that this wasn't just a jolly old experience because it was

12:30 hitting the families, you know, yeah.

And do you remember the day your dad came home?

After the war? Yeah.

Can you tell us about that day?

The day he came home, yeah. We arrived up the station to see this bloke get off the train, yeah, and he immediately got rid of his uniform and started work, yeah, and he didn't want anything to do with army,

13:00 military, nothing. He just wanted out. He never went to the RSL [Returned and Services League] or anything, Henry, no.

Do you know anything of his war experience?

Yeah, but he never used to talk much about it. I know that he landed in Balikpapan. I know he was on Finschhafen, yeah.

13:30 I remember when he was wounded and everything, yeah.

He was wounded in Balikpapan?

No, Morotai, just towards the end of the war.

What was the wound and how did you hear about it?

He got hit in the leg, in the foot actually, yeah, but he was all right. That was only a superficial wound. He used to limp around a little bit, but he always managed to get by so. But he

14:00 never spoke about it too much, the old man and you know, I can understand that. I can live with that.

What about your brothers, were there any that were close enough to the age of…?

No. I had one brother that was older than me, 12 months older than me, but he wasn't old enough. Probably if it'd kept going on another two years he would have, but no, he…

14:30 We were all just that bit too young for the Second World War, thank God, yeah.

And what happened over that time with schooling, did you…?

We just went along to school, yeah, we just went along to school and we did our air-raid practices. We had air-raid shelters all around the school grounds and the bell'd ring. The air-raid siren would go and we all poured out of school. We all knew where we

15:00 had to go and everything, and of course as the war progressed along, the Guinea grass got longer in the crawl trenches and our trenches and everything and the boys and girls used to divide off and the air-raid siren or all clear would go and the classrooms never got filled up for a while, but I remember that was boys and girls, yeah.

Did you like school?

We did our

15:30 air-raid drills and everything else like that and yeah, sang 'God Save the King' every morning and saluted the flag and the flag raised, very patriotic, which I think was a must during those war years, something to help hold the nation together and

16:00 being patriotic was one way of doing it. And yeah, I think it was a lot of comfort to the younger generation who were starting to realise what was happening around the place. It was, you know, strength in unity, but other than that we just got along with school work. There wasn't

16:30 the sporting equipment because that was going to the army and a lot of things couldn't be obtained because the material to make them went into making other things and everything else like that, so we missed out on a lot of things, but we gained by improvisation. We became, well, if the rest of the nation followed Ingham

17:00 we became a very, very…a nation of very good improvisers over those years, on fuel and everything, I think, WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK manure, driving motor cars and big gas tanks sitting up the back and boilers and oh my God. The things we used to do to make a car go and of course, you know, there were all old Dodges and Whippets and things back then and the engines could take it. Today's

17:30 motor wouldn't take it because it's all aluminium and everything, but we had all cast steel with big pots and everything and they could cop a pretty fair bashing around which is… So it was a vehicle of the time.

Do you remember how the town reacted when the war was over?

Well we had a big dance and we had a big party on that occasion.

18:00 Yeah, all the oranges were in season and everything. There was… And it was just around the cane cutting season coming on and we had a big party in Ingham, and the sly grog shops [shops selling alcohol without a licence] were really copping it because there were a lot of stills around Ingham in those days, I can tell you now. We never operated one, but we knew

18:30 where a lot of them were and we'd sell a lot of funny water to the Americans. But they were operating in fine style because being a sugar town and a sugar mill, you know, you've got all the gear there. You may as well do something with it. You don't let it, you know… And the mill had a lot of copper pipes and everything. Now they were fermenting plants and I think one of the best stills was right in the mill itself.

19:00 The blokes that worked in the mill made a still while… So it was pouring out of one thing and into… Yeah, so.

So how much would the funny water go for, with the Americans?

From memory I suppose about a dollar a bottle in those days, yeah. Everything was a dollar, a dollar this and a dollar that and a dollar something else, yeah. Nobody else knew dollars, but we knew dollars

mate.

19:30 We knew them dollars, big round dollars, the silver dollar.

Can you tell us the lead up to you joining the army yourself?

Yeah, well when Mother finally… I finished school and then I had… My mother was arranging for an apprenticeship and I had a bit of time before the start of the new year to start my apprenticeship so.

20:00 And I'd left just prior to being 14 and that's August, so I still had four months there. But I think I pulled the pin a little bit earlier than that, probably about the February or March, you know, getting in early, getting practice at being away from school. But nobody worried about it in those days anyhow. They were too busy doing other things and chasing truants. But

20:30 at that time I'd joined the regimental cadets too, so that was a great interest to me.

What did you do with the regimental cadets? What sort of activities would you do?

We did all the training that the CMF did. We did exercises, bivouacs. We did it, right, cause they had school cadets and, you know, I think of today, they've taken rifles off everybody.

21:00 In those days, as 14-year-olds and 13-year-olds, we used to… We had all our equipment: bayonets, rifles, everything, and away we'd go on our pushbike to training and take them home and everything, you know. And now they, I don't know, you're not allowed to have a rifle. I don't know whether it's the right direction to go. I think they could have trained the people on how to safely handle

21:30 weapons and secure weapons without taking them off them. But, you know, done that and the government works in mysterious ways so yeah. Having done that and then I cut cane for a while. And that's a bugger of a job because I wasn't seeing much of my girlfriend and we were working from… I used to get up

22:00 at four o'clock in the morning and I'd collapse in bed at eight o'clock at night, you know. I mean it's hard, hard yakka. But I was getting good money. I was getting like about three quid a day in those days and that was a lot of money for a young bloke, you know, compared with when I started my apprenticeship. I was getting seventeen and six a week. Mate, I mean that was a big downturn in the old economics, you know. But

22:30 and then I helped drive a bunch of cattle off, from the Barkly Tablelands. It had come down from the Barkly Tablelands and I met the drive outside of Charters Towers and we came through to Selene and we trucked them in Selene on the railway trucks and brought them down to Alligator Meatworks in Townsville.

23:00 And I paid off then anyhow so. The drove was over anyhow so then.

What were the other blokes like on that trip?

They were a pretty good bunch of blokes. I ended up, one of them I ended up, the key drover was a bloke by the name of Chook Doherty and his younger brother ended up in Korea with us, same time as I did. He

23:30 joined about the same time as I did, yeah, so I think he must have done another drive and joined about mid of the following year, yeah. But they were good blokes, some old ringers, been around for along time. We had I think about four or five Aborigines, four or five Abo [Aboriginal] blokes with us –

24:00 or indigenous. But it didn't worry them and it didn't worry me. I used to camp alongside them and eat with them, you know. I've got no problems there so yeah, they were all a pretty good bunch of blokes, all a lot older than I am, you know, I was probably the youngest of the lot, yeah, although Doherty would have been a couple of years older than me I suppose,

24:30 yeah.

And so after that, you…?

Yeah, after that I took up my apprenticeship and I wasn't long at that. I went into that. I'd done about 18 months and he was doing the wrong thing by me. This Gino had come out immediately after the war and

25:00 they bought an old Chev [Chevrolet] Blitz, army Blitz, and I was driving that and I wasn't supposed to. I wasn't, you know, I wasn't old enough to have a driver's licence and everything. But I was carting timber from Stan Ply Mill up on the top of the range at Cardwell and hauling it down and stacking it and everything, every Saturday morning, which is supposed to be my day off, you know,

25:30 no extra pay, no nothing. And in the end old Matt Donohue, the police sergeant, said to me, he said, "How old are you?" and I said, "Arrr arrr rrrr." and he said, "You'd better come and get your driver's licence, hey?" Course in those days you had to be bloody 18 to get a driver's licence too. But I got my driver's licence a bit young.

26:00 So be it, and it was about this time when I what, blew the head off things. I'd just come back from a

camp at Selene with the cadets and that was my holidays, you know, my annual holiday. And of course Gino, the boss,

26:30 he was the sergeant, still thought he was a sergeant promenading, you know, the interpreter. And he tried to push me around a little bit and he didn't succeed too much. And I'd done a trip up to Stan Ply and came down and I'd racked up the timber. And on the Monday morning we're putting it through on the machines and in the machines you've got

27:00 one that you put an edge on and under, and a side, and then the next one you put it through a thickness, and we were cutting them down from about an inch and a quarter to seven eighths, all in one go. And I was tailing out-coming, off the tailing out table, and there was chips flying at me all over the place. And we knocked off for smoko and I had little prick marks and bloody blood was all

27:30 coming out over me and the dust. I was pretty angry and so we knocked off for smoko and he said, "Righto, we'll start again." So I got up and I went back to the machine and I switched on the machine and I'm starting. "Come on." he said. "No." I said, "you're tailing out, buddy." cause he was only a little bloke too and I was a pretty hefty kid. And so he pushed me

28:00 down over the heap of shavings and everything. And the greatest mistake he made, he followed me. So I picked up a lump of timber and I went whack and down he went. Then a couple more smacks, not with the timber any more, with my fists. And down over the loading ramp he went, right, so. And because I was an apprentice, we didn't come under an industrial award in those days.

28:30 I don't know about now. But anyway, industrial inspectors were for labourers and tradesmen. But not for apprentices. Apprentice, you just did what you did and you suffered it. So I wasn't going to suffer this bloody nonsense so I went over, jumped on my treadly [pushbike] and away I went over to the industrial inspector and he pointed out the wrongs that I couldn't come and see him,

29:00 I shouldn't come and see him. But he told me to get back to the factory. So I went back to the factory and, "Jesus, who's this bloke turning up? It's the industrial inspector!" Well he went through that place like you wouldn't believe, and they had to put in blowers to get rid of all the sawdust and covers over the machinery and big changes in the factory. And these apprentices, they had to have

29:30 a carton of milk, a pint of milk, every morning and everything. I used to take great – I hated milk – and take great delight, go, "Gees I can't stand that stuff." It was part of the… And I think it was over that or my little bits and pieces and we weren't too, getting on. The old man I got along with well

30:00 and I was his apprentice, not Gino's. I was his apprentice, the old man's apprentice, and I was, you know, I was getting along very nicely with the old feller. But Gino was upsetting the apple cart all the time so I said, "Well." I went back to another camp and I said, "This is it boy. I'm away out of here." so. And around this time I'd

30:30 transferred to the CMF because I was still under age of course. Harry Cushla, who was the CO [Commanding Officer] of the depot said to me one night, he said, "And how old are you, Cadet Corporal Payne?" And I said, "I'm 14, sir." And he said, "You're not. You're 16." And I said, "No I'm not." "No." he said, "you're 18." And I said, "No I'm not." And I was 16, I think, yeah. I said, "No, I'm 16." He said, "No you're not. You're 18." And I said, "No, I'm 16."

31:00 "Sergeant Miller, take Cadet Corporal Payne outside and tell him how old he is, will you?" So Sergeant Miller post marched me outside and he said, "You silly little twerp." He said, "He wants to pay you. How old are you?" "I am 18." Marched back inside. "How old are you, Cadet Corporal Payne?" "I'm 18, sir." "Corporal Burner, enlist this man." So I got paid

31:30 and now I had a regimental number, so when I went into the regular army I didn't have to have a birth certificate or anything, you know. I was a fully-fledged soldier. So I got in a little bit younger as well.

How did your father feel about you going into the army?

He wasn't very pleased about it and neither was Mother because they'd… we'd lost the uncle as I said, and you know, we…

32:00 They weren't… The old man had been in the war and of course Korea had just started, you see. And I thought, "Well, here we go." you know, the big adventure. And the old man thought, "It's all right. They won't send him away. He's too bloody young anyhow." so. Well when I enlisted, after I finally did get in I, cause I went back up to Ingham, as I said before, and punched Gino in the ear and let him see the error of his

32:30 ways, that I wasn't going to be his apprentice anyhow, right. I wasn't going to be the flunky around the shop, so he cancelled me. And Dad said I was able to enlist and so I got into the regular army pretty good after a while and sorting a few things out. And

33:00 as I say, I already had a regimental number so I didn't really have to have parental approval any more or anything, you know. But father give me his blessing so I said, you know, and his advice to me, "Be mates with the cook and the quartermaster." and he was so right. I could never advise anybody that's joining the military to be better mates than the cook and the quartermaster. You've got all your

33:30 equipment, you've got tucker, yeah. They're good blokes to know, yeah.

What was the initial training like for you?

Recruit training in the regular army, I breezed through that because I'd already copped a pretty hard pounding in the cadets and CMF and everything. It was just now that instead of being part time, I was full time and

34:00 a lot of the fellows were older than I was. But they didn't know really how old I was anyhow. They thought I was one age and I wasn't, so it never really worried me. I made some good mates and some of them, we're still good mates today. One of them was subsequently taken a POW [Prisoner of War] in Korea and he was a journo [journalist] with the Courier Mail,

34:30 and we're still good mates today so, yeah.

Where was that initial training?

Enoggera in Brisbane. Well when we first enlisted I went out to Indooroopilly, which turned out to be the provo [Provosts – Military Police] depot later on, and then we went to Enoggera, which was a personnel depot, and then towards the latter

35:00 end of my little stay there they turned it into the hospital and they brought all these females in as nurses. And it was a terrible place to be in, you know, young blokes with all these women around the place, damn terrible. And they shifted us all out to Enoggera and Enoggera then was entirely different to what it is today. Where all the main barracks are and everything now used to be a rifle range, and where married

35:30 quarters are used to be a grenade range, used to throw grenades there so, yeah. And of course down the other end of the camp we had where the personnel depot is now, that was a migrant camp. People that were coming over at the end of World War II, refugees and everything, had a migrant camp there and so Wacol was entirely different then. And of course you always had the

36:00 trams going to Enoggera terminus, which was the end of the line, so we'd go backwards and forwards by trams in those days. That's when we didn't miss the late night tram. If you missed the late night tram, you walked and you swiped all sorts of things on the way through because the butchers and the bakers and the candlestick makers,

36:30 you always used to put all the goodies and oranges and fruit and everything all outside the shops for the shopkeepers to pick up the next morning and put in their shops. And when you're getting home at half past two, three o'clock in the morning, you need substance so, whoop, and go to the next shop, whoop, yep.

What did you think of Brisbane, coming from such a small country area?

37:00 Eyes wide open all the time. Of course the biggest attraction in those days was all these females that were around the place and they were right animals.

But you'd had a few sisters, were they different? Was it different in that way?

Yeah, well they were sisters, these others weren't. Yeah, the others weren't. We used to go to the dances

37:30 and another thing in our youth, we all went to dances and everything, you know. That was part of our social outings and everything. You had dances and you had the dances and the pictures. That was that. So you took your girl to the dance or you took her to the pictures, one or to the other, right, and if you took her to the pictures you never paid for her to go in anyhow. You waited till she went in and then you got in and then, you know, and half the time you snuck in anyhow.

38:00 And if she was lucky you'd get there without or with something clean on or something. But other than that, many a time I used to wash my legs and everything and get all the mud off them and break the shotgun down and have the ducks in a sack bag and get into the pictures and put them under the seat and, "Hello, how are you going?" Yeah.

Did you leave a girlfriend behind in north Queensland when you came to...?

Yes

38:30 of course, yeah, and, you know, yeah, she married a bloke while I was away too and I wasn't happy about that. But, yeah, and years later when Flo and I were engaged, Flo came up to Townsville cause I was up in Townsville at the time, a place in Townsville, and Flo come up

39:00 to Townsville to meet the family who come down from Ingham and everything. And Flo got off the plane in Townsville and walked in and mother was there and the first thing she said to Flo was, "Has Keith told you about Betty Roberts?" I said, "You bloody old bitch." you know, "bloody witch."

Went over like a lead balloon?

Yeah, it did, yeah. But yeah, we've…

39:30 A normal bringing up, you know, boy meets girl and all this sort of thing, yeah.

What were the Brisbane blokes like that were training with you?

The city blokes? Strangely enough there wasn't too many city blokes. There was… We had a Pommy [English] remittance man. He was a bit of a strange character cause I'd never met, you know, a fair dinkum Pom before.

40:00 And then when they were saying, "Oh no, he's a remittance man." I thought, "What the bloody hell's a remittance man?" you know, so I soon learnt what a remittance man was. He'd been cast aside by the family, doing naughty things or something or the wrong side of the blanket or something, you know, and he was a bloody good bloke. He was obviously an ex British serviceman. He knew how to do all

40:30 his gear up and everything and showed us a few tricks of the trade and everything else like that. Some of them were considerably older. Jack Butterworth, who I got to know quite well, who was killed in Korea, we lost Jack in Korea and he was older and well educated. He come from Footscray in Melbourne and

41:00 he was a big rough looking sort of a bloke, you know. And he was an agricultural bloke and he was working out at Roma at the time and Calley was from Roma. He was a wool classer. They were a pretty fair old mixture of rough bag rough nuts and have a dig and that. All turned into bloody good soldiers though. That's, you know, that's part of the whole

41:30 gambit. They acquitted themselves well, yeah. Bluey Donnelley, as I say, he was a city bloke. But he'd kicked around a hell of a lot, you know, so he wasn't real city slicker. I think we only had a couple of real city slickers, pansies with, you know, pansies from the city, yeah.

Tape 3

00:32 **So Keith I'm just wondering, what do you think your main motivation was for deciding to join up?**

I liked the military type life because I'd been in the cadets and the CMF. I was getting sick of the factory work and everything. There was far too much noise in a factory anyhow, all the machinery and everything and God bless me, I go into a bloody military and there's no noise in the military, oh my God.

01:00 Anyhow and the big adventure was there. It was open because, and having grown up with all these soldiers in and out of the place, I was very uniform oriented and it looked pretty glamorous to me. And Korea had broken out so the big adventure was on. The opening for the adventure was on and I said, "Well that's my way out

01:30 of leaving the borough, of leaving the family nest or whatever. I'm away." So that was the greatest motivation I think was just to get away from the factory, get away from home. I wasn't impeded at home in any way. But, you know, spread your wings sort of thing, yeah.

But you said earlier that you knew that war was pretty serious, that you knew people were being killed in the Second World War and so forth. Was that

02:00 **in the back of your mind at all, or you were just…?**

No, no, no, no. When you're young, Jesus, you're bulletproof and yeah, nothing had to happen and, you know, even in Korea or anywhere else, you know, it happens to everybody else. It never happens to you, you know. The young very fortunately see life in that direction.

02:30 You see it today, young people getting killed in motor vehicles and yet the others just put their foot down on the accelerator just the same, you know. It happens to them, it's not going to happen to me, yeah. That never worried me at all. I think the big adventure of A) going to Brisbane. B) You know, going out on

03:00 my own and then travelling overseas. That was the big adventure, yeah. The rude shock was when I went into the line in Korea. That was a shock. That was not supposed to all come about, that lot, you know. That wasn't in the scenario at all. But of course it had to be because it was

03:30 part of being in the military and I still… I enjoyed the military life right through until almost the end when I'd just had enough of what the government was handing out and everything. Things had changed, policies, and it wasn't my army any more.

Well when you joined up and you went to Enoggera what, in those initial stages of training and so forth, did the army sort of meet your

04:00 **expectations?**

Yeah, I had a great ball and I did all the way through. The military is what you make it, you know. Once you learn the system, you use the system and the system's a pretty good one. You keep your noise clean, you do your job and nobody ever worries you, you know,

04:30 do all the right things. You do the right thing and nobody bothers you and by purely and simply by doing the right thing, people leave you alone and you get a little bit more freedom on movement and everything. Recruit training is the time that it's go, go, go, orders here, people shouting and screaming and I thought, "God mate, get off yourself." you know,

05:00 but. And then of course when you become an instructor and you're doing exactly the same thing, you say, "Hey, whoa up." you know. But that has to be. You have to train people in the ways of military and you have to train them and then indoctrinate them to instant obedience to orders without question. And

05:30 there's no parallel in the world that requires that particular thing than military because if you don't have strict obedience, instant obedience to orders, then people's lives or your own could be lost because you don't do what you're told to do at that particular time, so there's no ifs, buts or maybes. And of course

06:00 to go with that you have to do it hard physically and mentally and everything to make sure that you do react whilst you're under that physical and mental strain in accordance with what is required so, and you get all of that in recruit training. After you leave recruit training and then you go into

06:30 what you call corps training or infantry training, training of the finites of military fisticuffing, you then learn all your tactics and everything else like that that help to keep you and other people alive. So it's a very exacting business, soldiering. There's no

07:00 room for error. Errors occur, people die so, and, you know, you still see it today, you know, they call it friendly fire. I don't see anything friendly about getting shot at by your own aircraft or something, you know. That's a mistake, so you've got to make sure that you can avoid those mistakes. People don't

07:30 and then they get into problems. However I enjoyed the old military life. It was for me.

You said you loved it when you first joined up in that recruit training. What did you love about it?

Probably the military life itself, being amongst blokes who were all thinking in the same

08:00 direction. The relaxation times of on leave and everything else like that, you know. We were pretty fair teddy boys in those days, you know, we dressed well and we captured our share of hearts and everything. That's a very important part of life, that capturing hearts and

08:30 the training went along smoothly and it was everything that a young man could expect, you know, yeah.

Were there blokes though that weren't up to the training and sort of had joined thinking like you, that they were, it was going to be great, but couldn't cope with the army life?

Well we never struck too many of those. What we did strike, they couldn't cope with the army life. They couldn't cope with some of the physical aspects. In those days

09:00 physical aspects, they had the mental attribute for the military. They were switched on in that direction. But their bodies wouldn't allow them to, though they were supposed to be medically fit, you've got to be reasonably strong and everything in an infantry type situation. People's slight frames and bodies and everything don't have the physical makeup

09:30 to carry out the arduous duties of humping big, heavy packs and doing all the things an infantryman's supposed to do. So they still mentally are very wide awake to the military and everything so what they do, they just transfer them to a corps where it's not so physical, into medical corps and things like that where their physical attributes

10:00 will allow them to carry out their duty and they do it tremendously well, tremendously well so. But I never struck anybody in my part of that particular part of my service that couldn't put up with military discipline. And of course we found that even right through to the first bracket of National Service

10:30 in the '50s. When I started instructing in the '50s and struck that first lot of National Servicemen I went through, there was very few of those that couldn't cop the discipline because we were a pretty disciplined nation back coming through the '40s and early '50s. Time has tempered. I did notice in the second bracket of National Service there was people that just could

11:00 not mentally put up with the discipline of military service. They'd been born free or something, I don't know. But times had changed. The discipline of our society had broken down a bit, you know. They weren't, I don't think they were required to do what we used to have to do in the '40s and

11:30 '50s, yeah. I think that they become, started to become a different nation, right, a different people. Even, you know, you could tell the country people from the city people. But even the country people were starting to, you know, balk at the discipline and I felt that that was a little bit of a downturn on our society. But

12:00 no, we never struck any of that sort of problem.

What aspects of the training did you personally find most challenging?

Probably for the educational part of it, anything that required education because I left school very early, and which you did in the war years anyhow. You'd

12:30 come up on 14, you know, everybody was away. Manpower said, "You were 14, you're finished school, you're away." So in those initial years probably the hardest thing I struck was anything to do with arithmetic and things like that, you know, conversion of bearings and all that sort of thing, which become secondhand later on. And of course I went

13:00 through the military educational scheme and all through the years and upgraded myself education wise so, you know, I didn't, though I left school early, A) to support the family that was increasing in ever rapid numbers, and B) it was, the soldiers were,

13:30 the elder ones were all away at war and everything and we just had to do our thing.

When you joined up, how old was the youngest brother or sister in your family? How old was the youngest child?

My youngest sister was born when I was in Korea.

So there were children being born even as you were joining?

Yeah.

So was your salary that you were earning, was that going towards helping your family?

Yeah, I was, even then I was

14:00 allocating a certain amount to the house out of my salary, yeah.

And was that expected or was that something that you wanted to do or...?

Well I wasn't asked for it. But, you know, it would have been frowned on had I have not. But I'm pleased to say that, besides all that, a lot of that money wasn't used. Mother put it in my bank and if it came up

14:30 something of a necessity then she'd use it, you know, and tell me that she'd used it. Father never had anything to do with the bank account or anything, it was Mother run that part of the business so, you know, when I came home I had a tidy little sum in the bank and Mother hadn't used a whole heap of it all so, which, you know, I thought, "Well it was allocated for that.

15:00 If you didn't use it well you didn't really need it." right. But where she did need it, she used it.

So with your brothers and sisters being born over those years, even for the time that you were in Korea, what sort of sex education had you received, what did you know about how your brothers and sisters were being born?

Coming from a small place like Ingham and working, you know, we had dairy farms and we used to bloody deliver

15:30 milk and everything and deliver rice on Saturday mornings and the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s laid eggs and the eggs had chickens and everything. We knew about sex life all right, mate, don't worry about that, right. As old Joh Bjelke-Petersen [Premier of Queensland] would say, "Mate, don't you worry about that."

But what about contraception? Had you been taught anything about that?

No there was none of that, nothing taught in school, you know,

16:00 of anything of that nature. We knew of women's problems because you had sisters and everything else like that and you knew Mum was pregnant and you knew the lady down the road was pregnant and then you got the whisper, "Oh, she's a naughty girl that one. She's going out." and, "Oh, my God." I thought, "If only you knew, Mum." all right, yeah. And of course sex education

16:30 in those days was very much a practical thing, rather than... It was never mentioned at school or anything like that, you know, and I don't know whether that's a healthy arrangement really though I think today sex education and everything in classes, if it is controlled,

17:00 I don't see it controlled too well these days. I don't know, I've never been to a sex education class so I don't know what they talk about. But I feel that there's a little bit too much permissiveness these days, a little bit too much freedom. A naughty girl from Ingham

17:30 went on holidays to Brisbane for, you know, six months or 12 months or something like that and then she came home again, right. But...

With baby in tow or without baby?

Without baby, very much frowned on, yes. I mean

18:00 having a child out of wedlock in those days or becoming pregnant outside of wedlock in those days was very much antisocial, very, very frowned on, probably one of the reasons that it's better to have sex education today. But then again you also have today love childs all over the place. They're just

18:30 part of the scene and, you know, marriage was the thing of the day and marriage was meant to last in those days. And a lot of the people of those days made marriage last and they worked their way through the problems and they stayed together. Now our society have brought about

19:00 an ease of breaking a relationship or breaking a marriage and, you know, unsupported mothers' pensions and rental assistance and all this sort of thing, whilst that is so, it's probably a good thing in one way. But not in another. I think it's just an easy out.

So what about when you joined up and in that initial training, was there any sex education

19:30 **for the young recruits?**

Yeah.

What were you taught about contraception or...?

Well when you say sex education, mainly it was on the venereal disease side of things, right. You had a lot of lectures on the social

20:00 diseases of sex because soldiers are like that, right. And foreign countries, you know, the Americans brought a lot of social disease into Australia. But then again Australia had very little social disease compared to say

20:30 Malaya or Japan or... But wherever troops go, social disease follows, right, purely and simply because of, they're all fit young men and life goes on but. And of course with the variety of troops that go through the place, you know, only one bloke's

21:00 there and the next thing bloody half a dozen's got it so yeah. We had a lot of education on the social diseases and what to do and what not to do and that sort of thing and the only preventatives we had against pregnancy and everything in those days was the old French letter [condom] and all that sort of thing, you know, which was, you know,

21:30 which acted as a fair part of stopping social diseases as well, yeah.

So how did you personally react as a young man to those sort of lectures about VD [venereal disease] and the potential to catch those diseases and...?

That was all right, you know. God, you know, before that I'd pulled calves out of cows

22:00 and, you know, got my...

So it didn't worry you too much then?

No, never worried me, you know, of the education part of it. I was always very careful of repercussions of my actions, you know, that you'd be very careful of that.

22:30 **So how long was the... You had the initial recruit training and then you had corps training, and what changed for you in the corps training? Or before you left for Korea, to what extent were you prepared and at what stage were you as a soldier?**

On completion of your recruit training we were then posted from Enoggera down to Puckapunyal to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment which was at that stage a training

23:00 battalion that hadn't gone on active service for deployment to Korea. It was purely and simply a training battalion. Life had changed considerably from recruit training to corps training. Now you had a lot of live fire exercises and you had live ammunition going round you all the time and

23:30 the training was very intense. The preparation for war was very much put to the fore and we were very, very well trained. And I'm happy to say the Australian soldier is still very well trained for the duty he has to carry out. We had...

24:00 We weren't equipped very well in those days. We were still utilising World War II equipment, which didn't stand us in good stead in Korea because we had tropical studded boots and we were in a 30 degrees below zero thing, and the leather just froze up and the studs seemed to drive needles through your feet and all these things. And we had

24:30 a blanket and a greatcoat and a poncho and the equipment we had was not near as good as what it should have been for combat troops in a Korean theatre. We did survive by liberating a little bit of American equipment. Quite a lot of American equipment

25:00 was liberated as a matter of fact. Vehicles and everything, we liberated from the Americans. It just changed sides a little bit. But same war, same vehicle, but different drivers. And we then started to get, later in the campaign, we were getting issued with British winter equipment which helped us a hell of a lot, you know, and we

25:30 just got rid of all the Australian gear, yeah. It just wouldn't stand up to the cold at all.

Now you were pretty excited about going to Korea. When you joined up that was, you said Korea was the big adventure that was looming. What was your understanding about what was happening there?

We were well briefed all the way through and what was occurring and who was in action, what units were in action, what, you know, what was happening. And you had to have that so that you

26:00 could build a pretty fair picture in your own mind. And all your training was virtually what happened in Korea today was happening to you in your training tomorrow sort of thing, you know. You were living that experience of yesterday in Korea, today in Australia, so that when you got into Korea it wasn't a great shock. The only thing that become the shock was the two-way rifle range, you know. You were shooting,

26:30 he was shooting at you and you were shooting at him and it was the other way around was you knew that anything that was coming in your direction wasn't going to hit you or wasn't supposed to hit you, it went overhead. But on a couple of occasions we lost a few blokes, lost a couple of blokes in training through accidental fire from weapons and everything, giving overhead cover and things like that.

Can you tell us a little bit more about those accidents in training?

27:00 Yeah, well one of them, one of the accidents we had was brothers and they were firing a two inch mortar. One elevated the bail too much and the weapon hadn't been cleaned. The firing pin just engaged the cartridge and it just dribbled out the end of the bail but enough to

27:30 charge the bomb. And it landed just in front of them and exploded and one of the brothers was killed. The other one was wounded and a couple of other fellers were wounded as well, so that was one of them. And another we had, he was hit crossing a rope on a creek. One of the instructors got a little bit overzealous and lifted the Owen gun a little bit too high and hit him across the legs.

28:00 Another one drowned. He had all his equipment on on a river crossing and he couldn't get out of his equipment. There was no quick release on equipment in those days so he sank. And we tried to get him out but couldn't get him out and by the time we got him out, we were bashing him and everything. But nobody knew CPR [cardiopulmonary resuscitation] in those days, see. He

28:30 probably would have been alive today if somebody had known a little bit about CPR. And there was another chap hit. We had a very low wire entanglement about a foot, or 500 mil [millimetres] if you like high, and the idea was you take your pack off and you crawl underneath it, pushing your pack and pulling your rifle underneath the wire. And a machine gun was shooting over the top of the wire

29:00 and it was pretty dusty and everything and the fellow couldn't breathe properly so he lifted his head up through the wire and crack, crack, crack. He got it. So all those things. But in those days too it was… See we had a percentage of accepted casualties in place.

Yeah, can you just

29:30 **say that again about the acceptable?**

Yeah, well, you know, with the casualties that we did receive, we had a five per cent casualty rating, accepted casualty rating in training. And that particular training, we called that a battle inoculation training, so that was the last period of our training prior to going

30:00 overseas. And of course when we left Australia we had… I had 30 days' leave before I left Australia. I went home and took me a week to damn well get home from Puckapunyal, which I didn't have to go back to Puckapunyal. I went back to Sydney and was mustered at Marrickville and then flew out from Sydney

30:30 to Port Moresby, Jackson Strip in [Port] Moresby and then onto Okinawa. Okinawa to Iwo Jima to Kure so, and of course now was in the big land of the oriental people.

Just before we go on with that, can I just ask you a little bit more about those accidents in training? How close were you to any of those blokes

31:00 **who died during training?**

The bloke that got shot, I was about two behind him. He was in front of me and there was another bloke between him and I and yeah, I was pretty close. We pulled him out of the wire in actual fact. But he was gone. We knew he was gone. He was gone.

And how well did you know, him?

Good,

31:30 yeah. Yeah, it didn't please us. We all had to go back and go under the wire again and go up under the wire again and all sorts of things, you know.

Immediately after?

Yep, to make sure that you wouldn't balk in future, you know.

How hard was that?

Pretty hard, yeah, pretty hard. But you knew by then

32:00 too that the machine guns that were fixed on tripods on fixed lines and everything, their elevation had been corrected and they'd been test fired and everything so you knew that they were going over the top. And also you knew that if he'd have kept his bloody head down, right,

32:30 he would not have been hit. Or we thought that if they'd dusted it down, put water and stopped the dust and everything so you could breathe. But they said, "Well that's not part of the training." you know. "You've just got to put up with the conditions that are there. Nobody's going to go and sprinkle the soil with water in a dusty area to let you through in action." you know. "You've just got to go." So you could see that.

33:00 I mean it was nobody's fault, only the digger's fault. But he probably got a little bit claustrophobic and couldn't breathe through the dust and everything. And you're hot and you're breathing like bloody, you know, you're... It's the end of about a half mile run up hills and over obstacles and this was the last of an obstacle going up hill so yeah, you were

33:30 puffing and panting. And there he is trying to breathe, puffing and panting and he got dust and everything and it's coming down his throat and his lungs and he, you know, well we all had it. But he just couldn't do it and he stuck his head up. And to go back through again, well, you know, we've seen all the preparation done to make sure that the gun's elevation was high enough and all the rest of it, so it was

34:00 just a case of keep your stupid head down, right.

How did those deaths in training affect everybody?

Can I say you accept it? You accept it to a certain degree because the training is very, very intense, you know. One of the things that you do as

34:30 training, you're given a shovel and you've got a whole heap of bits of dirt like a graves pit locked on the top of it and they say, "Go and dig a hole in there." right. And you've got to dig deep, you know. You've got 15 minutes I think they used to give you in that soil, and by gee, you just got down below 15 minutes and then you'd have to lay in this trench

35:00 that you'd dug and the instructors come along and checked and made sure that you were down deep enough and everything else like that. And that you had a clod of dirt in your hand, right, and then a Matilda tank came out of the scrub with its BSAs firing over the top of you. And then one track run over the top of you, right, and as it went over the top of you, you had to get up and throw this sticky bomb on the tank –

35:30 which was a lump of dirt, yeah. All that sort of training was, it was very realistic training. And we'd do section and platoon attacks, company attacks, under live fire, with live fire going in support, in front of us and all the rest of us. So to see somebody hit, it was purely accidental.

36:00 It was a mistake made by them. Or in the case of the mortar, the mortar hadn't been cleaned and those kids should have cleaned the bloody cannon anyhow. It was their responsibility, you know. Their mistake, they suffer. It's not pleasant. But you accepted the casualties in training because the training was

36:30 intense and meant to keep you alive. Most of the time military training is harder than action, sometimes.

To what extent though did those deaths influence perhaps your thoughts about your own mortality?

No, gee whiz, no. You're still bulletproof and yeah. You're full of life and bulletproof.

37:00 No it was, you know, you learn not to make mistakes, simple. That's what you learnt from that, don't make mistakes, don't do something stupid. So it's a good learning curve as well, isn't it?

During training, what did you discover about yourself in terms of your qualities as a soldier? What you were good at or what you weren't good at or...?

37:30 I think I discovered that I could keep up and do as good a job as anybody else. I always strived to ensure that I never let the team down, never let myself down personally. And I found that I

38:00 could achieve quite a lot that others couldn't achieve, purely and simply because of determination I suppose. I was a pretty determined sort of a bloke, you know. If there was a challenge, I'd accept the challenge and I'd make a fistful of it, do the best I could about it.

38:30 So yeah, probably I learnt to accept challenges and I learnt that within myself I could do all of the things that were expected of me.

What do you think had shaped that sort of determination that you had?

39:00 Probably the upbringing in the family, the responsibility of the family that… The responsibility and determination of having to care for the rest of the family or, you know, be part of the family unit and not let the family down, so you don't let a team down sort of thing, yeah. And I think it was

39:30 mainly the family upbringing and the environment in which I was brought up in a little country town and, you know, we were pretty adventurous type kids. We were pig hunting and everything when we were 13, 14. We were out there doing it, you know, and we were riding horses and bloody buck jumping cows and cattle and bloody calves and, you know, anything we could,

40:00 want to jump on anything's back and ride the guts out of it and, you know, yeah. So I think a lot of it was the environment we were brought up and the responsibility of the family that brought about those sort of things.

Tape 4

00:32 Every house had a weapon and strange, there wasn't the accidents and all this bloody murders and nonsense that you have, no, a different society.

So by the time you were 18 you'd really sort of, you were quite, would you describe yourself as being mature, I mean in, how?

I was overseas when I was 18.

How old were you before you actually, by the time you finished?

17 when I went.

01:00 **So you were only 17?**

Yeah.

So you were just a kid. But how prepared did you feel to go into war?

I was a big kid. I was still, I was nearly 18 anyhow. But I just accepted it. I wasn't a kid any more. Well

01:30 you know, it's… Try and understand, we weren't kids any more, you know. We'd grown up. We'd grown up fast, too fast I suppose. But we knew life. We'd lived life, you know, God, dear oh dear and what grooming we never got on some aspects. We got overseas…

02:00 When we got overseas anyhow cause once we got to Japan we went through a whole heap of training again to… Once again, the conditions that were on at the time in Korea and Japan, climatic conditions… We were there acclimatising ready to go because they were virtually on the same parallel anyhow so the climatic conditions from here, transfer on the

02:30 OE Sang [?] and day and half later land in Korea at Pusan and then a day and a half by train and it all started to come to pieces, that holiday you were having. It was no longer an adventure.

When did that happen? When was it no longer an adventure?

When somebody started shooting at me – wrong war.

So how soon was that after arriving in Korea?

03:00 About two days, two and a half days, yeah. We moved into the line. We landed in Pusan and went overnight up to Seoul. We overnighted in Seoul. We went up to Hwach'on Bu the next day and that night we moved into the line.

How much training had you done in Japan

03:30 **before you went to?**

About three and a half months, four months.

So?

I was over 18 anyhow. I was…

You had your 18th birthday in Japan?

Yeah.

What did you do for your 18th birthday?

I think I slogged my guts out with a pack on my back between Aramura and Kure as a matter of fact. Was not a very nice birthday, yeah.

What were your impressions of Japan?

Great, you know, oriental

04:00 country. The eyes were wide open, a young man's delight, you know, and the Musamays [?] were great, friendly people and yeah, I enjoyed Japan. I would have quite happily stayed there, you know. But they shipped me off home.

What did you see of the effects of World War II in Japan?

Well I

04:30 went to Hiroshima. I didn't go down to Nagasaki. You saw a lot of the effects and, you know, the docks and everything, still early in the '50s, hadn't been built up and Hiro where we were was a port town anyhow and it had been blasted something terrible and all of the structures now were bamboo and

05:00 paper and everything, you know. They hadn't started to build and any decent building that was standing, the old Jap barracks never got hit. The POW barracks never got hit. But we occupied those and the Brits occupied the POW camp and the hospital. We took over the hospital.

05:30 We took over some of the bigger hotels and things like that that hadn't been knocked around and turned them into canteens and officers' quarters and all that sort of thing.

Can you describe the living conditions that you were in in Japan?

Well in the camp itself we were all under tents, right. We did have, there was some buildings there. But they were mainly ablution blocks and

06:00 Q [quartermaster] stores and headquarters buildings and everything else like that. But all of the troops, we were all under tents in tent lines and I think the greatest cultural shock I received when I first, first time when I walked into the toilets and I was about doing my business and a Japanese lady walked in to start cleaning around and

06:30 no problem at all. I thought, "God!" bit of a cultural shock. But you soon got used to, you know, all those sort of things that, the different cultures of a different country, right through your service and everything else like that. And Korea was once again a country that was now pounded by war and there was refugees

07:00 and it was of filth and… Though they were a clean people. They tried to keep things clean. But there was, you know, they were very nomadic because of their refugee status. They'd be here and they'd gone and, you know, the war moved, they moved and yeah.

You said you went to Hiroshima. How did seeing that impact on you?

07:30 I was rather startled I think to see the devastation of one bomb. I think that impressed me rather than I did think about all the people that were killed. But that was, "Okay so that happened." but

08:00 to see the destruction that one bomb had done, you know. Cause we're now training and we'd seen bombs land and they blew big holes in the ground, and we'd seen artillery shells and mortar shells and everything. But nothing like this. This was just complete and twisted steel girders and God, dear oh dear and when you think that it was one bomb,

08:30 you know. The casualties didn't sort of, that didn't worry me at all, right. I think it was the devastation and the effects of one bomb that more impressed me than anything else.

And what about the Japanese people, how did they strike you?

They just wanted to get on with life. They had

09:00 no animosity towards us. I think they realised that. And a lot of the younger ones would say, "Well grandfathers started the war, so we had to suffer because they made the mistake of starting, going to war. They should not have gone to war." so they weren't blaming us. They were blaming the grandfathers

09:30 for putting Japan in the war.

Now you were 18 years old, what were your political views about Australia's role in Korea, what we were doing there?

Yeah, well once again we were pretty indoctrinated towards that too. The United Nations, see we knew we'd been through the League of Nations business and we knew the League of Nations had collapsed and

10:00 United Nations had taken over, and this was the first time that the United Nations was called upon as a unity to exercise its charter, and we knew quite well that this was what the rest of the world wanted, right, and that the

10:30 Australian government was complying to that. I mean there was no anti-Korean feeling or anything in those days. It was a forgotten war really, you know, most people just forgot about it. It happened too soon after the other one. They all thought it was part of the other one, you know, part and parcel.

Before you left Australia, what was the atmosphere like in terms of that fear perhaps of a

11:00 **communist threat or that whole sort of Cold War period?**

I don't think the Cold War period had really struck Australia. I don't think it really struck Australia until probably about 1953. We knew the Russian bear was there. But

11:30 we… I don't think the Australian citizen really had any thought or anything about the Cold War, right, at that stage. By gee, they did by 1953 though.

So by the time you arrived in Korea, what was the situation in terms of what was happening there?

Okay, tactically on the ground at that time

12:00 the line had started to stabilise. The United Nations forces had pushed the North Korean and Chinese forces back north of the Yalu River and then they'd subsequently come down again and stabilised the other

12:30 side of the Imjin River on the 38th parallel, or just north of the 38th parallel. So when I got there we'd just gone into the final defensive stage of the war. We were still pushing forward in small groups. But more we were stabilising on the defensive line, rather than heading

13:00 north and at that time there was drifting in the wind. But though nothing, no negotiations had taken place or anything. They were still talking in Paris about having a negotiated peace settlement or something, you know. But nothing ever happened at that time. But it had certainly happened by the

13:30 end of or mid 1953. Mid 1953 they had negotiated and they sat at that table and we used to watch the light at P'anmunjom, the searchlight up there, all the time and say, "Well, when it blinks out we know that they're going to call the show off." you know. And of course, strange as it may seem also because they'd started to go

14:00 into this stabilised defensive line and they were starting to talk about, you know, having a negotiated settlement. We were saying, "Jesus, I hope it's not all over before I get there." you know. Yeah, it's strange isn't it? Yeah, nobody wanted the war to end until they had their little share of it, you know. Sorry state of affairs. But that's what it's like

14:30 so there we were. We'd gone into, by June of 1952, we'd gone into a stabilised defensive position along the line and we were building up, fortified the defensive positions all along the line.

So can you describe for me that first battle when you said that you first realised it was a fight?

God yes, I did.

15:00 As I say, we went into a defensive posture and one of, the activities that we were carrying out then was we'd had our outposts out from our defensive position. We'd carry out fighting patrols, recce [reconnaissance] patrols. We'd go out and try and capture prisoners and everything else like this and we'd do a company attack on positions and on the enemy

15:30 positions and he'd do them on us and we'd do them like that. Reciprocal, back and, "Your turn next buddy." you know. So the first time I went out it was just towards the end of winter too and… No, it was the beginning of winter. And we'd just started to get the first of the snow and I was bitterly cold.

16:00 And we hadn't gone into smocks in those days. We were given a combat smock, a green one, and on these recce patrols and things like that we'd put on a white suit over the top of it, a snow suit. And we didn't have those and I was

16:30 forward scouting on this particular patrol and Charles [Charlie – the enemy] decided to take a few shots at us and I thought the whole bloody Chinese Army was shooting at me, you know. There was bits of snow going poong, poong, poong, all around me and I thought, "My God." you know, "this is not supposed to happen." But, and I felt rather large. I felt like an elephant, you know. I thought, "Jesus, I'm only a little bloke." you know.

17:00 I felt pretty big though and I thought the whole damn Chinese Army was shooting at me so. We got out

of it anyhow, obviously, all right. But that was pretty frightening to be in a situation where, you know, a couple of nights before we were getting artillery shells and everything. But that's not personalised. It's a very personal sort of thing when somebody's shooting at you,

17:30 you know. You're the target. It's quite different when there's a lot of ammunition coming in and it's impersonalised. It's going anywhere. But once you know, that you're the target, it becomes a worry. In fact you say, "I hope you keep missing me, you bugger." you know.

How far were you from the people who were shooting at you?

At that stage I think about 150 yards, yeah, not too far. But far enough.

18:00 **Could you see them?**

I could see them all right, yeah, I could see them all right, yeah, you know, so you do what you have to do. You engage them and the rest of the patrol comes up and joins in the firefight and then it becomes a little bit impersonal again, right, because everybody's shooting around the place and there's a lot of ammunition flying around and you can see people

18:30 moving and you shoot in their direction, hoping that you'll hit them. You don't know if you do because everybody else is shooting anyhow. So yeah, very impersonal sort of a thing.

What about when you were out there as forward scout on your own, were you shooting at that point or...?

Well when they started shooting at me, yeah. See I was moving. They were nice and steady. They were getting stuck into me. I wasn't... I never

19:00 started the trouble. They started the trouble.

And were you able to see whether you hit anybody or...?

No, I don't think so, I don't know. You know. As I say, it started to get a bit impersonal.

What happens in that situation when you're suddenly for the first time in a real war situation, you're under fire, what happens in terms of your training and...?

19:30 The adrenaline starts to pump and you start automatically carrying out the actions that you're trained to do. In other words I just returned fire, bugger it, you know. You've got to return fire and hopefully the other people come up alongside you and take over and get into the firefight with you, right. Or somebody

20:00 would yell out to you to come back or whatever, you know. But there's... Normally they come forward to the scout because the scout's out there on his damn own. And they come to him and then you all go or all do whatever you've got to do.

What was your job as forward scout?

Mainly to find the enemy and I found him. He found me, yeah. A scout is

20:30 to... His job is to lead the way out and to make sure that you don't come across any nasties or lead your people into nasties, mines or anything else like that, and hopefully that you see the enemy before he sees you, right. But, you know, if somebody says, "I can deal with it my bloody self." you get camouflaged down and a little bloke walks alongside of you

21:00 and he doesn't, you don't know you're there, do you, yeah.

And how did you come to be selected on that day to be forward scout?

Well just the rotation of things, "Righto, you'll be the scout today. You're the scout." you know, everybody takes turns at things. And some people are better at it than others and

21:30 I knew that job as well as I knew the other jobs and as well as the other blokes did and so you just, it's your turn, you're the scout. These days they tend to, in jungle warfare, which is entirely different, you do have set positions as scouts, though it's a very foolish commander if he leaves the same bloke scouting all the time.

Was, obviously that position is

22:00 **pretty dangerous because you're way out front. Was that a role that the soldiers sort of were wary of being in or how did you feel about being named forward scout?**

No sometimes it was, sometimes I felt that I

22:30 would sooner be the scout than somebody else. I was a little bit more confident of my own ability, probably too bloody confident, and I wasn't as confident of their ability to keep us out of trouble. I'd say, you know, it's a bit of one of those one-eyed things sometimes, you know. Sometimes you know that

23:00 this is a bit bloody shaky. But other times you say, "Well I think I'll do the scouting, buddy." you know,

"I'll give you a break, mate. You have a break and I'll take over." yeah.

You said that you suddenly realised or you said, "Well this wasn't meant to be happening." People weren't meant to be firing at you, but you'd been trained to know that that was exactly what was going to happen?

Yeah.

Why

23:30 **do you think it suddenly seemed different, what was it about?**

Well this was for real. This was very personal, very real, you know. They weren't just shooting in your direction or shooting around the place. It wasn't just rounds going over your heads or anything. This was people actually trying to shoot and kill you and it got very personal and I got very angry about that too. I didn't like it at all

24:00 and it's not a good feeling when you feel, when you're selected, you know, as a target.

And how long did that sort of firefight go on that night?

Probably about 15 seconds. A lot of things happen in 15 seconds, buddy, I can tell you, yeah, until it become impersonal.

24:30 About 15 seconds, very personal and then probably a couple of minutes and the firefight was all over.

And were people killed?

There was a couple of people, yeah. We didn't… A couple killed, yeah.

Australian troops or…?

25:00 No, we had two wounded, that's all.

And the others were Chinese?

Yeah, he didn't fare too well.

And what happened to those dead soldiers?

You searched the bodies. You got what information you could and you left them there. Australians did that. If we had enemy casualties close in on our position we would retrieve and bury the bodies. In other words we didn't

25:30 allow him to come that close in and pick up the bodies and take them back. But if the bodies were half way or closer to him we would leave the bodies, right, lay them out virtually, yeah, you know, pretty dignified soldiers we were. And next morning they'd be gone and we knew that they'd come out and pick them up. They

26:00 also knew that we would do the same thing and it was a gentlemen's agreement. We never buried, we never ambushed, not like Vietnam. Vietnam, you would ambush a body, right, waiting for somebody to come along and pick it up, right. Korea, we never did that. No, it was very, still a very gentlemanly sort of an arrangement. You know, he left us Christmas presents on our wire. We got pinged off about

26:30 that. He'd come up and hang cards on our bloody front wire, you know. We weren't very bloody considerate of that at all.

Christmas cards?

Yeah.

And what did they say?

Just bits of paper, you know, Merry Christmas, man with the big hat and the big bayonet. Yeah, Merry Christmas, yeah, digger you know, yeah, so.

27:00 And course we reciprocated. We wouldn't let them bloody well get away with that antic without doing something, you know, so we'd take, well I think we took them over a box of rations, American sea rations and left it underneath their wire, so that they could have a Christmas feed, yeah, so, you know. But it was, that was I think the,

27:30 one of the better things about the Korean War. Your casualties did get out. We didn't have too many people missing in action. If they were missing in action it was mainly air force pilots and things like that. But our own troops, no, it was all recoverable and we made sure that we did that and we'd

28:00 virtually stop the firefight. Well, you know, stay in our own positions and we'd see them come out with the white flag, pick up the wounded and dead, take them back and say, "Okay, that's fair enough." and we used to do the same thing. We'd go out and they'd be there and we'd be here, pick them up, away we'd go.

And these were just sort of understood rules that you were working by?

Yeah, you know,

28:30 when a firefight was on, a firefight was on. But when it was over you were allowed to look after your casualties, which was as it should be, you know. Though the POWs, I know they copped a hell of a beating in the POW camps and everything. The

29:00 people in the line, the frontline soldier was a different person to that person that was guarding prisoners at the back, right, and I found that. I was escorting a prisoner out one day. I was going back for a 24 hour rest. And we'd captured him the night before and brought him back and give him a feed and what have you and

29:30 a smoke. He wasn't going anywhere. He was too bloody frightened to go anywhere anyhow and he was only a bloody kid. Well I was only a kid too, and so I was one of the blokes escorting him out the next morning, going out on my 24 hour rest. And when we got back down to the jeep and there was a provo down there and he grabbed and shoved an Owen gun in this bloke's back, "Get up

30:00 there." and I said to him, "You're a big bloke, you are. You should have been out in the valley last night when he was shooting a bloody burp gun at us." I said, "and then you could poke your bloody Owen gun at him. Leave him alone." So he got in the jeep and the provo jumped in the front and I give the kid a smoke and, you know, "You're not supposed to do that. We've got to interrogate him."

30:30 "Interrogate him?" I said, "Bullshit, don't know what's going on he's that frightened." You know, people back behind are different to line soldiers. Line soldiers have that respect for the enemy, you know, yeah. You know, that he's going to kill you if he gets the chance and you know you're going to kill him if

31:00 you get the chance. But by the same token, you know that he's there under orders and you're there under orders, you know.

So you said that one of the best aspects of the Korean War was that aspect, that sort of gentlemanly behaviour from...?

Well probably the, you knew that if anything happened to you you were going to get out or something was... You weren't just going to lay there and deteriorate out in the paddock, yeah.

What was the worst

31:30 **aspect of the Korean war?**

Shelling. We'd get anything up to 240, 280 shells on our position of a night-time, just a continual bombardment of artillery and the cold, climatic conditions, cold, cold, cold. And in summer time the bunkers all collapsed in and there were rats, rats like bandicoots. You wouldn't believe it. I used to lay there with a 45 and go

32:00 poong, poong in my bunker shooting bloody rats, yeah. Climate, climatic conditions, the conditions of service, you were continually cold. You were never, never warm and you slept in a sleeping bag. You slept in your socks. You just put clothes on at the beginning of winter and you keep putting them on and

32:30 they'd come up the line with the powder spray and get rid of all the lice and everything and two months later you can have a bath when you get out of the line. That's an experience. When you come out of the line one of the first things you do is you – or if you go out on 24 hour rest – you have a shower and change your clothes.

33:00 So you go down to the bath units and it's a big long tent arrangement and you come in one end. And in winter time obviously it's heated, summer time it's air-conned [air-conditioned]. And you peel off everything, get rid of everything. And good thing at that stage you all stink the same, you know, and I mean you do stink. Your

33:30 skin virtually rolls off like that because you've had clothes on and everything in winter, dreadful. And summer time it's just mud, mud, mud and you're sticking to your mud and you have a shower by getting out in the rain, you know, if you can, if a gentleman doesn't throw some shells your way and things like that.

34:00 So you go into the shower area and you strip off and then the next one in as you go into your shower itself and you're fumigated and you shower and gee that's bloody heavenly. It's absolute heavenly to have a shower. And then you go from there and you dry off. Then you go through the doctor.

34:30 The doctor checks you all out and everything and makes sure you haven't got too many sores and carbuncles and everything else like that and then you go into the Q store part of the area and you get a whole new outfit and you feel like a million bucks, yeah, and you go out the other end and there's a pay bloke there, always a pay bloke, cause you never get any money in the line. What are you going to do with money?

35:00 You have no money, right. But now you can go to the canteen so they probably give you 10 quid or

something, BAFSV [British Armed Forces Special Vouchers], you know, British Occupation Force money, yeah. So you go down, for 24 hours you just get on the booze, write yourself off and get back on the truck as a sick head, go back up the line again so. But it's great. That's one of the beauties of

35:30 the whole thing. And course when you go to Japan on leave, after six months we used to have five days R & R [Rest and Recreation] in Japan, a good experience. You step off, we used to go over in flying boxcars, bloody great lumbersome things.

36:00 And we'd land at the Kimpo Airport and we'd get off and we'd be dirty and raggedy and not the best of looking people in the world. And I remember on the first time I went back on my five days R & R and I never got out until about, it was out seven and a half months before I could get my leave and I…

36:30 Because there's all these civvies [civilians] are there, coming off their aeroplanes and here's this woman. She's got a fur coat on, a little poodle. I thought, "My God, lady!" you know. Two hours across that channel, here's this like a pigsty and here's this, we come into this. So that was a bit of a shock seeing all these civilians, you know. And lights, cause, you know, our only lights is

37:00 a candle and a choofer [heater]. We used to get Avatar [fuel] and we had a plastic cord and a grenade ring on it as a tap and we'd run it in there and we'd light it and we all got choofer necks and everything off, from the charcoal and, you know, come out and we'd have black and pull your balaclava down and your black necks and everything. Only thing that was white where you shaved of a morning around

37:30 there so that was a bit of a shock. And you go through much the same system as through the showers and everything and then into the pay office and, or the doctor and what have you, pay office, and then you get your uniform. You've got your medal ribbons on. That's the first time you've ever worn them and you've got all your bloody badges and insignias on your battle dress and you walk

38:00 out and you're a million, mate, straight out that gate, yep. And you're always going to be very selective, and you're very selective.

How many, did you have the opportunity of meeting some nice women when you were on leave in Japan where you…?

Yeah, well I used to get away from the camps and I liked going out in the villages

38:30 and things like that and I think I had a lot… Another mate of mine, we had a lot better fun than what the blokes did living in the city area where all the night life was and everything. We had good night life where we were, you know. But it was entirely different. It was same when Flo and I went to Malaya. We lived out with the people,

39:00 you know, and we had a lot better time than people just living in barracks and all this sort of bloody nonsense, you know. And of course the other factor was there.

What about brothels in Japan? Did you see, I mean we've heard lots of stories about them?

Stacks. Every second place was a den of iniquity, yeah. Let's be truthful about it. That's what it was all about.

39:30 And of course the Japanese people, remembering they were trying to rebuild the nation and the nation was built, rebuilt because of the women partly, from the money of the Allied forces through the occupation period, through the Korean war period, through the Vietnam war period.

40:00 That's what built up the Japanese economy so, you know, whilst the Japanese menfolk decried that, the women in actual fact kept the nation going, yeah. You know, they were able to purchase

40:30 commodities for the families and everything else and they supported the families.

So it was a really big industry that the country was depending on?

Yes, yeah, and a lot of theatres of war are just like that, heaps of them.

41:00 I've never known, been to one yet that isn't like that.

Tape 5

00:31 **You said after six months you had R & R in Japan, can you tell us a little bit about the last part of the Korean experience for you sort of chronologically?**

Yeah, well I, we did mention that the normal period is 12 months on active duty in an active theatre. After I'd had the five days, I came home and

01:00 I went back to Korea and I still hadn't had my 10 days R & R so it was only about a month in between those two, because it was about seven months, seven and a half months before I got my five days and

then I was supposed to have, after 10 months I was supposed to have, 10 days, so these were running into each other virtually. But in between that period of time we'd done another

01:30 stint in the line and we came out and a mate of mine was broke. I don't know where he was spending his money. He'd blown a whole heap of money on five days R & R and he was going on 10 days R & R, so I lent him £200 sterling and Les Lucas, you bloody well still owe me 200 quid. I never, ever got that back. So when I went

02:00 on the my 10 days R & R I had a very, very quiet time. I never had the finances to spread around because I was sending money home and I'd lent him money and I hadn't built up a capital after my five days, so my finances weren't real brilliant. So I did a lot of investigation of Japan at that stage. I did train rides,

02:30 which were very near nothing. I got pushed into trains and I managed to breathe sometimes on trains. And, you know, and I did a lot of walking and everything around the countryside and I really enjoyed the Japanese hospitality if you like, at that time. They were, even though we were then still an occupying force

03:00 because they never got their peace, the peace treaty wasn't signed in Japan until '53 or some time, '53. There seemed to be no blame towards us and everything and the country people were good people, yeah, and I really enjoyed that 10 days period. So after the 10 days I went back to Korea again. And the battalion was in the line

03:30 so rejoined them in the line. And we… Just prior to, before I went on my 10 days R & R, we'd lost one of our platoon commanders. He'd got wounded pretty savagely and our platoon sergeant was running the show and the position that we went back into

04:00 wasn't a very nice one. They'd gone down to the sergeants' mess, you know, officers and that could go out of the line and have a bit of a fling and come back in, and he came back and I nearly shot him that night when he came back. He was wandering around the crawl trench. I was on duty and I heard a noise and he was sneaking around to see whether we were awake or something. That's the stupidest thing he could have ever done.

04:30 He was that far from being shot, just another half a pound weight on that trigger and I'd have had him, so he was a very fortunate man. He passed away a couple of years ago. We lost a number of people in the platoon. Platoon commanders didn't fare too well. We did

05:00 one big company attack which was Fauna, Operation Fauna, and we went a mile and a half down behind his lines and came back up on him at about two o'clock in the morning. And there was a big long crawl trench running from his position down to his house post, which we were taking out. And the aim of that was to get a prisoner and I and another fellow was sent down in this big long

05:30 crawl trench. And he had spider holes going off here, there and everywhere and the damn thing was that damn deep we couldn't get out of it. Well we just went along and threw grenades in the spider holes and kept going. And when we run out of grenades and I had a couple of magazines left in my Owen gun, I was yelling to get out of there so they put a bayonet down over the side of the

06:00 crawl trench and pulled us out with the rifle and bayonet and we lost a couple of blokes that night. We lost a couple, two or three wounded. One bloke came in 24 hours after. He got hit and couldn't move and we couldn't find him. But he got his own way out the next day and laid doggo [motionless] over

06:30 in the valley overnight, throughout the day. And then another one of the platoon commanders got hit. They hit one of our outposts and took a couple of blokes prisoner. One of them died and the other bloke was released out of P'anmunjom later. And the platoon commander got hit and

07:00 we carried him out and he become a major general and he was the CO of 5 RAR in Vietnam, when I came down to visit the battalion. And he got hit with a burp gun, went through the zip in his bulletproof vest. So we dragged him out of the paddock. That was on the 11th of the 11th, beautiful day, Armistice Day.

07:30 **Were you wounded in Operation Fauna?**

No. The only time… And I thought I'd been wounded, and I didn't find out until years later that I never got a piece of shrapnel. It was the vehicle. I mentioned before, after I came back off the 10 days R & R I went back in the lines for a bit, and then the battalion came out of the line and they were coming home.

08:00 They'd refitted to come home and I went to 28 Brigade headquarters, to the defence and employment platoon for 28 Brigade. Among other duties we were vehicle escorts, escorts to vehicles and everything. And I was doing that when the enemy shelled the road and the vehicle went off the road and the driver was badly hurt and I managed to…

08:30 I got out of the vehicle and got down to the camp area and reported it. I'd busted all my face and everything at that stage and I thought it was shellfire. But it wasn't. It was obviously from metal or something. So I was shipped back to Japan then, to hospital in Japan. And

09:00 after I'd had all my operations and they rebuilt my face and what have you, they said, "Okay, your time's up." You know, "You're going home." And I didn't want to go home then. I wanted to stay there. But word come through that my mother wasn't well so they sent me home, and she's 92 and still alive. I could have stayed in Japan, yeah, because

09:30 it was a good place to be. We were saving money. We were reasonably well paid, you know, for those days, as a defence force. We were I think about the second highest paid army in the world. The Americans of course were higher paid than us and the Poms, they're really on the back leg. I wouldn't have gone. We always used to say, "I wouldn't go outside of the wire for your pay, mate, bloody hell." you know. No, they were really bad off,

10:00 you know, and we used to give them some goodies and if we were on leave and the Poms were there we'd shout them beer and things like that. They just couldn't afford it.

Leading up to something like Operation Fauna, can you describe how the COs would come down and explain, you know, what was going to happen? Or how did you know what to do and what was the lead up to that?

Well the lead up to it was we

10:30 were in the line and then we did a relief in place with another company and we went into the reserve position in the battalion, behind the other companies that were in the line, and then we were trucked out of there and we went back and we did some training. Strange, that piece of ground and that training that we did, was this operation so.

11:00 And the formations that we were doing and everything. And of course it didn't take dull heads too long to know, "Hey, we've got a show coming off." you know. Even the dumbest privates around the place knows that you're doing a rehearsal for something, right, so we were well briefed. We'd done a lot of training on a similar type or piece of ground.

11:30 Our weapons had all been checked by the armourer and everything and we'd done, I'd never seen it prior to then, a whole company shooting. We just lined up with all the weapons in the company and just opened up at once and it was damn awesome, the firepower that was going out. And it was a good comforting feeling to know that a company could produce this amount of, this volume of fire,

12:00 and accurate fire. So it was pretty comforting to know. So we did that rehearsal and then we went back into the line and then obviously into the reserve position. And it wasn't until about a week later that we actually did the operation itself, cause the in between period I did one reconnaissance patrol, did one of the recce patrols. But there

12:30 was other reconnaissance patrols going up. Other companies had tasks to secure points on the way so that we would have points to come back to and go, pass through on the way, because a mile and a half behind his lines is a long way behind his lines. We went up behind him and came back onto him again so yeah, we were very, very well trained for that particular

13:00 part of the operation. And the platoon I was in was one of the forward platoons of the assault. The platoon commander, we led… Our platoon led the way in and the platoon commander very fortunately, and his section commander, picked the right re-entrant to go up, you know, when we went back. And if he'd have gone up the wrong one we'd have been in a big heap of trouble, but they went up the right one.

13:30 We all knew just to shake out of our formation, do a right turn and then go back down over the hill again. And as we went down into the re-entrant, before we went back up onto the hill that he was occupying, that's when I and this other chap dropped off into the crawl trench and started to move along it and we couldn't do anything until such time as firing started. Once firing started, we could then do our little

14:00 bits to stop them from coming out of these spider holes.

How did you know to do that? Were you instructed prior in the training phase or did that happen when you got to the position?

No, we knew what we were about. We were carrying extra grenades and stun grenades and extra magazines for our Owen guns and everything so that we could do that particular job, yeah.

So they had quite a bit, they must have had quite a bit of intelligence about

14:30 **that?**

That's what all the reconnaissance patrols are for and everything else like that. You get as much information as you can, and let's face it, we'd been, and other units had been in similar positions and they'd been up on positions and they knew that they built these spider holes in and around the place. So we had to take care of that, right, assuming that they were built in this thing. If they built them in others, they built them in this, right. So

15:00 prior knowledge just said, "Okay, well he's going to have that." As soon as the firing started the New Zealand artillery opened up and they put in a horseshoe of fire right around us to stop the enemy

coming down off his main position and reinforcing the outpost area that we were taking out. Unfortunately they never stopped them. The enemy had a machine gun over on the ridge on the other side

15:30 which we lost the casualties to. But one of our fellows took it out and he was awarded a Military Medal for it. But all in all it was a pretty successful operation. We never took a prisoner. One come bouncing out of a bunker up on top of the hill and he immediately got, well he tossed a grenade, silly fellow, and he got a grenade come back at him so we didn't get our prisoner.

16:00 Our company commander, it was a very successful operation, brought all our people back except that one bloke we couldn't find because he went down lower and laid doggo in the snow. When I say laid doggo, he thought we'd all gone because the whole thing was a bit of a mess, and then he

16:30 worked his way back throughout the bit of the night that was left, and then laid up doggo in the valley of a day time and then came in the next night. He was bloody near frozen. But he came in through the outpost the next night. So all in all we got everybody back and it was a successful operation.

Did you know it was successful at the time or did you…? How did you find out about the success of it? I mean, can you

17:00 **feel it at the time that it's successful?**

Yeah, you know that he's not around any more, you've taken it and you've done the job. The only thing we never did was get a prisoner, right. We just left a lot of bodies so. And we'd only had, as I say, the casualties, two of our blokes at the same time so, you know, when you go on a thing like that and you only lose a couple of people you

17:30 feel pretty good about it, you know. You could lose a lot more, yeah.

Was that the most significant operation that you were involved in there?

That one on there, yeah. There were other firefights, you know, ambush patrols and fighting patrols down in the valley and everything else like that. But that was our major company one that brought home a lot

18:00 of lessons.

What sort of lesson was it for your personally?

Yeah, well on the personal one that you start to feel that you weren't quite bulletproof any more, that was one of them. And I think the other one is, the greatest lesson that you learnt at that particular time, was that you had to work together as a team

18:30 and everybody had to do their damn job otherwise things fall to pieces. And for years and years after, every time I was instructing people I, you know, I always emphasised the importance of teamwork and everybody doing their bit otherwise it just wouldn't happen, you know. Yeah, it was… Anyhow, the

19:00 CO got an OC [award]. Joe Mann got a DSO, Distinguished Service Order, and he was later to become the first commander of the training team in Vietnam [AATTV – Australian Army Training Team Vietnam], so.

What was he like?

He was a good bloke old Joe, yeah. He was a war-time officer. He did a short course at Duntroon. He was a real big man and

19:30 a soldiers' officer, good officer, yeah.

What does it mean to be a soldiers' officer?

Well you get snooty officers and you get soldiers' officers. Soldiers' officers don't worry too much about their career. They look after their men. They talk to their men and

20:00 they invariably climb higher in rank than the snooties, yeah. Michael Jeffery, our present Governor-General, was a soldiers' officer. Flo and I know stacks of them. Sir Thomas Daly, who was a brigade commander in Korea when I was there, he was a soldiers' officer. Sandy Pierce, stacks of them. They're soldiers' officers.

20:30 They're good people, you know, they're people that soldiers will follow, right, not because they're officers. But because they're the men they are and that makes a big difference.

Can you pinpoint in the Korean experience as a young soldier someone who influenced you for the future?

21:00 Probably Joe Mann. Joe Mann would have been a big influence in fact on me because Joe just walked around, said g'day to everybody and but he was a smart dude. He knew what he was about. He had good soldier qualities and yeah, he was

21:30 very much a man's man.

What about your mates in the Korean war, can you tell us a little bit about, you know, who you surrounded yourself with?

Yeah, well Les Lucas, who still owes me a couple of hundred quid, old Les. Anyhow he's passed away now. He's gone. He was a West Aussie, damn good soldier.

22:00 Teddy Baldwin, lives down the Sunshine Coast now. He was a most unlikely looking soldier. But he was a good soldier. Ron Porto who was the section commander, he's only 12 months older than I am. He served on and got out,

22:30 lost his son and came back in again and served on and he's now living... He's since lost his wife just recently and he's now living in Salisbury in Brisbane. Big Sammy Small, old Samuel.

23:00 Samuel was, came into the section. He was a veterinary surgeon and him and his gold nib pen, me and my gold nib pen, old Samuel. And he was a big man, six foot three or something, big man and the platoon commander

23:30 made him his batman. Biggest mistake Gus Brand ever made was making Sammy Small his batman. Sammy Small just wasn't the batty [batman] type at all. So Gus wanted his pistol cleaned. Sam pulls it out of the holster, takes it out of the bunker, and goes bam, bam, clip, put it back in the holster

24:00 and says, "She fires, she's clean." yeah. And Sam used to get up to more tricks than you've ever seen. And then there was Jeffrey Jetson and his name was Major, Major Jeffrey Jetson and when we came out of the line and it was, and the winter was

24:30 starting to rip in pretty bloody solid and we only had these old Australian tents and it was bitterly bloody cold, so Jeffrey and Les and myself... Who else was there? Somebody else. We managed to get down to the American supply depot and Jeffrey had a big mo [moustache]

25:00 and we all rolls in. He says, "Major Jetson. Sir, we requisitioned 30 bell tents, arctic bell tents." and we loaded them onto the trucks and the Americans drove them up to our... And old Joe... We drove them into the company lines and I got the blame for that. I don't know why. I think I got the blame for it

25:30 and Joe Mann yells out, "Payne, you." he said, "What are you up to now?" So we had all these arctic bell tents and we had to give them back and the only bugger that ended up with an arctic bell tent was Joe Mann, after we'd conned all these damn tents, yeah, and, the rest of the battalion hadn't got them so we're not having them, nice thought. But however, you know,

26:00 But the company commander will just see if they're fit for soldiers to use. yeah.

How did you choose mates? Did you... Was there something that drew you as a group together?

Yeah, we were all in the same section, in the same platoon and you live together, you fight together, you're it. You're the family,

26:30 like it or leave it, you're the family and you get to know everybody's little quirks and ways and everything and what to say and what not to say at the right time or the wrong time or anything, you know. And soldiers are all very helpful to each other when you're in situations, you know,

27:00 always help each other. If you got two bob, they got two bob, you know, nobody's ever broke sort of thing, yeah. Then Benson & Hedges, old Benson & Hedges. He was a skinny little runt and we'd been out on a fighting patrol and came back and one of the jobs you do, you count people as you come in to make sure you've got the right

27:30 people and all this and of course you can sit down on the bloody trench and have a smoke then. But you can't take any smokes out with you. You can't take any paper, nothing. You're clean skinned. All you've got is your dog tag, so when you get back in, bloke's that's there better have a smoke otherwise he's not real popular, right. And it must look like a cloud when the patrol comes in and they're all leaning back having a smoke in the trench. And

28:00 Benson & Hedges was on this night and I walked in. I said, "Where's a damn smoke?" And his name was Benson, so he gets 'Benson & Hedges'. And, "Give us a smoke mate, give me a smoke?" And he says, "You owe me one now." and I says, "Yeah, righto." you know. Over the years, he's still alive too, the bugger, over the years I must have given that bloke cartons of cigarettes for that one smoke.

28:30 Every time he sees me he says, "You owe me a smoke." yeah. He's missed out in the last 10 years cause I give it away 10 years ago, yeah. But great little funny things that we did and, you know.

I mean I understand that in war you do expect there to be that, you know, a certain amount of casualty that happens around you. Was there a significant casualty that you experienced in Korea that

29:00 **affected you at the time?**

No, I think the night Jimmy Cunkill [?] got hit was a bad night, you know, because he came up under his own fire and everything and he ended up taking out the outpost. We got off it and Jimmy never got off it and

29:30 he was alongside of me when he got shot. I just went down, nothing I could do for him. He was gone and that hurt, you know, yeah.

This section of transcript is embargoed until 1 January 2034.

30:45 Well we, I was very, when you talk about things that affect you, Americans have a very, very bad habit and we were operating with the Americans at one stage and

31:00 they had their casualties and they used to bring their casualties down and line them up like cordwood, you know. And the reinforcements coming in and here's the bodies just laying here and dear oh dear, it was bloody bad news. We don't do that. We don't do it with enemy dead. As soon as we recover enemy dead we bring them back and the ambulance people and everybody take them out, take the bodies out and bury them, take our own out and send them back for burial and everything

31:30 yeah, my word. But, not the Americans. I don't know why the Americans do that. They're strange people.

How long would the bodies stay there?

Probably, I don't know, until they can get a vehicle in. But they don't seem to go to any great trouble and they don't cover them, you know. You can cover a body, be a bit dignified,

32:00 you know.

What did you think of the American soldiers in Korea?

The American soldier is a very brave soldier. There's nothing wrong with the courage of an American. But he's... And Vietnam was the same. It doesn't matter where he goes. He's got a force of numbers and his minor tactics on section level and platoon

32:30 level aren't very brilliant. They seem to cluster together and they don't, they operate from a platoon commander down and they operate more in the old British system of, "Don't tell the soldiers anything and then they'll follow you because they don't know anything." and that's not a very brilliant way to work. Whereas the Australian military, God bless us, we have the 'must knows', 'should knows'

33:00 and 'could knows', right. You don't want to boggle the chain of command with giving them information that they don't need. If they need it, you give it to them, right. If it is information that is asked for, we give it, right, in our army. The Americans don't and nor do the Poms, though I believe the Poms are starting to wake up

33:30 now and they're passing on information. But even though our orders, our sequence of orders in the military come from the old Pommy system, we follow the system and give out information to our soldiers and question our soldiers on the orders that are given so that they fully understand them, right, and they fully understand the task that they have to do,

34:00 right. We also have an order of seniority within our own organisation so that if one goes down, the other bloke can take over. And I think it's something that you learn very, very early in your military career, that if you're to take over and lead, it is

34:30 mostly done under active service conditions. The leader is down and you have to take over so you're taking over at the worst possible time. You're taking over in the middle of a firefight and you must know what's going on. Therefore we as an Australian, in our army we pass down information so that whoever does have to take over, and any one of those private soldiers can take over,

35:00 right, at any time and so they do. And I even know of a case where a radio operator run a company, the tail end of a company attack, right, because the company commander went down, right, and instead of bothering anybody, he just kept it going as if the OC [Officer in Command] was there. He was just talking on the radio and when they took the top of the hill

35:30 he said, called up Mr so and so, "Best you come up, take over the company."

Where did that happen?

That happened in Korea, yeah.

That is quite an amazing story.

Well it's not abnormal really, you know, a radio operator can do that. If everything's planned and the plan's going along, the OC can go down, the leader can go down and the show just keeps going because it's organised, it's run, it's

36:00 everybody knows what's going on, right. And if the leader, if the commander has to start and issue orders when the firefight is going, things are starting to get a bit messy, right. It is then that he shouldn't have to because all the junior commanders are commanding their own elements within the whole group and everything

36:30 so everything is moving according to plan, right. If things stalemate a bit then the smaller group does what it has to do to overcome that without the overall commander trying to do it and that's the way we operate. But the Americans can't operate like that. They operate in large numbers and they always come too close together. They're

37:00 a machine gunner's delight, you know, yeah, It's the same as the Chinese. They used to stack together like firewood, you know.

Did you get a sense in Korea that you wanted to move up through the ranks?

I didn't get a sense that I wanted to move up through the ranks. But it just happened.

When did that start to happen?

On a patrol, yeah.

37:30 The patrol commander was wounded. But he wasn't badly wounded. But he was down and the blokes just yelled out, "Hey, come on Payney, what are we going to do?" I thought, "Payney, you'd better do something." yeah, so that, you know.

So this is exactly what you were talking about, you had that exact experience of just having to go in and take control and do you remember?

But I didn't do it. They said, "Come on, what are we going to do?"

38:00 you know. But I'd been nominated as the next command anyhow, right.

And what did you do, do you remember what happened at that point?

Yeah, I do, moved one group up here and moved another group there and we finished up, he bugged out and we picked up, cleared the thing, picked up the wounded and out we went, yeah. But the patrol commander actually, he walked out. He ended up walking out. He

38:30 just went down, was knocked out for a while.

Ellen [interviewer] asked you before, you know, how the training experience changed you. How do you think Korea changed you, your first real conflict experiences?

Korea changed me in the aspect that I was to put all these lessons together, the things that I'd learnt. I was starting to become a professional soldier.

39:00 Everything was starting to mesh together. Even though within your training you're learning all these sort of things, they haven't started to come together yet. Korea, they started to come together and I'm saying started. They didn't all come together really until I started instructing. When I started instructing, because I had to now impart

39:30 this knowledge, I had to know it in closer detail and how it all married and interlinked and everything else like that, to be able to pass the thing along. And that was when the true professionalism started to come, when you have to teach somebody else. It doesn't come necessarily with that first command decision that you have to make.

40:00 The true professional, I feel in my own thing, is when you have to try and, well when you have to impart knowledge to other people to keep them alive.

Tape 6

00:41 After I came out of hospital, prior to coming home, I spent a couple of weeks at the salvage unit in Miro where people went to recuperate and everything and I was hoping to be able to stay there on posting for another

01:00 12 months or so as a single man, you know. But, as I mentioned, Mum was reported not well and so I came home. I think it was for the best anyhow because I was a little bit rundown myself at the time and I did need a bit of recuperation as well. Consequently the military then posted me to 4 Cadet Battalion in Townsville which looked after the cadet units

01:30 in the main schools, the big schools around Townsville and Charters Towers, and it also let me have the opportunity of meeting my future wife.

How did you meet?

On a drivers' course. Flo was doing a clerical course, typist, you know, course and I was doing a driver max course and we just sort of said, "Well." you know, "We'd better make

02:00 a show of this." So by the end of the year in the December we were married so that, and fortunately we've battled on now for nearly 50 years, having had five sons and they all lived with us throughout the army years. But 4 Cadet Battalion was good to me. I recuperated and this was

02:30 now a start of a transitional period. I was learning what this other part of the military was about, the administration of the military, not the tactical of the military. I was also starting now to become involved in the instructional aspect of the military.

How did that come to pass? How did you come to be selected to be an instructor?

Well I wanted to be an instructor

03:00 and within the cadet movement, we had ARA [Australian Regular Army] warrant officer instructors out looking after all the schools and everything else like that, and where possible I'd go and assist them in their instructional duties and everything. And now and again I was able to give one of the less important lessons and things like that. I was able to jump in and do them for them which give me that

03:30 instructional in.

Why did you want to be an instructor?

I think it was important at this stage that the knowledge I had, and as it was pointed out to me by some of the warrant officers, you know, "You've got the knowledge. Impart it. Tell people, train people so that you can help to keep them alive." And I thought, "That's a pretty fine thing." And I soon fell into

04:00 the instructional mode and learnt that pretty well. And of course that followed two avenues. One was now a drill parade ground type of instruction and the other one was weapons and tactics and everything like that. And whilst, in our younger instructional days we combined the lot, you didn't deviate from any of those subjects,

04:30 what we did do later in life, we specialised, like doctors, you know. We sort of leaned a little bit more to the weapons, the employment of weapons and the tactics involved around the weaponry to get the best use of the weapon to be able to carry out your tactical manoeuvres and everything within the

05:00 whole of the concept. So initially it was just the drill and everything put together and then that was all came about when I went down to Wacol, 11 National Service at Wacol. I was then sent on an instructors' course, a qualified instructors' course which was quite a long course. It was two months of learning how to be an instructor and

05:30 it gave you a qualification as a qualified instructor. This was a great help to me all the way through the rest of my future in the military. Going back now, after the course went back to Wacol and carried on with my instructional duties with short periods in between. When we had a recess in between two intakes coming and we had a bracket there. But

06:00 we either took leave or we did courses or we went and did directing staff on military exercises with the regular battalions or did time at Canungra. I did all these things. But unbeknown to me, what was happening at this time with my career, and the career of a lot of the people that ended up in Vietnam on a Training Team,

06:30 was we had now Brigadier Daly, Tom Daly, who was the brigade commander in Korea. And he came back and he took over 1 Military Logistics, or Northern Command it was then, and he brought out the order that we, all the NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] go and do all these courses. So I ended up doing parachute courses, signals officers'

07:00 course. I'm a qualified signal officer, regimental signal officers' course, mortar courses and courses, courses, courses, courses. And this rounded off the whole lot of our military training business, you know, and brought in true professionalism. We were able to see now how armoured married up with infantry, how tactical air

07:30 married up with our whole tactical picture and how to employ it, the artillery and, you know, the mortars and everything, in the whole big concept. We just weren't infantrymen any more. We were becoming very specialised people. And Tom Daly did that. Course Vietnam wasn't on then and nobody knew anything about Vietnam then and I doubt whether Tom Daly did. But he certainly did a forerunner

08:00 to training people for the task that was to come about by the advisers in Vietnam. So I went through the National Service training period and when that folded up we said we couldn't get out of it because we were instructors and they weren't letting us go anywhere. So when it folded up we were back to the regiment,

promotion and then we did feed up training to go back into Malaya. We went back into Malaya in 1962 and our initial engagements were still chasing the elusive communist terrorists on the Malay-Thai border. Then the Indonesian

Confrontation started and we had the whole lot of Singapore and the Malay Peninsula to look after along with the British and the Ghurkhas that were. And the Kiwis [New Zealanders] that were in country at the time so. And then of course Borneo was the main part of the business. Unfortunately I didn't get into Borneo, or fortunately or unfortunately, because by this time

the new bracket of National Service had started. The selected servicemen were now starting to be called up under the marble system for deployment into Vietnam and those units that needed them to strengthen, to look after the defence of mainland Australia, plus to reinforce the battalions on the Malay Peninsula and then Papua New Guinea. So

a group of us, all the senior NCOs and a couple of the warrant officers and everybody, left the battalion and younger blokes were promoted. But they knew the job anyhow because that's what we do. We train people to take over from us as we make ourselves redundant, which is a good way of doing things within the military force.

So when we left, bang, the unit was still very professional, very capable, of carrying out its task in Borneo. We came home and went, a lot of us went on the warrant officers' course and qualified as warrant officers and were promoted to warrant officers and ended up at Skyville, the Officer Training Unit training the young National Servicemen

who were to become officers, who were to command and we knew were going to command 30 men in action. So the task was, we knew that we had to make a damn fine job of these young men so that they could carry out their tasks and they could help to bring some young Australians home, so it was

full on. Five o'clock in the morning, 10 o'clock at night, no problem, seven days a week. And those kids got trained and in a short period of time. In the short period that they were there, that's six months, they learned to be a junior commander. They went into action and we eagerly awaited the reports from the commanding officers in Vietnam as to how

our product was faring in country. And basically one line come back, "Send us some more of this value." so we knew we'd done our job. It was pretty hard to get out of that unit and everybody was trying to escape. We had an escape committee going.

What do you mean by that?

Well if you didn't get out, couldn't, once you get into a position and you're instructors and everything,

like National Service, they won't let you out, right. You're… That's your job and you stay there and you do that. So the army bottles up its key people sort of thing and in this case the military secretary, nobody could move out of there unless the military secretary said so, you know. He said, "Yep, you can go. You can go." so.

Why did you want to leave?

Well Vietnam was on. We had to go to Vietnam

right, however I went to Vietnam by a devious route. One of the other fellows was offered, he later become the regimental sergeant major of the Royal Military College, Duntroon, Norm Goldswing. He was offered a regimental duty, he was a warrant officer class three at the time, position to

PIR, Pacific Islands Regiment, out of Wewak. Before that posting took place the big decision by the military secretary was that, "No, he wasn't to go there. He was to go to Vietnam for six months, then come back and take over as RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] of the Royal Military College."

So that left Papua New Guinea open so he called me down at the office and he said, "Keith, you want out?" I said, "Yeah, bloody oath." and he said, "Okay, New Guinea, ring Paddy Brennan." who was another friend of ours who was now working in the directorate's office, right. So I rang Paddy Brennan and I said, "Is that posting?" "You want to go Keith?" "Yep." "Righto, pack your

grip mate, you're on the way." So I went out the back door of Skyville up to Papua New Guinea and I was supposed to be the… Regimental duties warrant officer is to take over some of the tasking of the regimental sergeant major, mark out his program, do all the gopher jobs for the RSM and stand in the RSM's place if he's not

well. The RSM was not well. But I didn't get that job. I was told initially to raise a stores list and select down and put up accommodation for a junior NCOs' course and be the senior instructor on junior NCOs' course at Papua New Guinea. I started to do this, make out stores lists and everything, and

then I got a whisper along the track that this wasn't really what I was supposed to be doing. And I thought, "Well I haven't heard anything else. Until I hear something to the contrary…" Anyhow that afternoon I was called up to… The commanding officer called me up and he said, "Righto Keith, we want

you to take A Company with a couple of PIR officers,

16:00 indigenous officers, and go up to Star Mountain and patrol the Star Mountain. And I thought, "Okay here we go." right. I'd worked a lot with indigenous troops and everything, you know. But I'm able to do that, so that's what I did for the next couple of months, went up, worked outside of Wanimo, up into the Star Mountains and I finished

16:30 that operational duty and it was taken over by Bravo Company. And I came back for a little bit of a rest and everything and the commanding officer put me, made me the, now the transport officer, because we had a big stocktake coming up. There hadn't been a stock take in 2 PIR since the battalion occupied Main Point. And when it

17:00 the battalion went up there initially all the stores went up first, which is always the wrong way to do things and they were just dumped in a big bundle and then the troops arrived and of course the troops just take stores out, nothing was signed for. We didn't know where stores were and I had tents full of all sorts of things. I had a whole transport compound of vehicles and all the stores that go with

17:30 vehicles and everything like that and a ledger about that thick so. And the only stores work I'd done prior to that was the cadet store bit, all right. But I learnt enough about it I suppose to get me by. And so we went about doing this enormous stocktake of trying to find out where everything was and write off things. I wrote off vehicles and

18:00 all sorts of things, hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of gear that just didn't turn up anywhere or the white ants had got out of at Main Point, and, you know, when I say white ants, the rust had got out the vehicles and everything. And the wives, our wives all sat behind typewriters and typed up stock sheets and everything else like that to go through the whole damn exercise.

18:30 **How unusual was this situation?**

Most unusual because normally a unit has a stocktake every year. This year it had been up there for probably, you know, about 10 years and operational pretty well in that time, you know, and consequently there'd been no great stocktake

19:00 done and this left a big shortfall in military accountancy. The military like to know where everything is and everything accounted for, so to do that job it was a damn big job and I ended up with a whole big thick ledger of the initial items plus the CESs [?] and the CESs within CESs and all the rest of it so.

19:30 And at the same time I was the boating officer. I was the fire officer. All the ex regimental duties had come my way. I didn't mind the boating officer so much because that got me away and up the Sepik River on patrol, up to the villages right upriver and everything else like that so that was pretty enjoyable, and I could do a bit of fishing

20:00 and I took a convoy in. I took a whole company into the other side of Maprik and that. I pushed the convoy in and got them back out again in one day and it had never been done before, bogs, bogs, only busted one axle so that was quite a good one.

What sort of fighting was going on there when you were there?

There was none there.

20:30 It was only on the Irian Jaya border where the Indonesians were being naughty and shifting marker posts and everything else like this, just being plain obstructive and annoying the local people in their life and they were dragging them back over their side of the border and all sorts of things. We couldn't go into their area. They were brutalising, and they still are brutalising the Paps [Papuan New Guineans]. So

21:00 to try and not let them interfere with what was going on in Papua New Guinea, we had to patrol the border. And we patrolled our waterways really well as well because he was trying to bring in arms and create cells along the border area, in that border area, of people to disrupt the organisation and administration of

21:30 Papua New Guinea on that western border area.

And all the time that you were in New Guinea, you were actually eager to get to Vietnam?

Yeah, Vietnam, New Guinea was only a little step. It was only a step to get to Vietnam and of course as soon as I got there, I applied again for posting to Vietnam. Before we finished our time in

22:00 Papua New Guinea, we were off again. But Flo did come up and the children did come up. We had a brand new house built. I used to go over and see the house and I'd weed the garden. But I had no water. The water, the articulated water was supposed to come through from the brand new water scheme but. And they were putting in steel piping

22:30 and we'd get a goya, earthquake and it'd snap all the pipes. So they run out of replacing pipes and we had no water. All the pipes and the food, everything, all the stores for the local coal storage and everywhere, and our coffers in the camp and everything, all come up on the Braeside and we used to

call

23:00 it the elastic sided Braeside. Everything's on the Braeside, right. So we waited for that to come in and it was, must have been the slowest ship. It definitely wasn't the Rangoon Star I can tell you that. It must have been offloaded and loaded all along the Australian coast because it was a long time getting up there. But I

23:30 overcome that problem. I found the tank, a water tank that hadn't been used. I soldered that up and got it in operation, built a tank stand, put it up on a tank stand and then got on to my engineer friends and my mechanic friends and we made a pump so that I could pump water into the house. So when the rain came and the water filled the tank, I had the pump and I walked over and I said

24:00 to my mate in the signals office, I said, "Get a notice down to Johnny Fuge." who was another mate in Skyville, cause Flo was still down at Riverstone at the time. So he went around and told Flo and she got a call forward notice and came up.

How was military life different for you as a married man as compared with when you were single?

A big difference and a bigger difference now

24:30 than what it, or then, than what it is now, or vice versa. Now they don't have to live in barracks. See back in our days, we lived in barracks. We didn't have civilian clothing. We went out on leave, we went out in uniform. We didn't go out in civilian clothing. You were on duty 24 hours a day. If you lived in camp and there was work to be done, you got the work.

25:00 The married man didn't, so I got married.

That was part of the motivation, was it?

Yeah, well no, not really but, no.

How soon after getting married did you go to Malaya? You went to Malaya together, didn't you?

No, it was nearly 10 years before we went to Malaya.

So you were living in Australia together for all those years?

25:30 Yeah, we were living initially in Townsville when we were married, then we shifted to married quarters at Wacol and then…

During all that time as an instructor you were a married man?

Yeah, and I'd start at five o'clock in the morning, knock off at 10 o'clock at night, and I thought Flo was in bed all the time. I'd come home and go in and have a look at the kids and they were always asleep when I saw them and when I got up and when I went, you know, and at the start of an intake, I'd never see them

26:00 for the first fortnight of the intake, I'd never see them, yeah. It was a hell of a job. Now, these days they don't do that. They start at nine o'clock and finish at five o'clock and gee whiz, we could have had a bit of that lot.

So how tough was it to balance sort of family life with army life?

Well the family never got much of our time at all, and

26:30 when we did have time off we were too damn tired to try and do anything. And I was trying to keep costs down and I'd had a garden going and I'd come home and I'd grab the torch and have a look around the garden of a night-time, then I'd go up and have a shower and bloody, might have a bite to eat if Flo's got something in the… But I'd normally have something in camp and get into bed, and five o'clock I'm up and gone, yeah, so

27:00 it wasn't a way to bring up a family. There wasn't very much quality time with the family. And course those days we never had the finance to buy cars and everything, you know, and it wasn't till about 1956 or something, '57, that we purchased our first motor car. So before then it was bundling the kids on the train all the way from

27:30 Wacol, down to Redcliffe, change trains, everything, just to have a bit of time on the beach with the kids. And by the time we got them down there it was nearly midday and we'd have a bit of time on the beach and then they'd play around. They'd get tired and they'd start to get cranky and we'd load them all up on the train and home we'd come again. It wasn't family time and there was a lot of broken marriages and everything at that time. And of course within

28:00 the married quarters there were those people that, from different units and everything and they were away and infidelity was rife and, you know, yeah, not very nice in the services in those days.

28:30 And you still get a lot of it and I feel sorry for the wives and everything today because we in the

regiment know that you're either out training, you're in camp or you're overseas, right. That little bit in between times that you've got with your family is not a very nice way for family life. Outside the regiment in the other units

29:00 they have a far different lifestyle altogether in the military. They do have quality time. They start at five and knock off at, you know, "Mum's sick, I'm having the day off." or whatever. Within the regiment that just doesn't happen so it's a lot of broken marriages and not a good way to live.

And how difficult was it for you personally to maintain a good married

29:30 **life?**

Well it was difficult. You were trying to support a family and we weren't getting paid a whole heap of money, support a family, try and be with the family. And Flo, God bless her, she looked after the family and she brought up the family. I did what I could when I was there, but I was never there. That's the service.

30:00 You're just not there so it's very, very hard for the wives. Military life, especially the frontline units, you know, regiment infantry battalion. They just never get home. They're copping it the same now, 12 months overseas, 12 months at home, 12 months at… When you're at home you're out on operations, you're rebuilding your unit. You're doing courses. And there's the family,

30:30 but they come last.

So it's a huge sacrifice to make, that sort of commitment.

Yes.

Was that something that came easily to you or…?

Well today they've even got a bigger sacrifice and that, you know, with friends of ours, they're both in, both of the couple are in the service and she's in the navy and he's in the air force. She's just done deployments into the

31:00 [Persian] Gulf, in the first Gulf [War]. Then she went to Timor, then to Bougainville. He went to Canberra, then they bought a home in Canberra, then she went off to the second Gulf, then he came home. He went to Timor, so can you see what this is like?

But you had the same sort of situation?

31:30 I didn't have that situation. I had Flo. In our day, Flo was in the army too so when we were married Flo had to leave the army. Today they can stay in the army and do whatever. They stay in whatever defence force service that they're in, they can stay in. But Flo was at home. She was housebound.

Given the little time that you had with your family and your children, how did you actually enjoy being a father?

32:00 I enjoyed it a lot. But there wasn't enough of it, you know, and I'd come home and I'd be tired and Flo would say, "Let's go for walk." and I'd say, "Gees, I just walked hundreds of miles with a pack on my back." you know. It was hard. It was hard for both of us. But we made a go of it. You just make a go of it

32:30 otherwise you give in, you know, yeah.

We sort of skimmed over your time in Malaya. You were there for a couple of years. What was the most significant thing about your time there, do you think?

Well we had a bit of a ball in Malaya. Operationally, we'd go on operations for two or three months and we'd come out and we'd be as white as that, cause we wouldn't see the

33:00 sun, right. We'd get wet every afternoon. We'd have a shower every afternoon by nature and. But when we were back off operations and that we had a pretty fair lifestyle. We had mess formal dinners. We had football, inter-unit football games and everything else like that. The wives thought Malaya was absolutely superb.

33:30 Flo would go out and Flo would get the seamstress down and make her an afternoon, after five [dress], and the hairdresser would come to the house and dress her hair for her and, yeah, course and she had a house amah that looked after the children and she had a wash amah that looked after the washing and everything. There was a gardener that did the garden. Thank God for that because I wasn't there half the time anyhow

34:00 but it still… And Flo was course very involved in the Scouting movement and everything like that then. She got her Duke of Edinburgh woggles and all those sorts of things and did courses in Malaya and laid on bamboo beds and all that sort of thing.

And what about the operations in Malaya? How were they different from what you had previously experienced?

I always classified them as the greatest training

34:30 ground that the Australians ever had for operational duties in Vietnam. We had an enemy. We had to be very switched on. But we never had a great heap of contacts, you know. If you had a contact it was rather the oddball than the reality so to me… And what we classified it as was a good training ground with a live enemy,

35:00 and thank God he never showed up very often and it was a stroll in the jungle. You learnt the jungle. You learnt the way of life and you learnt to live with the jungle, in the jungle, and look through the jungle so it was a very, very good training ground for all the Australian forces that went to Vietnam. It was a great one.

What about

35:30 **the enemy in Malaya, the communist terrorists? How did that enemy differ in terms of your operational tactics?**

Well they only used to go and try and get in, get food from the village or murder an administrator or something like that, you know, and by the time we got there, things had eased off considerably from what they had in early 1954s period so.

36:00 And they were now isolated to the Malay-Thai border area and you had the Thai Army. And police had now taken an active role, instead of an inactive role, of keeping them on the move on their side of the border, right, cause we didn't go over into their side of the border. Thank God for that. They'd shoot you, that stupid, yeah.

36:30 So we'd patrol our side and they'd patrol their side. Mainly the people we were running into were just drug smugglers and timber getters and all illegal activities, right.

You said you didn't have many contacts [meetings with the enemy]?

No.

But did you have any? What would have been the most precarious contact?

We had four blokes I think, four blokes just going up a creek bed

37:00 and they're, one of their weapons never fired anyhow, you know, and the others, they weren't going to get into a box up. They just walked into us and dropped their weapons and run so, you know, it wasn't a contact contact so to speak as we know it. Why he was still trying to be active and bedevilment I don't know. I think they were trying to then start to build up communist

37:30 cells throughout Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and to reactivate the whole thing again along the Malay Peninsula to once again reactivate into Indonesia, they'd have, link up again on that archipelago. But it was early days

38:00 in that direction and late days in the other direction, right.

So when you came to be instructing the platoon commanders who would go to Vietnam, what were the sort of qualities you had that were necessary in a good instructor?

Experience. And I had the instructional ability behind me and I'd had these various

38:30 postings and all these courses and everything that I'd done. And not only myself, but there were a lot of the regular army people at that time as I mentioned before. And we'd married all these subjects together and we saw how the whole of the military could operate. And one of the beauties about instructing those particular people, those cadets at Skyville, officer cadets that is, they were very switched on

39:00 and what you tried, what was allocated for you to teach within 40 minutes, they would have a good grasp of and everything in 20, 25 minutes. So you could then bring in a lot of other things that married in with that particular subject so that they were learning a whole heap of things all at once. And then probably in the last four or five minutes of the training

39:30 period you could just recoup on what you'd already told them and they were switched on enough to accept the whole lot, see. Whereas the average IQ [Intelligence Quotient] of an average enlisted man in those days, you needed the 40 minute period but in some cases. But the 40 minute period was laid down because you always taught to the comprehensional

40:00 ability of the lowest in the class, which I disagree with anyhow. You should go, cut mid way, yeah.

So how had those particular men been selected to do…?

They were selected, first of all when they're called up they come in and get their education qualifications and bang, bang, bang, bang and

40:30 we say, "Okay well send him to the psych [psychiatrist]." and he goes and does a psych test, right. And strange as it may seem, the IQ of the cadets at Skyville, the acceptance IQ was higher than what it was for the Duntroon cadet, yeah. A lot of Duntroon cadets don't know that. But it's a fact. They had a

higher IQ for acceptance into Skyville

41:00 because they had to learn very, very fast. It was a crash, crash program and the only thing that was left out was a lot of the niceties, right, how to use your fork and knife and all these sort of things, you know. And they did tactical exercises without troops on mud maps and everything else like that to

41:30 battalion level and they never went outside of battalion level. They never went to brigade or divisional level like the cadets at the Royal Military College do in their fourth year, their last year. But that system's changed too now. They're only doing 12 months. They found out the value of education. They go to ADFA [Australian Defence Force Academy] and they do, they get all their educational qualifications and their background military training,

42:00 recruit training plus a little and then they go.

Tape 7

00:31 I mentioned that we could bring in associated subjects within that training, laid down training period. And it was assimilated by the cadets within that 40 minute period as well as having that five minute tailender to recoup on the lesson we were supposed to be teaching, because of their IQ standard

01:00 which, you know, they had to have that to be able to grasp all of the subject matter and learn their trade as young commanders in six months. And it was a pretty big task and they were full on, yeah, they were 24 hour a day men.

Were you suspicious of training getting you into a commanding position rather than having experience?

01:30 No, I think, well no doubt you've got to have both. You can't go into a training period; a book can only tell you so much. It's like operational,

02:00 we've got an operational orders system and everything else like that or SOPs, Standard Operational Procedure, right that this, this, this, this, this is what happens, you know. Well that's okay, but those sort of things are only used as a guide. There's, you know, to give you an example, you don't walk through the jungle with a steel helmet on your head if the enemy's not shooting

02:30 artillery or mortars and everything at you. A) You can't hear anything. B) You get awful bloody sore on the head, right, so it becomes a useless bit of equipment and we just shouldn't have it, right. If the enemy's got artillery and mortar capabilities and is using it against you, okay you wear something to protect your head against shrapnel and everything else like that, all right. So

03:00 within the experience factor, you've got the experience here and you've got the ability to train there and you're marrying this one with that one so that when you're imparting the knowledge you are imparting part of experience. And somebody asks you a question about so and so and you say that is bang, bang, bang, right. So you've got enough experience and everything to bring in all the

03:30 associated things and give them an answer to the problem. No, you've got to have experience as well as, you just can't be a dumb, walk around and say, "I'm an instructor." you know, no.

And the guys that came to Skyville, do you feel that they had enough... I mean you said that they had high IQs?

Yes.

They had the experience to back that up?

Yes and those that graduated, mind you we'd get pretty fair classes in

04:00 and not all of them graduated. And a lot of them we sent out and sent to the battalions as corporals and everything else like that. They, if they never met the standard they were out. So yeah, those that graduated, except one and I won't mention his name, right. But he was the son of a politician and my wing. And I was in charge of the infantry training wing and

04:30 we must have filled in reams and reams of paper on this fellow and the amount of times it went to Board of Studies… And tell you he's no good. And it was coming in from all the other wings as well and we couldn't get rid of him because he was a politician's son. He graduated. He was the only graduate I ever saw go out of Skyville that should not have graduated. Fortunately the army had enough brains to leave him in Australia and put him in

05:00 a signals unit down in Melbourne where he couldn't do anybody any damage. But nonetheless he graduated – politicians! Was he smart enough? No, he wasn't smart enough. Was he a slob? Yes, he was a slob. Did he think he could get away with everything? Yes, he did. Did he get away with everything? No. But he got commissioned

05:30 so yeah, it happened and it should not have happened.

So did you find that the men under you in that instructional situation were quite respectful of your command?

Yeah, I had five instructors in the wing and we all worked well together. And Skyville was one of those units where

06:00 in the other wings you had officers instructing in the wings and everything. We'd help them and they'd help us. I had them as fatigue men, the officers as fatigue men and everything. We never had a demonstration platoon or anything like that so we were very short on the ground regular army wise from the instruction point of view and the lessons we had to teach, so we'd be their fatigue men and they were our fatigue men and

06:30 we got the job done. As I say, it was full on. With the first course that went through we were also the fathers of the cadet. In an officer training establishment they have a father and son system where this class looks after the sons in this class and down the line they go, and course the first class that came in had no fathers. We were the fathers,

07:00 right, night and day, wet nursing and everything. Not too much wet nursing I can tell you.

What did that involve then?

Being with them of a night-time, when they had their study time, their making men period and everything else like that. The senior class normally looks after those things to guide them in their study line and their

07:30 making men and getting their uniforms ready and get all this done, you know, though Skyville a lot of it was done by laundry cause they just never had time to do it. We couldn't have cadets wasting time doing miscellaneous things like ironing clothes and everything when we could be teaching him something so, you know, he certainly had to do some polishing and everything like that of his gear and maintenance of his gear but. And his other mundane things, we said

08:00 "Well look, let's pay a little bit of money out and get this done so we can teach them something in that period." And with the first class, that's what we used to do. They'd knock off at night-time, then we'd be around the cadet lines and around their accommodation and anything, any problems they got we'd bang, bang, bang, you fix that up, this is how you do it, bang, bang, you know, wet nursing. But

08:30 that was just a time consuming factor for us because we also had, we never had a laundry to look after our gear. Thank God for Flo. Flo was up in the mountain, but I was down in Skyville so I used to do a lot of my own. Plus we had to prepare a lot of the lessons ourselves. When we first went to Skyville there was migrants still there so we were living out of an army Wills cooker –

09:00 a mobile cooker arrangement. The cadets' mess was built first and the cadets moved in and we were still in the Wills cooker. We had no sergeants' mess. The officers' mess opened after the cadets came in. The officers had no accommodation. We had accommodation and no mess. They had a mess and no accommodation

09:30 because they were in the old property home. They used that as a mess and plus the headquarters. So they took over, the officers took over that and they were welcome to it, if they can get there, off out of the bloody road, you know. We were down the bottom, so we ended up paying a debenture to start our own mess and because we'd all moved into now Skyville, which

10:00 was just out of Windsor in New South Wales. And the accommodation, cost of accommodation skyrocketed, right so the private soldiers, and we didn't have too many of them. But all our accommodation, there was no married quarters or anything. They were building married quarters over at Riverstone and we went into them. But we were living 12 miles up in the mountains.

10:30 We were the nearest we could get and what money we'd saved in Malaya got paid out because we weren't getting our rent subsidised and we were only getting two thirds our military salary. And we were paying our debenture to the mess and then we were paying a subsidy to the private soldiers' kitty to keep them alive with

11:00 their married quarter or flats or whatever they had because the whole was a mess. That's the way the army run in those days. But still it was a rewarding experience. I probably think Skyville would have been the epitome of my service. We put a lot into it. We had a lot to achieve and

11:30 we achieved it and I'm very bloody proud of the product that we got out of Skyville. We got a lot of young men home to their mums that probably wouldn't have come home if we hadn't have trained those young fellers so yeah, it's a good one.

Were you ever worried that you would, you know, lose the edge of being able to be out on the...?

12:00 Worried, apprehensive, you know. Have we done enough? You know. And, as I mentioned before, we were eagerly awaiting reports from the commanding officers in Vietnam who were receiving these

young fellows, you see. So when we got good reports we said, "Okay." but there was no slacking off. And we did critiques on each other and

12:30 everything possible to make sure that the right message was getting across and enough of the message was getting across and not too much of this and not enough of that and that's like the ironing thing, you know, when they first came in. They were ironing and doing all and we said, "This is barney. Put it through and tell the government to increase the bill, right." and they did. We pointed out to the military

13:00 secretary that we want instructional time, not bloody laundry time. They can learn how to iron a bloody shirt and a pair of pants some other time. I can teach them that in a day. I want to teach them to be officers. So that was important to us and anything that we could do to improve that little lot, was done, yeah.

So you may have covered it. But how then was that different to any other officer training

13:30 **that had been around?**

Time factor, time space. Royal Military College, Duntroon, in the time that I was instructing there, they did four years. That encompassed their academic training plus their military training. Now they have four years at ADFA and then they go over and they do 12 months at the Royal Military College, right.

14:00 So they've got a lot more time to learn to command 30 men that these blokes had six months to do, right. But they didn't of course. They had… The cadets that we were getting already had their academic qualifications, right. They were uni [university] students or…and going for degrees or something like that, you know.

14:30 They were 19, 20-year-olds, not 17-year-olds going to Duntroon.

So they'd leave that six month course and go and be officers in Vietnam?

The day they graduated they went on leave and they come back off leave. They were posted to a battalion. They did the run up training with the battalion and said, "Ta-ta." Or they left there, went on leave, come back and went straight to Vietnam. All depended on how good they were.

15:00 **That must have felt a real huge risk because you were saying before about the officers that you really respected in Korea were soldiers', you know, officers?**

And these blokes turned out good, first class, good blokes, yeah, terribly proud of them.

How did you come then to be in Vietnam?

Well I applied for a posting to Vietnam

15:30 and the situation in New Guinea had declined. We'd done our bloody stocktake and everything and they said, "Okay, we've trained." And strangely, the fellow that took over from me was one of my ex CSMs [Company Sergeant Major] when I was a corporal. I came out and he went in so and I thought,

16:00 "Well, that's ironic." So I came out and I'd done the advisers' course and everything, then had a bit of leave and bang in the January of '69 I was away to Vietnam so. You had to apply, but it didn't take much to get you there if you were the right people, you know, and they just had the right people so. As I said, Thomas Daly trained

16:30 us all and a lot of the people, even National Service were, made up two thirds of the adviser commitment anyhow, you know.

Why did you want to go?

Vietnam, it was on. I'm a soldier, yeah. God if I hadn't have gone to Vietnam, if they wouldn't have let me go to Vietnam that would have been a disgrace to the nation. No,

17:00 and mother wouldn't have been able to live with me, no that's a flaw in the character. No, so yeah, well that was your duty, away we went. And having arrived in Vietnam of course after having done my courses in Australia and I'd done a collateral language course down at Woodside, too, to

17:30 learn to speak Vietnamese – don't know why. They'd have been better off teaching me French because I worked with the Montagnards and they could understand French and the Vietnamese could understand French. The Montagnards couldn't understand Vietnamese and they also had about 300 different dialects in their language, you know. Some of them couldn't speak to each other, let along anything else so. And

18:00 of course my Vietnamese was absolutely superb, you know. They said, "Well if you don't pass the course, you don't go." and I thought, "Well that'll be interesting." cause every stand I went around to they'd say, "Well what's so and so?" and I'd say, "Co." 'Co' meant girl, "Co, co, co." So I qualified and I went to Vietnam, yeah. And prior to going

18:30 over, this time I'd done all my mortar courses and everything and I'd been subject to a lot of loud noises in my service and I was starting to get a hearing problem and my hearing problem was classified as

CZA, Communication Zone Anywhere, you know. But not front line. In other words

19:00 rear echelon I could go to, so where did I go? Mobile Strike Force. But they weren't going to let us go, two of us, a mate of mine, Jimmy Getrix [?], who had already been to Vietnam and he was wounded pretty badly in the arm. And Flo and I went and saw him when he was in hospital and his arm was withered up and he was squeezing a ball and everything. And I was either going on

19:30 my advisers' course or I'd just finished my advisers' course and he said, "I'm going back to Vietnam." And when we were going home I said to Flo, "I don't think he'll be going back." yeah. And he did, same aircraft. But before we went they said, "Look you've got CZE." so Ron Cowie, the major down at the personnel depot, said, "Look." you know, "into the acoustic

20:00 lab [laboratory]." and everything. And out it come and he said, "You can't go." right. And I said, "Give us that phone. Directorate's office. Paddy Brennan. Hey Paddy." right, "Give us the goods major." "You're both on the aeroplane, away youse go." yeah. So away we went. Arrival in Vietnam was nothing dramatic.

20:30 It was just receiving the smells of South East Asia all over again. And the place had been pretty well bombed around all the airports and everything else like that there. None of the buildings close to the airport had been hit. It was mainly Allied air force bombing and strategic targets around the airport and the near villages and everything that the NVA [North Vietnamese Army]

21:00 and VC [Viet Cong] had tried to carry out firefights in.

Where was the whole war at, at that stage when you got there?

Vietnam, all over.

But I mean at what stage of the conflict were you in?

We were probably in phase two, leading into phase

21:30 three. The terrorist war had finished. The major infractionary war had begun. The NVA, North Vietnamese regular forces, had started to infiltrate the south so things were hotting up nicely. The oven was getting nice and hot

22:00 and that was right throughout the country. The year before I arrived we'd had the Tet Offensive. They were now rebuilding up because after the Tet Offensive, though we had the Paris [Peace] Accord and all the rest of it. And the bombing was on and the bombing was off and the bombing was on and the bombing was off. And when it went off it would allow him to build up and send more troops down south, do all the things,

22:30 saying, "Thank you very much, you've given us more time." And by the time I went there in '69, everything was percolating along very, very nicely in the kettle. So to move into the operational concept that I went into, I was assigned to Special Forces. When I left Canungra I

23:00 knew where I was being assigned to. I was going to Special Forces. I was assigned to Special Forces. But I didn't know that I'd be going to Mobile Strike Force unit until I got assigned to that unit by the commander of AATTV [Australian Army Training Team Vietnam – the Team] when I hit Vietnam.

23:30 We moved the next morning straight over to, we flew then to the Special Forces camp at… Anyhow we ended up on Van Trai Island where we were to do a 10 day orientation course with

24:00 the Americans, calling in American aircraft, artillery, use of their helicopters, use of their specialised equipment that we were going to use in operations and mobile strike force. I was only there for two days and then we got a call that two of us had to go direct up to Pleiku so we picked up all our chattel

24:30 and away we went. We flew up to Pleiku and I landed there just in the afternoon and was assigned as the commander 212 Company and that I'd be going on operations the next morning. I thought, "Well that's a good feed in, nice and slow, nice." you know, "Good way to get it." And I had to then go down and get my orders for the

25:00 operation the next morning and I went into the S4 shop. The Yanks drew my maps and the rest of my gear and everything else like that so that I'd be operational, learnt where my operational area was and when I started to ask questions about the tactical support and where it was and who it was and all these things, "Wait a minute,

25:30 this is a bit strange." you know. And they said, "Well look, you get on the ground and you'll be right." you know. I thought, "Yeah, you tell me why, what's happening first?" And this was a shortfall that occurred right throughout my force, by the Americans. The Americans were get up and go, gung-ho, and when you get out there, "Let it all happen." you know, "We'll…" And I said, "No, no, no, no. I'm getting some orders before I go."

26:00 So anyhow, I got what I could. And I hadn't seen any of my soldiers at this stage so I went over and XO [Executive Officer], who was another warrant officer, Warrant Officer Kev Latham, was fitting up the company ready for the operation the next morning, issuing ammunition, weapons, making sure they had

all their gear and etcetera, etcetera. But no orders.

26:30 So I now had to bring my orders establishment together and I had… At that stage, I had an American medic who remained with me all the time. Top sergeant, Jerry Delrow. And then I had a staff sergeant medic, medic and the staff sergeant, heavy weapons

27:00 man. And he was supposed to look after all the heavy weapons around the place. And then I had a communications man. So that was four and myself. Then they dropped out the heavy weapons man and doubled up the communications man with the heavy weapons. So I said, "We can live with that. I can look after the weaponry." you know. "I'm pretty customised at that." And so

27:30 I held my orders group, still not bringing in the Montagnards or the Montagnard platoon commanders or anybody, any of their group at all, because they still had to go out and live with the people and go out to their own homes that night. They used to go home, come in on operations, fly out and, you know, so you didn't want too much information

28:00 about where you were going and what you were doing floating around until you got on the ground. And I made it a habit after that really of getting the platoon commanders on the radio with the headgear on and the mikes while we were flying in on the helicopters, and I'd brief them as to what was to take place on the ground when we got on the ground, so that they knew what to do, right. Once we got on the ground then I could,

28:30 and we were secure, I could pull them in and have an O [orders] group and tell them about the operation, bring them all into the picture so. I went down. I had a look at the soldiers and I thought, "My God, this is what a Montagnard looks like. This is pretty good." Spoke to Kev. Kev seemed to be pretty switched on. He was an ex SAS [Special Air Services] sergeant and was promoted to warrant officer so he appeared to be of pretty good value.

29:00 Spoke to the medic, Jerry Delrow. He was, Jerry was a 21-year-old, a volunteer, pretty highly trained in his medical field, had very little knowledge of infantry tactics or anything like that. They specialise and that was his MOs [modus operandi] and that was where he was so yeah, and Jack Clements who was a radio man, knew his business.

Were you worried about the medic having…?

29:30 I was worried about the two Americans, I can tell you. I was very worried about them. Jack Clements was a little bit more, had been around the traps a little bit longer than Jerry. Jerry, this was Jerry's first operation, my first operation there, his first operation. Kev had been on one, but not a heavy one. They hadn't had a firefight. And Jack had come in from another organisation and he was, he'd been around for a while so I wasn't really

30:00 worried about him. I had good reports on him and I knew that he could command a platoon so. And because I had to allocate our round eyed [Western] platoon commanders to the formations that I wanted to adopt in the field and basically I operated on four platoons forming a box. Kev Latham,

30:30 who was the XO, was also the platoon commander all the time. Jack Clements and the radio man and the heavy weapons man, and they changed over occasionally. But when I run out of heavy weapons and ammo [ammunition] and he wasn't going, could Jack Clements run in either of the two flank platoons, whichever one was the diciest. I'd

31:00 do a map of reconnaissance and I'd say, "Okay Jack, take this side." Or, "Shift over to that side of the fence." you know. So he was running there and Jerry Delrow was looking after the rear platoon all the time, good place to put a medic, in the rear. Anything happens, you can utilise him, anything here, you know. And I taught him to be a platoon commander as well so he was learning the ropes and answer, and I was giving them problems and everything

31:30 all the way through, being the old instructor, again, in the paddock. So we left on the operation. We boarded the aircraft very early in the morning. We flew in and we didn't do a prep of the LZ [Landing Zone]. We flew straight into the L Z. By prep I mean we never had gun ship fire onto the position and everything to make the LZ

32:00 reasonably secure before we went in. We just took it in as a cold LZ, and bang, and in we went.

Why did you have to do it that way?

Well the thought was that there were no enemy in the area or very limited. No enemy had been seen and all this thing and it was supposed to be a shakedown operation for me anyhow. And the other companies of the battalion, who were forming a blocking force up, and I was feeding into them

32:30 and so, you know, it was the new boy, and a new boy on the block and feed into it. So Kev took the first bird [helicopter] in. He went in first. His bird got on the deck. He popped a green smoke clear, cold LZ, come on in. The next bird got on the deck and then the other two fluttered in alongside of him and they started

33:00 to unload and next thing, boong, there's a red thing of smoke going up and I'm coming in on it. So we

had a contact straight off and there was a lot of firing going on, but not a lot of hits being made and…

When you first saw that red smoke, do you remember at all what your instincts kind of led you to do?

33:30 Well I knew what I had to do. I had troops on the ground. I had to keep going in and I had to take command of the company and bring those other people in, make that ground secure for them to come in. And then the gun ships came in then and rattled in all alongside of us and everything to keep the NVA reasonably busy while we got secure on the ground. Once we got secure

34:00 on the ground, he beetled off. We went down and we found a blood trail which we followed that for quite some time until it run out on a stream and we just couldn't do it. And then I had to swing back and get into my own AO, area of operation, so that I didn't run into anybody's outlandish H & I [harassment and interdiction] fire. They used to fire artillery just willy-nilly into an area and

34:30 you had to be in your area otherwise you got it. So I had to get in there and I had to link up with another company two days down the track. So I had a route that I was following, sort of a willy-nilly one. Nobody knew where I was following, but I knew where I was on the map. We had a peaceful day that day. That night was peaceful. The next morning we

35:00 again saw signs of enemy and I went down off the ridgeline and found an old village complex and we came back up onto the ridgeline and it was reported there was NVA coming in our direction. We set up a hasty ambush. The ambush was sprung. There was a lot of firing and there was nobody

35:30 hit. And I had a look at the ambush area after, and all our rounds were hitting high up in the trees so I had a big problem on my hands. The yards [Montagnards] needed training on how to keep their weaponry down and keep it down low to hit people in the knees and all the rest of it. So I knew then what I had, half of what my problem was. I had to do weapons training in a big hurry. We moved

36:00 out of there and we had a jolly old ride and I married up with the other company later that evening and we went into an all round defensive location and we then, the following day, we carried out a range practice. We just fired the weapons. I'd give them targets, then I'd put them down and I'd see who could hit the target and who couldn't hit the target. So I was sorting my people out and doing a bit of a training

36:30 on the operation.

Did you at any stage when you were trying to really do this fast track training, were you worried about, you know, the future of that company?

I was concerned about the standard of training of the company. Yes I was. I was very concerned about that, concerned not only for

37:00 myself and my round eyes, I was concerned for the soldiers, you know, they just weren't capable of hitting anything and doing damage to the enemy therefore they'd do damage to themselves. So it become a quick training course for the next two days. And then we were pulled out of that and went back to Pleiku. Having got back to Pleiku I

37:30 spoke to the commander about the problem and everything so we were taken off operational duties for the next two weeks and we went into an intensive training program. After the… At the end of the two weeks I was reasonably confident. I'd broken them down now. I created a killer group in each of the squads.

38:00 In other words it was either two or three men that could hit things, hit a target, right and they were the killers and I give them a little badge, you know. Anyhow but it worked so they wouldn't just fire willy-nilly. They'd pick targets and do some knocking down and what the others knocked down, well that was just good luck. But

38:30 they were supposed to fire fire support and suppressive fire to keep the enemy from firing or firing accurately at our people while these other people knocked them down. And they all understood that. "Oh, that's good plan. That's good thinking." right. Plus I put their guns on improvised fixed lines and everything else like that, showed them how to put their weapons so that

39:00 when they pressed the trigger and it just went like that. It was hitting somebody about the knees and as they were falling I was hitting them higher up. And of a night-time so, you didn't have to aim because you couldn't aim under artificial light and things like that anyhow. So it was a pretty intensive type training and I felt pretty confident that their formations, their ready reaction to

39:30 enemy action, contacts on the right and the left and everything, that they could acquit themselves quite well . Their use of mortars and the M79s, their rocket launchers and everything else like that. We trained people especially for that, though everybody was trained. But we had people that could use it, which is, whilst it's not

40:00 the best thing to have around the world, at least it's something, you know, because if he gets knocked over you haven't got somebody to back him up. You've got somebody that will fire it. But you don't know whether he can hit it, right. So that was the stage when we went into the next operation and that was

up around the Ben Het area. We had one of the brothers, well he shot his...

40:30 Shot a forward scout. But two brothers were...

Tape 8

00:32 Having carried out that part of the training, our next operation was straight up into the Bet Het area. Ben Het area at this stage was just starting to get a bit dicey. It was good Indian [enemy] country. But he hadn't really come across the fence from Laos and Cambodia at that stage and this is in the Thai border area. We went down and we were patrolling along

01:00 and through OAR [?] and two brothers who were forward scouting. One went around one side of a bamboo into a little stream and his brother went around the other side and bup, bup, bup, bup, bup so, and he killed his brother. So we had to get that, pull that operation up that afternoon and call LZ and get rid of the body and everything that afternoon. But

01:30 I feel that that fire let the NVA know that we were in the area cause the following day, just after dusk, we run into a whole heap of problems. We had probably about a squad and a half

02:00 of NVA fired on us from a ridge line. Fortunately we were on one ridge line and we were on the other. I thought that was pretty stupid of them because there was ground in between, a re-entrant in between, and I thought, "Well." you know, and they were on lower ground to us anyhow. I thought, "That's pretty stupid." So we engaged them and then they broke the engagement and I was about to move again and I

02:30 thought, "Woo, woo, woo, woo, woo. Why did those clowns do that?" So I thought, "Well, I'm just going to... I'll bring some artillery fire onto that main feature in front of me." cause that's what they were doing in actual fact. Their main people were up on the ridge line and these people were trying to hold us up so that they could do their thing. So I brought some artillery in on that and we went up and they'd gone off the ridge line and everything. But

03:00 they'd left some evidence that they'd been there and they starting now to consolidate around that area. We left there the next morning. That night I didn't stay right on the position. I went into a re-entrant off the position knowing that he would probably mortar the position that night thinking we were on it, and he did. But we weren't on it anyhow. So I was starting to switch on to Vietnam a little bit

03:30 now. And I'd left the ground of tactical importance to get secure ground away from somewhere where I knew that he was going to clobber, and he did. And this had all come into our briefing and everything and training for Vietnam, the way the enemy operate, right, so you learn your lessons and you say, "Well, I'd better be a bit careful here."

04:00 So and the next morning we were heading in a northerly direction. We had to check out an old French fort area. To do that we had to cross a bit of a stream and a large, pretty large open plain area that used to be a couple of paddy fields. As we were starting to get down onto that and off the ridge line I picked up some

04:30 corduroy across a swampy area. And corduroy is, you know, logs cut down and laid down and everything. And we followed that and I thought, "Gee." And I run into what I know was tank positions that had been dug into the side of hill and there was ammunition there, tank ammunition and everything like that. I'd bumped into that probably about middle of the day, just prior to

05:00 lunch I suppose, no lunch for us anyhow, but round about midday. So I reported it, got the sig [signaller] and we put a coded message through and I requested an air strike onto the whole thing. So I pulled back onto the ridge line and as I was pulling back onto the ridge line we bumped into a

05:30 group of about four or five and I had one bloke wounded. And then we got the message that they were going to put in a B52 bomb raid on that particular area and for us to clear below the blue line, south of the blue line and I had to get down there before dark, you know, and that's 1500, you know, a click [kilometre] and half away, so we bowled down there.

06:00 It wasn't a very good tactical move. But we got down there and carrying our wounded and I couldn't get down, right down below the blue line. But I got a pretty fair way down and the birds come over about two in the morning. And I made sure that they stayed to the November, the north of their first bomb line cause they'd come in on a bomb run and then they'd turn and sometimes you turn south and lay that way. But I wanted them to go north but

06:30 they come south. We were in a bad, real bad situation. As it was, the trees were all shaking and everything. So the next morning I was told to secure ground and I was airlifted out, so that was the end of that operation. I then went back to Pleiku and Ray

07:00 Simpson's mob went up and did the BDA [Bomb Damage Assessment] and that's where Simmo got his VC [Victoria Cross] doing my bomb assessment damage. He always used to say, "Do your own damn

BDA Payney." right. Then I went down to, I flew south down to the [UNCLEAR] area, down to Bu Ji Map [?], pulled in on a Special Forces camp. And I was to operate to the west

07:30 of the special forces camp. And I went up and spoke to the commander of Special Forces camp and he said, you know, American, "God damn, you blokes react pretty quick, don't you?" And I said, "No." said, "Ah what..." Cause I hadn't had any of this as part of my orders. He just said, "We just had a heavy contact out there day before and the lurps [long range reconnaissance patrols] had found something out there." and I said, "Well that's nice information for me to know." right.

08:00 And of course the area that I was going into, I was out of gun range and I was out of mortar range. It was pretty close over onto the fence, over onto the Cambodian border. So I thought, "Well this is not going to be too jolly." right. So we packed up all our goods and chattels and away we flew out the next morning, and I flew into this area and I call it the duck pond. It was

08:30 a junction of two river streams and two re-entrants, two spur lines coming down and forming a nice big duck pond and I never picked that as my landing zone. Somebody else had done the AR [Aerial Reconnaissance] and said, "That's a good one. It looks nice and level and everything." And there was big punji [bamboo] sticks sticking up in it and everything, real great. And as we started to go down on the ground and we went in by Chinooks on this occasion and as soon as we cleared the tree line and started to feather the

09:00 birds for a landing, he opened up on us from the ridge lines all around us and the jungle off on one side. So back into the frays we were. And we contained them there and we got the rest of the company in that afternoon and we'd secured things with the support of gun ships and tactical area on the ridge line and the gun ships

09:30 coming in and hosing down the jungle over on the right flank of us. And I'd asked for guns, artillery support and I couldn't get any artillery support so I asked for tac [tactical] air support to pound up the ridge line just on daylight. And I'd briefed Kev to take his platoon across a stream to a start point

10:00 just below the ridge line when the gun ships came in and the gun ships and the fast movers, attack air, bombed along the ridge line and put napalm down. And Kev followed it up and secured that ridge line for me and we moved the company up onto the high ground where it felt reasonably secure and we licked our wounds. And of course some of the wounded that we had the previous day, we got out that morning. Once we secured the ridge line

10:30 we got the wounded out and we got reinforcements in that weren't very happy. And so we consolidated on that ridge line throughout that day. And just before dark I moved again and I moved up the ridge line a bit further up towards the higher ground and went into a secure position by dark. From there, the next morning we moved up and I went up onto

11:00 the high ground itself, formed a base there, and waited until the other two companies that were coming in got their situation. So having left the high ground we them… I'd selected another piece of high ground to go down across another little river and then up onto the high ground before

11:30 dark the next day. The other two companies at this stage had come in and located themselves almost directly east and west of me and I was now to lead off and hopefully funnel, do an inverted funnel, and force the enemy back out towards them. Normally we'd travel with two companies up and one back and bring them into the funnel,

12:00 but this was the inverted hour of peace this one. So I started to move down and I got to the little river all right and everything seemed to be pretty quiet and we started to cross and things got a little bit touchy. The Montagnards were now really on their toes and waking

12:30 up very, very, very quickly. I no sooner got to the other side of the little river and bang, everything opened up and I went down, straight off. I got hit across the side of the face and went down and my radio operator, when I came to, the radio operator had me leaning up against a tree

13:00 and he was just saying, "I'm talking to the FAC [forward air control]." who was the spotter aircraft up above us, that FAC works out the fast movers, the tactical air. He puts down a rocket and marks targets for bombers and everything else like that. So when I came to, the

13:30 radio operator's saying, "We've got a bit of a problem going on down here." We had a little bit of a problem all right. There's bark flying everywhere and things weren't too pleasant. And I started to move forward to find out what was going on and I saw Latham pick up an M60 machine gun and charge forward and he engaged the enemy and he knocked out a few of the enemy. And everything went quiet and we reorganised and brought the other platoons across

14:00 and consolidated ourselves. And we then started to look after, we had one bloke that was wounded in the arm and not too badly, and mine was only a superficial thing anyhow. It just knocked me down. But one of the Montagnards had been shot through the knee and he was in a bad way, and so I had to secure a piece of ground there again and get rid of more, cut down more trees and blow down trees to get a helicopter in and to evacuate

14:30 the wounded. I also asked at this time for a re-supply of ammunition and other stores, medical stores

that we needed to replenish what we'd already been using. And Teket, my interpreter cum the company commander, he called himself a company commander anyhow,

15:00 the Montagnard equivalent, he used to get along all right. He said, "Beaucoup Payne, beaucoup, beaucoup." Beaucoup means plenty, right. He wanted plenty of ammunition and I said, "Okay." So I asked for a double first line ammunition re-sup [re-supply], right. And it came back, you know, querying my request, right, because that's a lot of ammunition. But we damn well did too.

15:30 So we got the ammunition and I said to… We cleared that position just after midday, about one o'clock and I said to Kev, "Go up this ridge line onto that bloody feature and I want to be up there before dark." So Kev led off with his platoon and away he went and we formed up and away we went. We got up onto the feature all right and went onto the ground and normal

16:00 tactics. Once you're on the ground you send out clearing patrols around your position to make sure that there's nobody going to bother you. One of the clearing patrols went out in a westerly direction and he run into fire straight away. We stayed there for the next two days. We had four heavy attacks against our position. We nearly run out of ammunition. I

16:30 had wounded laying around me in the shell scrapes, little scrapes in the ground, all over the place. I utilised the Spooky that night. That's an aircraft comes over with Gatling guns on the side. And he was ripping into them all round the place and the NVA had a twelve point seven [gun] about half a k [kilometre] away and he made the mistake of shooting

17:00 at Spooky who just said, "This guy's got my calling card." and that's the end of him. So whilst we had been contained there, we were trying to bring in a relief company. First of all I couldn't get in Montez's company, 211. I couldn't get that in from the western side because that was the side that

17:30 everything seemed to be hitting from. So Tolly came in from the east and I told Tolly to pick up water. We were out of water and we'd been giving the wounded Albumin and everything. And they needed water and we were giving them our water and going without water ourselves. And because our adrenaline was up on a high and everything, we were dying of thirst. Believe it. It was bad news, in Vietnam, dying of thirst. So we were almost out of ammunition, we were out of water.

18:00 and we had the casualties and we weren't going anywhere. We couldn't go anywhere. What I was fearful of at this time, he always seemed to be attacking up the one ridge line, coming up the same way all the time. And I thought, "This dump's going to wake up shortly." because I was bringing all my claymore defences and everything out of here and I was putting them down there. And I'm saying, "One of these times I'm going to shift it out of there and he's going to hit me from there." you see. So I was in a very,

18:30 very unhealthy position here of whether, "Will I take it from there? Do I think he'll come up there? No I don't think he's gone up there." So I took it from there and then by the time I'd taken up there, he'd come up there and then I had to take it from here and I thought, "The dump's going to come up here somewhere." But at that stage we were starting to run that low on ammunition, we were really low on ammunition,

19:00 so low that we were putting C4 [explosive] into the tail fins of his B40 rockets and just throwing them out with charger on them and use them as bang. And there was a bit of steel going around, but improvised claymores I suppose. Tolly came into us, spook, cause his people were spooky. I didn't want to be shot up by his lot,

19:30 you know, and I didn't want to shoot up his lot. So I went out a little bit to them and spoke to him on the radio and I said, "Okay I can hear you, I can hear you, come forward." So he came forward in front of his forward scouts and we met up and, "Okay let's go in." And I said, "Don't worry about a company position. I've got plenty of spare holes. All you did is fill them in and distribute your ammunition." So he did that just before dark

20:00 and he'd have only been there 10 minutes and the angry man hit again. And he was starting to take casualties then so we divvied [divided] up the ammunition and we secured ourselves in, before dark. My people had their first meal in three days. I still hadn't eaten

20:30 and I was buggered and I wasn't, my head was aching from being hit the previous couple of days. I wasn't feeling too brilliant and I was damn tired. So the next morning I said, "Well okay, look, we can't stay here on this position. We can't bloody well, you've got to clear the position, Tolly. You've got to get down that bloody ridge line and clear it." So

21:00 I said, "Look, I'll bring in some bloody choppers and we'll belt up the ridge line for you and support you down there, and you take your company and move right down that hill and clear the bloody ridge line." So he went over and he spoke to his Montagnards and they told him they weren't going. And I said, "Well there's no option Tolly, they've got to go." I said, "Who's commanding that company, you or the Montagnards?" So

21:30 he said, "Well look." he said, "I think they'll go if we recon [reconnoitre] by fire." That means as soon as they get up and start walking, they're shooting. They shoot their way down the ridge line. And I said, "Well we're not going to get any ammunition until such time as you clear that ridge line. I can't, I'm not bringing in any birds." right. And anyhow one came in and dropped some ammunition, but he got blown

out of the sky for his stupidity because I told him not to come in but.

22:00 And the American Special Forces sergeant major, he's an E9, he got shot in the aircraft and was hanging out on the safety strap out of the aircraft. But it didn't matter. The aircraft went down anyhow. But they came in with the gunships when they were beating up the ridge line. They came in with the gunships, followed them in and were just tossing ammunition out to give us ammunition.

22:30 I think if they'd have waited a little bit until Tolly cleared that area, waited half an hour, that aircraft wouldn't have been shot down or anything. But that was their choice and I told them not to do it anyhow. But, so once we'd cleared the ridge line, we found down the bottom a whole NVA training area, makeshift blackboards, his operations room. He had running

23:00 water down through bamboo piping. He had all sorts of things and we got his… He had a little pig farm down there. He hadn't let the pigs go so we had some pork, too, which was very beneficial to the exercise. And we got a lot of his operational orders, and flew that and a lot of ammunition and rice out of that area by the afternoon of the

23:30 27th. This is all the 24th, 25th, 26th. 27th we flew out all the rubbish out of there and then we started to move and clear into an area. And we found mass graves of those that had been killed in the firefight. We can't, we married up then with Montez's

24:00 company so we had the whole three companies together for the first time in the whole lot of our operational experience. Our AO now had broken down from 10 square kilometres to one square kilometre so we had to find out what was in that area and didn't take too long at all. Every time we moved we were fired on so, and we knew that we were in his divisional headquarters area. We got

24:30 orders to move out of that area so we found a lalang [grass area] on a map and we moved over into that the following day. And the birds [helicopters] were there and they came in and picked us up and flew us out. And almost simultaneously, bomb raids went in all round that position anyhow, so it gave him a good touch up. On arrival back at Pleiku I'd lost 10 killed,

25:00 31 wounded. I now had a problem. I had no trained soldiers and I was only back for two days and now we're coming into the first of that awful month. So I said to the commander, "Well." you know, "I'm going to have to have soldiers." So I saw the Reinforcement

25:30 Company Commander, Jock Stewart, an Australian. I said, "Jock, I need soldiers." So I ended up with I think about 34 of them and they'd only been in for two weeks. He picked the best. I had two days to run them up and that was now the 29th, 30th, the 1st and the 2nd of the following month.

26:00 So we did some very hurried training and then I moved, I got orders to move to the Ben Het area again and we moved this time by vehicle to Dac To. I pulled up and I parked outside of Dac To for two days because they were waiting to find out what was going on because Ben Het Special Forces camp was under siege at this stage.

26:30 And my orders were that… Well we knew where the NVA 24th Regiment was. We knew where the 27th Regiment was, right. But they also knew that 66th NVA Regiment was in the area somewhere, probably trying to break through and cut out the main axis highway road and everything from Dac To

27:00 to Ben Het to isolate Ben Het special forces camp and then ultimately isolate Kon Tum city itself. So whilst they were all gearing up and finding out what was going on, had two days racing around a little paddock there trying to train these fellows. And I married them up with one of my older soldiers so that I had a young bloke and an old bloke married through the system,

27:30 and a father and son system in the section so that we could do some sort of, have some sort of experience between them, and the young blokes wouldn't panic too much. On the, about the 9th I received orders to move to Dac To 1. Again we went up to, it was about 20 kilometres. We went up by vehicle.

28:00 We were in that area again for about two days and my orders then were to move to Ben Het Special Forces camp. And I was to move by road and I wasn't very happy about that and I told them I wasn't happy. It's only about 25 ks. I said, "I'd sooner walk." because I wasn't going to go in there with vehicles and have a whole convoy shot up and everything. I'd

28:30 sooner walk. I'd started to walk and I was walking parallel with the road, not on the road. I was away from the road and I was the other side of the creek, road following the creek, and then I received orders that they'd found some helicopters to fly me into Ben Het, so they flew us into Ben Het. The other two companies came in. We were there overnight and then I received orders the next day to fly out to a feature

29:00 to the south west of Ben Het, towards the Cambodian Laos border. We got on the choppers and we flew out to the little hill and I got onto the little hill and the other two companies secured that ground cause it overlooked the basin area. And the other two companies that were walking out. I left early and they started walking, so they were secure on the ground and

29:30 could cover their movements on the ground. We then received fire from an old fire base, Fire Base 29

which overlooked Ben Het Special Forces camp across the road. And it was about three ks away and they were receiving, Ben Het was receiving incoming artillery fire from across the border and they thought that they had, the enemy had an OP [Observation Post] on the old Fire Base 29 and we were ordered to go up and take it out.

30:00 We started to go up and they brought in artillery and mortars and I got a check fire on that because they were throwing it all over the hill. We went up onto the hill, secured the hill. There was nobody there. They'd obviously gone out. And then the artillery from Ben Het started to exchange fire with this gun that was over in, firing from across the border and we thought

30:30 that they were firing at Ben Het. They were firing at us. But they'd synchronised the fire between the sound barrier being broken by the gunner's shell here and this one coming in here. So we give these check fire and these kept firing and then we knew, "Hey, this is from over there." We located his position. It took a while to locate it because he was pulling the gun back into a tunnel and everything and it didn't take, it took about

31:00 four days after the operation had gone. We were well into the operation by then so we moved then down to the south, back into pretty well the area where I was initially, down along that river area and heading further south and then west towards the border and prop

31:30 there. And was there on the afternoon and I then received orders that I was to fly down to the 5th Battalion, who had been engaged by the enemy, and reinforce their position the next morning. The other two companies were to follow me in. Went in the morning and we landed on the LZ, which was some B52 bomb craters

32:00 in an area where the bamboo had been blown down and everything. And we landed into there and moved up and secured the ground with the 5th Battalion and we never came under fire that afternoon. The other two companies came in the next, that night. We weren't here that night. They came in the next morning. We secured the whole lot with the people that we had on the ground. We were then ordered

32:30 from Ben Het to clear the ridge line to our south west. We were on one feature and the ridge line went down. There was another feature over there so Montez was tasked, he was the last company in and he hadn't had a firefight down at Bu Ji Map, even though we got tangled in that, Tolly and I did. But he never.

33:00 And he still had his full complement of his old soldiers and everything so they hadn't been bloodied and they… Well they'd been bloodied but they hadn't suffered any casualties, so he still had a good force with him. So he was ordered to move down and clear the ridge line. His rear people hadn't even left our forward element when they run into a whole heap of Chi-Com mines and a couple of machine guns and everything like that

33:30 so they pulled back. The next day Tolly was tasked to go down because Tolly hadn't hurt as much as I'd hurt. I'd really copped a hammering down south so, and I'd been getting these firefights all the way through. Anyhow, so Tolly was tasked to go down and it was about this time I was saying, "Well listen mate, we shouldn't be doing this. We

34:00 should be pounding that ridge line before we go anywhere." right. Anyhow Tolly started to go down and same thing happened to him. He got about 30 metres plus of where Montez got and he run into it, so back he came and then they said, "Okay well you're going down." I said, "Yeah, righto. But we're going down. We're all going, that's what we're going to do, that's what we're doing and I'll go down with the forward company, Motty on the right and Tolly bringing up the rear. And the people

34:30 of the 5th Battalion remain in this position as a secure base. I want artillery. I want tac air. I want this and that and this and that." And they said, "Oh gees." Anyhow we shackled all that up. But then in the ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam] regiment that came in to take over the firefight from us… Try and understand now, at this stage the Mobile Strike Force was not designed to

35:00 fight major battles. We were a reconnaissance outfit who could sneaky-ramp, push around the jungle, get information. We'd get into a firefight, their heavy American unit, infantry units, used to come in and take over the firefight from us and we'd pull out because we weren't designed to fight heavy battles. Vietnamisation

35:30 had now started, therefore the heavy American unist had gone off the highlands and had now been taken over by a Republic of South Vietnam infantry division. They came in and they landed in a clear area about eight ks north of where we were. They took all the assets, all the guns and everything and ringed their position with fire and everything and left us

36:00 pretty naked as far as artillery support and helicopter gunship support and everything like that. We invited them down to the firefight. They were supposed to come down. They would not come down to the party. When we wanted, when I wanted artillery fire and tac air to clear the ridge line and I would go down behind the ridge line, behind the artillery and gun ship fire, I never got any until about

36:30 two o'clock in the afternoon. I was supposed to kick off at about 10. I think I'd arranged H hour [hour of the launch] for about 10 o'clock. I had to rearrange an H hour for about 1400 and it was getting late in

the afternoon and I like to be on a position and well settled before dark so that I can move off just on dark so he doesn't know where I am. Plus I knew I had to possibly fight my way onto the position anyhow. So we

37:00 got some artillery and that was offset his beaten zone. His shell, some of it, was flying over the ridge line instead of the guns that I wanted laying a pattern along the ridge line, these guns were firing. Their angle of fire was skipping over the ridge line and all sorts of things. The gunships came in and they belted up. But I had no fast movers. So we kicked off and away we went.

37:30 I had my company, left forward company. Monty was right forward. Tolly was bringing up the rear picking up weapons and everything from the day before and putting bodies in body bags and all the rest of it, and acting as a rear support, ready support element, to reinforce us if we got into trouble. We went down the ridge line,

38:00 over the saddle and got up onto the main little feature. Just as we got onto the feature, there was a little knob on the end of it and we started to spread out and consolidate and he opened up with three machine guns straight in front of us. Simultaneously, he started to mortar both our positions, mortar and rocket both our positions from the right and left flank. He then sent, what it was an estimated company, around into the low ground

38:30 between Tolly and us and isolated Tolly's company from us. Tolly could shoot downhill at him. We couldn't shoot across it because Tolly would have copped our over fire, so he was in pretty safe position as far as we were concerned. He was in dead ground to us. But not dead ground to Tolly.

39:00 Montez was hit bad, real bad and we were starting to lose people and he simultaneously attacked us from the front and two flanks at the same time. The Montagnards started to fall back after Montez was hit. I managed to stop them and keep them on line. My own people stayed on line all right,

39:30 though they were getting panicky and they were shooting a lot of ammunition and they were taking a pretty fair toll of the enemy at this stage. Tolly's group had now moved back away from the firefight to form a firm base for us to break out and try and get back to him so that we'd have an intermediate point to get back to the strong point which is

40:00 held by the remnants of the 5th Battalion.

Tape 9

00:30 As I said, the enemy had now started to assault us from the T flags and the front simultaneously with, supported by heavy rocket and mortar fire and the three machine guns that were still in action in front of us, and they were hosing down the ridge line something chronic. The

01:00 position became untenable and I knew that it was useless us trying to stay there and I also knew at this stage that he'd set up an annihilation ambush. He wanted us on that piece of ground. He wanted to kill us on that piece of ground and if we stayed there and without any support, that's what was going to happen.

01:30 So it was decided that the withdrawal take place. Montez's company started to break in some disorder. Again I managed to stop them for a bit and then I turned my attention back to my own people and we started to do a tactical withdrawal of some sort of a semblance, bringing out as many

02:00 of the casualties as we could at that time. We managed to break out on the left rear of the position and the morts [mortars] that were, would have been to the south east of the feature. The soldiers went down there and I stopped a group of my own people and we held the ground until they got off the position and then we got off the position ourselves.

02:30 It is now about just on dark, move back. We formed a securer position on an intermediate ridge line and got our wounded up onto there and with the medics and everybody looking after the wounded. At this time I decided that somebody had to go and try and get some more of the wounded

03:00 and everything off the position. It was no good me taking Montagnard because A) they were panicky anyhow. B) I couldn't talk to them. I couldn't communicate to them. And the medics, most of the other people had been wounded anyhow, around us. The only people who hadn't been wounded was Latham and Delrow. The

03:30 communications man from Montez's company was killed on the position. His medic came off the position. But he was severely wounded and he wasn't going anywhere. He'd lost half his buttock and had been wounded in the thigh as well so he wasn't going anywhere, and Montez had been severely

04:00 wounded. He'd been hit in the face and all his jaw was blown away and so he was mortally wounded. So I said to a Lieutenant James, who was supposed to be the battalion commander – he wasn't enough for it anyhow – that I wanted my radio because without radio communications we were completely

04:30 and utterly out on our own, we were lost. My other radio had had its antenna blown off it and it was on the position. But I had no radio myself so I wanted my radio man that I knew was just down the hill. I was going to go and get him and I wanted to go out and get some more of the wounded. So I went down and I got my radio man. I pulled him back up onto the position and stuck him up near Jerry Delrow

05:00 and told Jerry to look after Montez and stay secure on the ground there. I then moved out and I'd only gone about 50 metres and I found the first group and I brought them back. And by now it was really starting to get dark down in the closed in area down the bottom and there was a lot of smoke and flickering fire from the firefight and the explosions and everything

05:30 that had taken place and it covered my movement pretty well. So I then moved about I suppose another 200 metres, 150, 200 metres, found another group, and then I found one more just forward of that and brought them back to a midway point and went, started to go back up again when I drew fire from a couple of the enemy. They missed and

06:00 I fired and didn't… So I thought, "Things are starting to get a bit dangerous now." cause the enemy knew that there was somebody on the position and coming back onto the position and he was starting to get himself organised. So I thought, "Well it's not the done thing to stay here any longer,

06:30 best I get these other people back." right. So I came off the position, picked up the people that I'd left half way, brought them back, right back on the old position, to find them all gone. Through the scrub and everything I saw phosphorus trail on the ground where they'd moved through, and I followed that and ultimately

07:00 found the two medics, Montez, I think it was about four or five Montagnard, Oriama, who was Montez's medic, and plus the people that I had myself. Some of them had been wounded as well. So we then moved and I

07:30 moved down off the ridge line. I started to go up the ridge line for a while because I thought Tolly might leave a secure people and people secure up there on the ridge line. And then I heard firing start up on the ridge line. It was an AK47 and I knew that the enemy then had moved up along that ridge line, were probably moving up to engage anybody that was on the ridge line. So I went back on the re-entrant again and

08:00 contoured around the whole thing and a Spooky came on station and I couldn't work him out because there was people all over the place. But I spoke to him on the radio and he kept buzzing around my position. He feathered his fans, making a lot of noise, which allowed me to go through because Charles now was firing indiscriminately down, trying to draw fire from anybody that was around the place.

08:30 I suppose we'd gone about two or three hundred metres, about three hundred metres, bad night, and then Jerry said that unless we get Monty out, he wasn't going to make it. So we'd been crawling with him. He was a big man and we were crawling with him on our back and trying to get him out, make him as comfortable as possible.

09:00 Jerry had give him morphine so I propped and I radioed through Spooky back to Ben Het, back to Dac To 2 rather, to Special Forces, and they were going to send out a Charlie Charlie bird. That's a command and control helicopter, with Major Jagles, who was the commander of Mobile Strike Force. He was going to bring it out with

09:30 a Maguiry, something you drop through and it's a clip up thing and hoist people out of the jungle. He was inbound when Jerry said that Monty had passed away, yeah, so I cancelled the bird. We wrapped Monty and

10:00 put him in alongside of a log to keep him. So we knew pretty well where we were and then we took off. And we again went up onto a high ground and we'd gone almost in a half circle at this stage, and I was talking to Tolly through Spooky, and Tolly started to fire mortars, his mortar, so that I could get a direction where to go in.

10:30 I got on top of a ridge line and I could see Tolly firing and I told him to stop and I took a bearing to it and a compass. And so we went in and we got in onto the main position where the 5th Battalion was, about two o'clock in the morning. We secured the ground. We put our people around and we treated the wounded as much as we could that night. And the next morning

11:00 we got helicopters in and everything and we got rid of our wounded and everything, and I went out myself because I'd been hit twice anyhow. I got hit earlier in the night and later again by rocket fire. Anyhow and I went back to Dac To 1, the aid post, and then…

Was it hard to have to leave before…?

11:30 All the wounded had gone and everything like that and they'd all gone. And I was last out and I was pulling them out anyhow cause I was the senior Australian on the ground and I was pulling them out. Anyhow so I got patched up a bit at Dac To 1 and I went back to Dac To 2 to the command headquarters and reported in, give them what the situation

12:00 and told Major Jagles that I wanted the Australians out. And he said, well he can't get them out because he hasn't got any helicopters and I said, "Well I'm the senior Australian and I want them out." and he said, "We'll get them out tomorrow." and I said, "Well tomorrow morning at the latest." So they found the helicopters the next morning and moved the whole lot of my force out of the paddock. I never did find out whether the ARVN

12:30 division went south and joined in the picnic. I don't think they did. I think they aborted the party and come out of the paddock at the same time we did. But the overall benefit of the operation, 66 Regiment, because of that firefight and the tactical air and there was a bomber, B52 bomber psyched, went in on it when they went out.

13:00 They weren't seen back on or about and they weren't seen again in a firefight for two years, right. It was the end of 1971 before they came…66 Regiment was seen again so. And it stopped the whole lot of the siege of Ben Het. They all broke off the engagement then and went back to their little things because

13:30 they were getting a hiding so.

So you had to be incredibly brave in that situation to bring those wounded out and to keep going under that enormous pressure. Did it feel worth it then to know that that was the result?

The result of my actions? It was the result of everybody's actions that. All I was doing was what should have been done anyhow

14:00 get my soldiers out cause he was shooting my soldiers, yeah, so, you know. We were led into a position and a situation which mobile strike force should not have been in. We weren't meant to fight as a battalion. We weren't meant to fight a heavy infantry engagement,

14:30 right, and we were meant to have tactical support. But the ARVN had taken over and the ARVN weren't playing the game with the Americans played so we just copped a hiding. But we give them a hell of a hiding. He got a hell of a hiding, I can tell you. He didn't get away from it very scot free at all. And

15:00 years later when I went back with Channel 7, with Ray Martin, I was speaking to one of the NVA, one of the VC who was the guide to the 27th Regiment, not 66 that we'd engaged, and he remembers the B52s cause I'd called in the B52s. He remembered them, right, and

15:30 he remembered the firefight with the 66 Regiment. He showed us where the hospital was, the NVA hospital, which was at the base of Fire Base 29 in a tunnel there. He pointed that out.

What was it like seeing all that again?

It was a bit awesome because the hill at Ben Het Special Forces camp itself, the sandbags

16:00 were still there, some of the bunkers were there falling down. The wire was still there. There was still some claymores in position. There was shells and grenades and everything laying around the place and I mean we're talking about 25 years after and nobody had been there and, you know. And all this Viet Cong, ex Viet Cong bloke wanted to know where the arms coat[?] was because that's how they were making their money, yeah.

16:30 It was an eerie feeling to go back there and of course to look back to where the firefight was over to the west, south west, there was no trees. The place had been denuded now and we noticed that coming all the way up from Kon Tum city. There was no jungle any more. And when I asked about it they said, "American,

17:00 agent orange, agent orange." and I said, "No, no, where's all the skeleton of all the trees? Come on." And they said, "No." And then they said, "All the ethnics cut it down, all the Montagnards cut it down." They've lived in it for thousands of years like. That's how they used to live. They were nomad. They had a vegetable garden here in the jungle and go, they knew where all the patches were and, you know, they'd lived there for thousands of years so they were about to cut it down, aren't they? And reality, then they told,

17:30 one of the fellows told us it was during the embargo, all of the people that were on the re-education program, re-education all right, re-education, wasn't, you know, what it was all about. It was cut the jungle down to sell the timber to gain some capital for the country. And that's what it is now and so it's, now it'd have trees because

18:00 Australia has given them, there's probably more gum trees over there than what there is in Australia at the moment, millions and millions of gum trees.

When you look back at that this far down the track, what is the hardest thing to remember about that whole incident?

Probably, I knew by the time I got to Vietnam

18:30 that the war was unwinnable. I'm disappointed in a way we pulled out. When I say we, I mean the

Americans, the Allies, you know, and all the Allied forces, pulled out and left the country. I feel though that in

19:00 hindsight it was time for us to pull out because we couldn't win the war. But we had stopped the link up of communism throughout that seaboard area of Indochina from China through to North Vietnam,

19:30 South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, linking in because the only reason that it never did it before is because Doctor Sukarno in Indonesia jumped too early. He jumped about eight years too early. If he'd have kept his noise quiet for about 10 years and let the Vietnam conflict escalate a little bit

20:00 and let the Malay thing ripen a bit, we'd have had a far bigger problem all the way down that archipelago – the old domino theory. So by going into Vietnam I like to feel that we put the first spoke into the collapse of the so-called Russian Empire.

How long were you in

20:30 **Vietnam after that incident?**

I came home in the September, September? Yeah, I came home, I was home for my birthday in August. I went back. The announcement was made, then I went north again, September, October I came home. It would have been

21:00 the October I came home. But I never went back. I never went back on operation. I did one operation. I'm sorry, I did one operation after that, back into the Ben Het area. They put people on the ground and I was airborne. They wouldn't let me go in on the ground, to try and locate Montez's body. I was pretty

21:30 pinged about that because I had a better chance of finding his body than anybody else. I reckon I could still to this day go to where we put his body. But, you know, the B52s bombed that place that much it was just craters, you know, so the chances of finding any of the remains would be pretty negative, you know, yeah.

22:00 But we did mount that operation to go and see if we could find Montez.

How did you recover physically and mentally after that in the following weeks?

Well I went down to hospital. Then I went back to Mike Force and then I came home on leave and I was supposed to be, cause I was doing training in the reinforcement

22:30 company then and I was supposed to be going back on operation and I was planning that operation when I was home on leave. I went back off leave and I was told I wasn't going back to Special Forces, that I was being reassigned to an ARVN unit in the north, up around Da Nang and I said, "Oh well, so be it." That's what it was supposed to be. We were supposed to do six months tight and six months loose. Well I'd done seven months or

23:00 a bit more tight, and now I'm going loose. But I'd been run down by then too, and I'd had a good set of ulcers and I was losing weight. I was about nine stone two. I was mentally and physically fatigued, mentally and physically. It had been, I'd had

23:30 five really hard months of bashing jungle, living hard, making hard decisions, a lot of meal times without meals and seeing all this other bloody nonsense on top of it, five bad months, so I wasn't

24:00 displeased in a way that I was leaving Special Forces, I can tell you. And then when I got my ulcers and everything and they sent me down to Vung Tau to the hospital down at Vung Tau and then they said, "You're going home." and I said, "Well I'm not going to bitch about that. I've done my time, I'm away. I'm out of here." I would have liked to have finished my time.

24:30 I had another three months to do, yeah, three, four months I'd have had to do to finish my time, three and half months, finish my time. But I felt I'd done my bit and I was out and I wouldn't have been able to go operational anyhow. My physical condition wasn't

25:00 that to allow me to do it and I was pleased to get home, you know. So I came home and they stuck me in hospital for some six-odd weeks, then posted me down to Duntroon in the middle of winter. Oh my God, I mean what a cultural shock that was, you know. I'd been, well you go back, I'd been in South East Asia. I'd been in the tropics,

25:30 you know, for nearly nine years and then I'm down in Duntroon and oh my God, yeah. So fortunately I had a good commandant down there that I had served with in Korea. He was a major in Korea. He was now a major general and the commandant, Sandy Pearson, a hell of a fine officer, and I, cause it was just going into the winter and I was bloody cold and I

26:00 had permission to wear greatcoats and winter dresses and everybody else was running around in summer gear and I'm freezing, yeah.

Was it hard to adjust back to family life?

I think Duntroon was a good posting for me in a way. It wasn't… We had our instructional duties and we

did our camps. But we had a lot of time now that we could have a bit of quality time

26:30 with the family and we utilised that, yeah, and adjust it was, adjust it was. I had now boys that were starting to grow up, you know, that weren't babies any more, yeah, so I had five young men in the place and I had to learn who they were,

27:00 adjust. But it was great.

Were you able to tell Flo about the Vietnam experiences?

No and I haven't told you yet. I've told you some of it. No, all the really bad parts, that's mine. She doesn't have to know. When I used to write home, well I only wrote a couple of letters. After that I

27:30 found the new trick, small tape recorders. So I bought a small tape recorder and a few tapes and sent it home to Flo and I had one with my tapes and we'd swap tapes. And I'd get halfway through the tape, that was for the family and then I'd say, "For Flo only, for Flo only, for Flo only." so the rest of the family had to blow through while the Flo only part of the tape went on for Flo. But I never told her what was going on, you know. I'd

28:00 say, "Everything was going all right." you know. "The training's well." and lies.

Hard to keep that front up like that?

Well I did until I got hit, that first time I got hit and then a man appeared at Flo's, at the door at home and the boys said, "Mum, there's a soldier outside." And Mum had a look and she said, "Oh yeah, how many.

28:30 Only one? Oh it's all right then." cause she knew too it would be the padre. Padres are bad news. So he came up, knocked on the door, "Come on then, how is he? Want a cup of tea?" yeah. "How is he?" Cause she knew I'd only been wounded, you know, yeah. And when the second time come around she said, "This is getting a bit heavy." yeah, my lies, yeah,

29:00 never mind.

Did she advise you to come home at that point?

Did she advise me to come home? No, no she was quite happy. I do my thing. I'm the soldier, yeah.

29:30 Yeah, the progress from coming home and finding out what's going on and I didn't realise for a long time after I came home, because when I came home and I started to sever my relationship from the green machine

30:00 and then I went to the Middle East and I started to get crook and I came home. But I didn't realise that I was getting really hung up, you know, until one day madam says, "Either you get to the doctor or I'm out of here." So I took that as a pretty fair warning.

So what sort of things were happening to you?

Well I was starting to drink too much. I was having brainos. I was going off the handle very

30:30 quickly. Any little misdemeanour would send me off the handle and I wasn't a very nice person, and madam woke me up to it. And I thought, "Oh well." But I've since learnt, you know, that I'm not the only cherry bush in the big paddock. There's a whole big orchard full of us.

Yeah, well I mean with such an extreme experience to have to go through, it's completely understandable

31:00 **that you would go through that.**

Yeah, so, you know, once I learned that I had a problem, I then had to learn to live with the problem and recognise when I was starting to get uptight and walk away. I still haven't learnt that sufficiently yet. I still get a bit angry every now and again, especially with the government,

31:30 the departments, everybody, the way they look at…

Do you feel that they let you down?

I feel that they've let the whole lot of the veteran community down, you know. They're paying lip service and bandaid attention to a very, very real problem, you know. The departments and the government were not even recognising the stress factor

32:00 in the Vietnam veteran. They never looked at Agent Orange [herbicide used in Vietnam]. That's still very naughty words. But the stress factor didn't get any attention whatsoever until the Granville [train crash] incident. I think you're old enough to remember the Granville incident, when the train piled up and everything, and then they started treating people for

32:30 stress, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the veterans just said, "Well what about us?" And of course

they couldn't hide behind any gum leaves any more. They just had to come out in the open and say, "Yes, well there is a problem. No, we'll see how much messing around we can do before we're going to compensate you for that particular injury." you know, mental trauma.

33:00 And having done that, they then say, "Well we'll have a look at how much we're compensating you for." And the compensationary thing has just eroded to a laughable degree now, you know. That's why the veterans have started their own political party and all these sort of, you know, government won't listen to what's

33:30 happening at grassroots level. They get in for too long and they think they're very stable and they isolate themselves from the public, from the Australian Joe Citizen, whether it be a veteran or whoever, you know, and they will carry out bandaid things and then all of a sudden throw out money needlessly and meaninglessly

34:00 in all directions and one wonders where they get the brains. They think they're buying votes, but it doesn't buy votes. That's, you know, they must think people out here are dumb. Politicians must really think the citizens of Australia can't see what they're doing, you know.

34:30 I don't doubt that before the election they'll jump up and say, "We'll increase the veterans' thing by this." But then as soon as they increase it by something, they take it off here anyhow. The Lord has given, and they take it away. They're good at that. They're real good at that. But yeah, disappointment in the way that the government hasn't looked after the veteran community. I feel

35:00 for the people of the Blackhawk [helicopter crash] incident, the HMAS Voyager incident, the atomic testing in Maralinga and Bikini Atoll and all those things, you know, the HMAS Westralia, the ship that got sunk, the people got burnt and everything, you know, shabby, just plain shabby.

35:30 And these cases are still going on and they say, "We're still investigating them." And a typical thing is, I think it's only a month ago I got a form. They're doing a study on Korean veterans and they want to say, "How is your health this month and how's this? How's your sex life?" and all of this. And I say this, you know, "I think this is 2004 so that's 51 years ago and

36:00 they're doing a study on a health situation of a Korean veteran." Remembering of course that a lot of the Korean veterans were also World War II veterans, so they're well into their 80s if they're not in a box. I'm one of the youngest ones and I'm 71 years of age and I think to myself, "Well what are they going to gain out of this study? When will they

36:30 implement anything that is found out in this study or is it just a fishing expedition?" I think the last one is where I'm at. They say, "We're doing this, we're doing that." A lot of garbage. Bit late now even to start doing one on the Vietnam veterans. But it'd make more sense, you know, yeah.

Can you tell us

37:00 **Keith about being awarded the VC?**

Well the actual announcement of the award, when I went back off leave and I was being reassigned up north I got real run around for a while and then I wasn't going anywhere. I had boarding passes to get on an aircraft here and I'd go out to the airport, "No, you're not going on this one. You're going that way." And

37:30 they sent me down to Vung Tau to talk to the soldiers and I thought, "What the bloody hell am I going to talk about to the soldiers down at Vung Tau?" right. Cause the announcement hadn't been made at that time and the CO, RDF Lloyd, Colonel Lloyd, was home on his 10 days R & R and his position was being filled by

38:00 Major Johnson, Frank Johnson. So I got a message to go and see him so I went and saw him in his office and he said, "General Hay wants to see you." And he was the commander of Aus [Australian] forces Vietnam and I said, "Oh well." It wasn't unusual, you know, for advisers to be talking to you. But normally they come up and see us, you see

38:30 as did Tom Daly who was the Chief of Army. After the firefight at Ben Het he wanted to know what was going on and everything, you know, because of Ben Het fiasco, the Bu Ji Map fiasco, Ray Simpson's thing. The whole thing was turning really rotten because of the lack of support and everything else like that. So he came up and I was talking to him at Pleiku

39:00 and it's not unusual for commanders to come out. When you're in an area and they come in and see you or you go and see them. So I went over to see General Hay and knocked on the door and, "Enter." I love that. I don't like senior officers and I don't like him and he wasn't my favourite officer. Good thing this will be all on

39:30 on tape when I'm all gone and he's all gone. And he just stood up from behind his desk and put out his hand and said, "Allow me to be the first to congratulate you. The Queen has awarded you the Victoria Cross." and I went… I can't do it on camera.

No go on, tell us, you can. You can say anything. How did you react?

No, I just took a half pace back and said, "Oh shit, sir." you know, cause I

40:00 really didn't know what I was there for. Anyhow and then we went down into the press room and it came across on the announcement, a time given at London at 10 o'clock in the morning, their coincide Eastern Standard Time so it's 10 o'clock throughout the world, boof, gone, right. And then we had a few beers all round and I was

40:30 a bit confused for a while, you know, and Simmo was there and Simmo's award had been announced just a fortnight before. And Simmo was there and after the announcement he'd go, "Come and have a beer, mate." So we went and had a beer cause Simmo and I knew each other from Japan days and everywhere. We'd soldiered together long enough to be able to go aside and have a beer, yeah.

What was confusing about it?

41:00 Well, just being, receiving the award. Big award, big bickie, you know, yeah.

Must have been overwhelming?

Cause I'd only met, at that stage, I'd only met one holder of the Victoria Cross. He wasn't wearing his Victoria Cross. He was wearing the medal ribbon, right, and that was

41:30 Sir Roden Cutler. He came out and reviewed the first class of cadets that graduated at Skyville so, you know, and I had never seen, true, I had never seen an actual Victoria Cross until I saw my own. That's why I don't like them all being in Canberra, you know. I think that they

42:00 should be spread around Australia or...

Tape 10

00:30 **So you were saying you didn't think they should be kept in Canberra?**

Yeah, well, you know, as I mentioned, the first Victoria Cross I actually saw was my own and that's one of the reasons why I don't agree that they should all be in Canberra. Whether the War Museum [Australian War Memorial] becomes a custodian of them or not is a different matter. But I feel that if that is so, the War Memorial should have a

01:00 mobile display where these things can go out and be seen throughout the nation, even if it's just one, you know, so the kids can see one. And definitely where cadet units are mustering in a number or something like that, you know, ideal time. We've been invited to the Western Australia cadet camp in

01:30 October and there's going to be over 800 cadets there. Well the only chance that those cadets are going to have, unless they go to Canberra, of seeing a Victoria Cross is for me to go over there and wear it. Now I don't, I can't go to everything, therefore where there are a lot of people mustering and things like that,

02:00 somebody should take certain items significance, that children of the nation, and people of the nation, should see it, right. Take it to Anzac Day. Spread them out all over the nation, right. Advertise it and let the people see them, yeah, not keep them in Canberra.

02:30 I mean it's not such a logistic exercise that they can't secure and take a little bit of metal around the countryside. We've got banks we can lock it in. We've got police vaults we can lock it in, all sorts of things.

Was does it mean to you to be a holder of a Victoria Cross?

I'm tremendously proud to be able to wear it for a lot of people.

03:00 I also accept the responsibility that goes along with the award, for the people in uniform of the nation, into the future, you know.

03:30 To still be alive and to be able to go and speak to somebody, speak to the, you know, cadets or school kids or something like that, to give the younger generation something to grab onto so that they

04:00 can, throughout their life, have a look and say, "Anything is achievable if you go about it the right way." And more importantly if they see it and read the history of it, and what you're doing on tape now, you're going to give to future generations,

04:30 they will be able to say, "Well this fellow is a normal Australian." you know. "He's not a superman. He's not an Einstein [genius]. He's just an ordinary Australian." right, "who was caught in a very nasty position, recognised the responsibility that he was given of command and

05:00 carried out the duties according to that responsibility to the best of his ability." Now if everybody in the nation sort of sees that and they say to themselves, "Well my responsibility..." And I always give this to

the children. "What is your responsibility now? Well, your responsibility is to your family, isn't it? To your Mum and Dad, to your school, to the citizens in your own town, to your friends." right,

05:30 "and to your nation." you know. And it starts them thinking on a line of saying, "Hey, I've got a part to play in this society." right. And if we can guide them in that light and make them probably have a look at the mistakes of the past, and I see today with the increase of interest amongst the younger generation of Australians, especially

06:00 in the turn of the century, they were grasping out for something to grasp onto to guide them into the new century. They wanted a bridge to cover that gap from an old century to their responsibility that they will have to look after the nation in the new century and they wanted something to grab onto. If they wanted to use

06:30 the award of the Victoria Cross as a prop to do that, if they want to use a footballer to do that, fair enough. As long as something gives them, motivated them, to not give up and to push on and look after whatever they had to do and add up to their responsibility in the new century, in their life.

How significant is the Victoria Cross and the incident for which you

07:00 **were awarded it, in your, when you look back now on your military career? How significant is that?**

Well it's a significant part of my life. But I also say that the firefight I had down at Bu Ji Map, I don't know which one was the Victoria Cross. I think the other one was. It was harder one though it wasn't as personal as what Ben Het was,

07:30 but it was definitely a harder firefight. I look back on it now and say, "Well it was a happening in my life." I accepted my responsibilities for that phase of my life.

08:00 I don't have any hang ups about my life and as I say to Flo, you know, when we go somewhere and we're mates and we're all gathering around and we're all talking and having a beer and everything, you know, and I meet, you know, people that I knew along the track in service and everything

08:30 and there's always, you know, a good greeting and everything. And I say to Flo, "That's what service is about. That's what it's about." You're recognised by your contemporaries, by your compatriots, that you did your job in service as well as they did, you know, and what better compliment could you have in life than a lot of friends, simple. Can we leave it there?

09:00 **If you want to, we certainly can. That's certainly a final statement. Do you ever dream about your war-time experiences?**

Yes, now you're getting down to nitty-grittys aren't you? Yes of course you do. Do you remember them? Yes of course you do. There's significant things will happen, you know, little things will happen that will trigger a memory and say,

09:30 "Oh, oh, not real good that one. Switch it off. Put it back down the filing cabinet again where it belongs." Yes you do. You have some bad dreams. Yes, I do. I have some bad nights, yeah.

And how do you get through them?

Mum wakes me up and I get up and I have a cup of tea and go back to sleep again and

10:00 hope I don't dream about it again, yeah. But we have recognised a factor that these sort of things come on, I don't doubt, either tonight or tomorrow night I'll have a bad dream because I'm talking through a situation, talking, and if I get amongst the blokes and we're talking. But we probably talk a little bit deeper than what we're talking to you. Then

10:30 in your sleep it's dragged out of your mind pretty readily and that's when you have a bad night.

Is there something that... You said earlier that there were things that you certainly hadn't told Flo and that you hadn't told us. But is there something that you would like to tell us so that it is on the record for future generations about your war experience that's important for people to know?

No, I think the

11:00 personal, very, very personal killing things and everything like that, people have got to realise that you're in action. You have a weapon. You're shooting at people and there's times when you know that you've taken people's lives and everything, and I think that they're personal sort of things,

11:30 you know. They're the bad bits that you really don't want to talk about, you know. I covered a thing and I made a bit of a joke about it, "They missed and I didn't." I won't tell you the consequences of that particular incident, you know. They're

12:00 not the nice things to talk about, Montez's passing, not the nicest. I can say this to you that soldiers in the field don't have a very dignified death. They die dirty. They're mostly unshaven, mud, dirt,

12:30 dust, tired, hungry. They die, unless it's a fast one, they die very, very painfully and sometimes they die on their own. They die very lonely because of circumstances. Other times they will die and somebody, thankfully, is with them when they do go

13:00 but, and they die in places that they never heard of, yeah. It's not a very dignified way of dying, a soldier's death in the field, yeah.

13:30 **You were in many theatres of war. When you look back at that and you've gone through that and so have many other people, so many people. We continue to see war today. How does that... How do you react to that?**

Very fortunately, the cameras, the editing is pretty good.

14:00 You don't see, unless they're brutal American-type thing, close ups and all of this sort of thing. You see glances of bodies and it's just over and done with. You don't, unless it's a film and there's a bunch of actors dying all the time and they're screaming or they're, you know, just puffing away and they go out nice and gracefully and, yeah. That's

14:30 not how death comes about at all. Death in the field is either very instantaneous. They've moving one minute and they're dead the next. They're dead before they hit the deck, gone, life has left. At other times they die horribly over a long period, very painfully, over a long period. They know that they're

15:00 dying. But they, there's an acceptance and an asking of, "Please don't let me die. I don't want to die." and there's the realisation that they are now. They know now they're not bulletproof, right. So if we could all have a nice soldier's death, a nice quick

15:30 bang and down, it'd be all right, like a quick heart attack. It'd be all right. But it's not. It's dirty. It's undignified. And we don't like to see it portrayed on film.

Do you have a final comment that you'd like to make, anything about your life experience or your war experience?

I just say to people well we'll

16:00 have wars and wars, and people will fight and people will die, and mankind will develop bigger and better ways of killing other people. But I wish we wouldn't. It's so unnecessary. When you see something and then 10 years after you say, "Why?" You're at peace with those people.

16:30 You want to feed them. You want to do trade with them, you know, everything and you're saying, "Well why?" I'd say let's put all the leaders in a big box and let them punch it out and the winner takes all. I know it can't be done. But I do wish we wouldn't go to all the trouble of killing one another and it's needless

17:00 absolutely needless. But when we get people like Saddam Hussein [President of Iraq] and [Adolph] Hitler [Chancellor of Germany] and all the rest of them and Idi Amin [President of Uganda] and you name them, we've got them, the dictators, the butchers of the world that brutalise their own people, the people of their own nation and everything, then the free world must look at the cause, and if it's a justifiable cause

17:30 go to war, bash it, smash it, do whatever you like with it. But take it right out so no brutality can be inflicted on people by their own race or by other people for generations and generations. It's stupid. If you let Saddam Hussein go, he'd have been still butchering people. And of Hitler – we don't know, do we?

So from your own

18:00 **war experiences, what would you say is the thing that you learnt most about yourself and about people?**

To put it very, very, very,

18:30 unselfish, don't be selfish. You learn not to be selfish. You learn to try and listen to other people's point of view. You learn humanity and you learn the respect of humanity

19:00 and you learn the horrors of death. And above all, you learn that they're things that shouldn't happen.

Thank you, Keith. It's been a great pleasure to talk with you today. Thank you very much.

INTERVIEW ENDS