Australians at War Film Archive

Jacqueline Andaloro (Jackie) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:30 **So, we'll start off with what your biography would say on the book sleeve about Jacqui?**

Okay, Jacqui Morgan, oh, that's the wrong name – you can tell I've only been married a few years! My name is Jacqui Fitzgibbon and I was born at Crows Nest, Sydney, in 1951, the eldest daughter of Tom and Jacqui Fitzgibbon.

01:00 When I was two years old we moved down to Dapto in New South Wales and I lived there until I started going out in the world with the navy and work when I was about 16. I had an interesting childhood in that it was quite basic; Mum was at home even though she had a little part-time job. My sister and brother were at school with me, and we just basically lived a normal country life.

01:30 Dapto was still a farming community area with cows and what have you; lots of green land. Dad was away with the navy at the time so Mum was both Mum and Dad to us. She raised my brother to be able to box and she encouraged my sister to have riding lessons. We all had what lessons could be afforded at the time. We went to tennis at a little old broken-down tennis court and then played tennis against the Catholic school wall. We grew up in a happy, safe environment.

02:00 There were no problems. Even though money wasn't abounding we still had a good home. And there was a lot of bartering going on. The lady next door had fresh veggies and we had the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s [chickens], so there'd be swapping and that sort of thing. Dad's pay cheque would always come quite late and we had to put everything 'on spec' with the butcher and greengrocer.

02:30 And once a month Mum would go down with her money – because there weren't allotments in those days and the money didn't go straight into the bank – so what would happen is that once a month Mum would go down with the money that Dad had sent down from Korea and pay all the bills. It wasn't unusual for us to be wearing hand-me-downs. We had a favourite – not! – jumper that was green, brown, and white horizontal stripes made up of leftover wool that the lady across the road gave us. And then Mum cut down a pleated skirt to make little white pleated skirts for my sister and I.

03:00 We hated that green jumper. But we looked nice. Anyway, it was a normal thing. When we'd finished with the jumper it went to the house up the road – to the girls up the road – and so on and so on. It was an interesting life until I left home at sixteen to join the navy. I travelled from Dapto up to Sydney to sign on. I actually did my enlistment procedures in Sydney, at the recruiting office in Sydney.

03:30 My Dad at the time was actually in Sydney. He was in the reserves and when he could he'd come down and visit while I was going through the procedures. My brother at the same time was showing great interest in my Mum's old career, which was air force, so he started planning on escaping from Dapto at the age of fourteen. But I was doing my medical and enlistment procedures in Sydney,

04:00 and I left in January 1969 to join the navy. I travelled by troop train down to Point Cook, just outside of Melbourne, on the south side of Melbourne. My Dad came down to see me off at the train station and he was in his petty officer's uniform, which was really, really amazing. Mum had sobbed all the way up on the train and she put me into Dad's safe hands and let me go…

04:30 But it was interesting because I started to talking to different people on the train. A lot of the girls on the train had come from country New South Wales and it was one of those trains where you folded down the bunks to make beds. So this was a great experience; it was whole new invention for me and a bit hard to get down, so we were all sort of giggling and what have you.

05:00 I made friends with a girl from Abermain in New South Wales – Nancy Philips – who remained my friend until she left on her posting. We seemed to get into a lot of trouble when we were in the navy because she was as short and small as I was, and when we first got down to HMAS Cerberus [Navy training establishment] we had to do things like marching. There was drill, and learning the lingo of the time which was all sort of strange navy talk. We also had to do wonderful (sic) things because we were all under eighteen.

05:30 We weren't allowed to go onshore because the navy had basically taken control, taken over parental control that is. So there was no going outside of the WRANS' [Women's Royal Australian Naval Service]quarters. And in the recruit school we always seemed to get chores on the weekend – because idle-hands-idle-minds, that sort of 1960's mentality. So we would be 'allowed' to help out the older WRANS doing their work.

06:00 My friend Nancy and I always seemed to get the same work, which was polishing the drill hall. And there was this big, huge polishing machine that you had to hang onto as you started it up and it would whir and then take off. And of course, if you didn't let go, you'd be dragged along with it. I still have a photo of Nancy holding onto the crossbar of the polisher and being dragged along the floor. I couldn't do anything about it because I was laughing so much!

06:30 Consequently, we were given extra time to 'help out the older girls' because we were thought to be fooling around and not finishing the job properly. Next weekend, the same thing happened. We tried to tell them that we didn't know how to operate the machine. And at the time there was this older WRAN – a chief petty officer by the name of Lenny Maiden – who in the old days would have been called a spinster, but nowadays would be called a 'gay woman', and she used to say,

07:00 "You sheilas [girls], I don't know how you sheilas can't use this machine." And she showed us how to use it. She worked it perfectly, beautifully. Then she'd leave and Nancy and I would get on the machine again and off it would go, all over the place. It got to the stage where, after about four weeks, they thought it wasn't a good idea for us to be on this giant machine because we wrecked the floor too much. So we were given the lovely job of cleaning out the ablutions.

07:30 They thought we were a lot better at cleaning out the toilets; they actually were called 'heads' and showers. But of course in between all those fun times we were doing other things – marching, we'd have to march up to our respective recruit training areas. We were doing parades and that sort of thing. At the end of our recruit time when we were expected to know as much about the navy as we could we were assigned to our different learning areas. I was going in as a sick-berth attendant, which is a medic,

08:00 and was sent up to the hospital with the other girls in that group. And we started our training in the hospital. The really interesting thing there was that we were introduced to some sailors who were training at the medical school too. Most of the sailors in those days, when they came into the recruit training school, would do their recruit training then go to sea to … well, to learn what the sea was all about.

08:30 I don't think that's always the case now. But in those days they had to do sea-training; learn how to chip paint off the sides of ships – which is really important – and radio operators would learn how to be chefs and what have you. But we on shore had to do our recruit training under the control of these WRANS who as far as we were concerned were just bosses who didn't know anything about life, been nowhere, and were all old mates. Which wasn't true, but for us young girls just coming in, that's the way it seemed.

09:00 **Jacqui, before we get too far into your service, let's go right back and talk about growing up in Dapto. What's your very earliest memory as a child?**

I think my earliest memory is of sitting on Mum's bed when my brother had been born. My sister and I had been born in Sydney but my brother

09:30 was born in Dapto. We were living in what were called 'Commonwealth cottages', Dad being away in the navy and all. We travelled in an old car that had been borrowed to move to Dapto. Dad had wanted us to live in a stable house, not move around with his postings all the time. I can remember being in the house – I don't think it had curtains because the room was so bright – and I was lying in bed with this thing that wailed all the time, but that

10:00 turned out to be my brother. I can't remember much about all the early days in the Dapto area. I can't remember my sister and I playing happily, though the photos show that we had little bikes; and Dad had built a swing for us. And we had a white rabbit called 'Grandpa' whose best friend was our white cat. The cat always slept on its back with its paws in the air, next to the rabbit, which we thought was strange.

10:30 But Mum explained to us that, "Everything in the world has a partner." Mum was really nice, always really nice; stray cats, dogs, kids, they always came to Mum. And we had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s. I can remember the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s. And I can remember that our backyard used to flood in the rain too; because the Commonwealth cottages had been built on reclaimed land

11:00 and the government owned the cottages for a lot of the military members so that in the streets there were lots of army, navy and air force people who worked in Sydney or Nowra. Whenever it rained it would flood, which was great because it would come up to your knees or waist and you could paddle around the yard on a board or whatever; it was really good.

11:30 I can also remember we had a clothes prop man who'd come around with a long piece of wood – because we had the old style clothes prop in the backyard. The houses were considered new – they were the Swedish-designed houses – but they didn't have modern clotheslines and a lot of them didn't have fences. So, there was built along the back an old wire, and the clothes prop man would come around and he'd sell you a new piece of V-shaped wood to prop the line up.

12:00 And we had the rabbit-oh man – that was a fellow who lived at the back of Dapto, and who would kill rabbits. You've got to remember that in the '50s times were still very hard. As a '50s baby Dad was away and money wasn't coming home all the time, and there weren't a lot of jobs around as well. It was just coming into the boom times. So we'd have the rabbit-oh come knocking at the front door and because we had a pet rabbit

12:30 the idea of eating one of its relatives was a little bit strange to us. We were only little kids. So Mum would have the rabbit-oh skin a rabbit on the front lawn and then she would cook it up and tell us it was chicken. Nothing else in the world tasted like Mum's chicken. And then years later when we'd grown up she told us it was rabbit. It was very funny at the time.

13:00 And then there was the baker who'd come around in a big old white van and he'd drop off fresh bread for everybody. You could actually buy bread. I can remember – I was under ten at the time – he had this huge wicker basket and he'd load it full of fresh bread. If you stood at the van when he opened the doors you could smell all this fresh bread. And if you were lucky he'd give you a little roll. He'd keep these little rolls for the kids, and the kids would always hang around.

13:30 As my brother got older he got into the billy-cart making area. It would be nothing for him to ride down the street with all the kids – see, all the kids played together because you know, somebody would have wheels, somebody else would have a piece of rope you could use as a guide; anyway, he'd come down the hill and stop just where the bread man parked. I think we had a greengrocer that came around too. Not sure.

14:00 You see, Mum showed her allegiance to the butcher and the greengrocer on the corner who gave us everything on spec until Dad's cheque came in. And I can remember when I started high school. I was so embarrassed ... going down and asking for some cotton, some sort of coloured cotton or something, and then saying, "Could I put it on spec?" I was just getting into that teenage stage where you were noticing that some of the other kids didn't go through what our street seemed to be going through. And we weren't horribly poor or anything, it's just that money wasn't

14:30 there all the time; you often had to wait. And a navy wage in those days wasn't good; I think it was quite bad. But I asked for the coloured cotton to be put on spec, and then when I got to school it turned out to be the wrong colour. The teacher said, "Take it back and get your mother to get you the right one, according to the list." And then, in the sewing class for days after, I had to say that Mum hadn't been to the shop yet

15:00 until finally the teacher wrote a note home. Mum said, "Why didn't you say anything?" And I said I was just too embarrassed. But you know, the early days of coming into being a 'girl of the world in Dapto' where – I mean, going to Wollongong on the bus was the biggest thing in those days, and that was eight miles away, I think.

Do you remember living somewhere else before Dapto?

No, apparently when I was born, Mum and Dad were living in a boarding house at

15:30 Narrabeen. They would call them a 'boarding house' now, but it was more like a hostel at Narrabeen, right on the beach. And Mum used to say to us that they would have to go down this winding corridor to the communal bathroom. I was just a baby, and rather than take me into the cold, communal bathroom, Mum would wash me on the kitchen sink and then wipe me down with oil.

16:00 And for years we used to laugh about it and say that that's why we were so beautiful – because we were oiled at an early age! But ... when my sister was coming along Dad being away in the navy a lot, didn't like to leave Mum so far out of Sydney at Narrabeen, which was not on a good bus route; miles away from anything in those days. I mean, it's all developed now, but in those days it was ... well, it wasn't developed then. So when the offer of the service Commonwealth cottages came up he decided it would be a good idea

16:30 to move down there; safe home, safe area, close to all the facilities that were being introduced. But I can't remember anything of Narrabeen myself, at all.

Do you know – with the cottage at Dapto being a Commonwealth cottage – did your Dad get to buy it?

In the end, years later, they were all offered the purchase of their houses, and he bought it. So basically, we lived in that house for fifty years. Mum and Dad are still there now, and they've re-raised so many other families.

17:00 **Can you describe the house for us; as it was when you were growing up?**

When we were growing up it was pretty basic. You'd come into this large front lawn and you'd walk up the path and turn right into a little veranda. Then you'd walk into the lounge room, turn left to go into the kitchen; then the hall with the first room on the left would be the laundry, then there would be

17:30 a little bathroom, then out of that on the right would be three bedrooms. And there was an outside toilet which was the source of a lot of fun. In those days we used to call it the 'dunny'; everybody called it the 'dunny', and we had the 'dunny man', though I remember that as we got older Mum thought it would be

a better idea to call him the ‘night soil carter’. Dad said, “Nah, he’s always been the ‘dunny man’; that’s the way everybody knows him.” That’s the way it was.

18:00 At night, because we didn’t have an inside loo [toilet], the really interesting thing was that Mum would send us all down the backyard to the loo before we went to bed. We’d have to walk each other down in the dark with a candle; and we’d get down and then you’d fight each other. The survivor of the round got to go to the loo first. So while you were in the loo the other too were fighting outside for the right to use it next. Meanwhile Mum would be calling out from the verandah, “Stay there with your brothers and sisters until you’ve all finished and walk back together.”

18:30 That’s not the way it worked of course. The third person would be in the loo and they’d hear the other two tippy-toe away; and they’d get to the back door and you’d be stuck down there. Usually it was my little sister, and you’d hear a tiny voice, “Muumm, muumm, come and get me!” Because the others had come back with the candle. It was one of those toilets that inevitably split in the middle.

19:00 When Dad was home he’d repair it. But with the splitting came all the wonderful things that would grow in the backyard; like red back spiders. Now red-back spiders have this crazy little joke that they play where you can go into the toilet at night and sit down, and when you start panning around with the candle you’d notice that there was a spider nest, web I mean, right across the door. And you’d think to yourself,

19:30 “How did I get through that door?” My Mum used to say they’d hear you coming and get frightened and lift their little webs up; and then they’d know you wouldn’t hurt them so they’d let their webs down. That didn’t help us to get out of the loo of course … ah, but that toilet! At Christmas time too it was really important that you left the milkman a bottle of beer, and that the dunny man got a bottle of beer too. It was for their service throughout the year.

20:00 You left them in the shed in case they called when you weren’t at home. And he would leave you a little poem about the joys of being a dunny man. It was always left on the toilet at Christmas time. Occasionally it might happen – say, like up the street – that he would trip, or a dog would sort of get him; and he had those old metal pans …. this is good isn’t it? we’re sitting here chatting about the loo!! … it was an old metal pan that he’d carry on his shoulder, and he’d come running up the backyard; and if you had a dog you had to put the dog inside

20:30 while the night soil carter was running up and down the backyard. But if you didn’t, and the dog came out and there’d be a bit of a fracas, then inevitably the pan could spill. A couple of times it did and he’d have to get a shovel out of the shed. He knew where everyone’s shovel was. Then Mum would be calling out the window, “Are you right there?” And he’d reply, “Yeah, I’m all right missus, just doing a bit of shovelling.” And she’d say “Would you like a cup of tea?” And he’d say, “Nah, I’m all right missus, thanks.” Inevitably, up and down the street this would happen.

21:00 We used to have a garbo [garbage collector] that would come around as well, that was a great joy to the kids, because, being an old garbo he used to collect any toys or anything that were still useable – you know, recycle them – and he’d give them to the kids along the way. He’d yell out to the kids up and down the street, sort of, you know, “Becki, I’ve got a little something for…” But when it came to our house

21:30 he’d say – because we had nicknames – my nickname was ‘Chickie’ and my sister’s nickname was ‘Sweetie’. So he’d say, “Sweetie, Sweetie, I’ve got a little toy for you.” And she’d come running out in her pyjamas, and if he was too fast going up the road then she’d chase him up the road, and my mother would get so embarrassed and say, “Please don’t run after the garbo.” But he was lovely. One day she chased him up the road and it was too far for her to come back – because she was only a little thing – so he brought her back and said, “Sorry, she followed me up.”

22:00 In those days it was safe for kids to have friends who were a little bit different or who were strangers. So he brought her back home with her little toy.

Where did your nickname come from?

Apparently, when I was born … no, I think it would have been about twelve months old because Dad was away in Korea, and when he saw me he said, “She’s such a cute little chicken.” ‘Chickie’ just stayed after that. It’s funny. My aunts still call me ‘Chickie’. And my niece, who’s twenty-five and a mother with two little kids, she writes all her letters to ‘Aunty

22:30 Chickie’ and Uncle Sam. It’s funny; just one of those names that stays. I have this old boyfriend from the navy, and he still calls me ‘Chickie’. So it’s just one of those funny names. My sister has eased ‘Sweetie’ out, though. She didn’t like it. I think Dad said she was ‘a sweet little thing’ and that stayed, but she hasn’t been called ‘Sweetie’ since her teenage years. She was a bit of a rebel.

23:00 **Did all of the houses in the street have outside loos?**

Yes. I think in about 1953 when we moved in they all had outside loos with an outside shed as well and a lovely backyard. We had the clothesline going across the backyard; and because there were no fences, Mum used to tie the kids to the clothesline. She’d strap us in with a piece of string and we could run up and down play to the lengths of our ties. Then eventually the workmen came back and finished the

houses but the

23:30 outside loos were there for years. I think we still had an outside loo when I went into the navy at sixteen.

What were the houses made of?

They were wood houses. They were actually a Swedish design and they were brought to Australia en masse – the wood, the plans, the whole box-and-dice [everything], and then constructed in the Wollongong area. I believe Wollongong and Unanderra had them. I've also seen some of those old houses in Sydney, at HMAS Penguin there, down at Balmoral.

24:00 But I think they've been taken away now.

Apart from rabbit that was chicken, that was really rabbit, what else did your Mum cook up for you as kids?

She did a lot of baking herself. She used to make our cakes and pies, and if there was a fete on at school she'd make all of that – and there was coconut ice to die for.

24:30 But on our birthdays she'd make our own special meals – you could have whatever you liked, cooked. My favourite was crumbled lamb cutlets with mashed potato and peas. My brother used to like savoury mince on toast. I can't remember what my sister liked. But everything was cooked at home. We didn't have frozen foods, and there weren't many canned foods – they were more of a treat sort of thing.

25:00 The produce was always bought fresh or was bartered for. We had our own WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s so we always had eggs, and the lady next door had spinach. My brother was tall and gangly as he was growing up. He was all arms and legs, and believed that if he ate spinach he would become like 'Popeye' [cartoon character] and he wouldn't get beaten up by the girls at school. So, Mum used to go to the lady next door – in fact, the lady used to bring over loads of spinach –

25:30 and my brother used to eat a huge bowl of it and gag all the way through it – hated it, but he ate it. Then the lady a few doors up had bits and pieces of other produce that we bartered for eggs. There was a bit of a barter system. It not only went for food, but for clothes as well. If we'd finished with any of our clothes then they'd go to whatever kids in the street could fit into them.

26:00 And like I said before, the lady across the road had the wool so she knitted up the jumpers for us. It just went in a circuit. We were all in pretty much the same boat. It wasn't until more families moved into the Dapto area that things started to change. There was more money around, and basically Wollongong caught up with Sydney.

26:30 **With your Dad being away a lot, was it the same sort of circumstance for most of the other families in the street?**

Yeah, in fact it was quite sad because Dad was away and there were a lot of navy guys in the street and a lot guys off HMAS Voyager, and I can remember – we were all little – that when Voyager went ... was, ah, ... went down ... some of the women were running up and down the street. It was frantic, but we didn't know what was going on. The women were very supportive of each other. [Voyager was sunk after a collision with aircraft carrier Melbourne 1963]

27:00 In those days it was a real community and such. You could only hope that it was still like that today. I can remember a woman – an English lady from up the road – running down the road and screaming, and some navy guys arriving at the bottom of the street and going into other houses to tell the women what had happened, so that they could be supportive to the women. I just remember there was a great turmoil in the street and a lot of crying and wailing.

27:30 So it was a community spirit in those days and everyone supported each other. The lady across the road – if she needed to talk to someone then she'd come and knock at the door. You'd be sitting around the table looking at this lady crying and Mum would say, "You children need to go out the back and play." And we'd say we didn't, and she'd say we did,

28:00 then we'd ask why, and she'd say, "I need to talk to the Mum." But yeah, it was a good community spirit, especially in those days. Being military families there were always incidents. But Voyager was the worst one.

After that initial turmoil, do you remember being told what actually had happened?

It wasn't till years later. It's funny because I can remember working with a

28:30 navy guy who had actually been on Voyager and earned a commendation for his heroic actions ... but it wasn't till I was in the navy years later that I learned about Voyager and what actually had happened.

Were there other children in your street that had lost parents in the Voyager tragedy?

It wasn't talked about all that much. I can't remember. If there was anything at all dramatic or unpleasant or nasty then Mum and Dad would talk about it quietly – we weren't allowed to listen

29:00 to anything that was sad or harsh. I don't think we ever watched any programs even. I mean, Dad was away in Korea and he had seen some horrible things and when he came home we weren't to be involved in any of that at all. We didn't know that my mother had ever taken a drink until years later. The street was quite young and there were a lot of young families and Dad had come home from sea

29:30 and there was a party up the road for the other men who had come home from sea. My mother had a glass of Pimms or something – something-and-lemonade which didn't agree with her. Dad thought the best way for her to bring it up was to put her over the window sill. But he forgot about her and went to bed. So she was quietly calling out later, "Tom, Tom, help me, Tom." Consequently she decided she never wanted another drink again. But we never knew about any of that until years later.

30:00 She didn't want the kids to know that she'd had an, ah, 'incident' over alcohol. Yeah, so we were quite a young street and we started getting people from overseas coming into the street as well because some of the houses were earmarked for 'New Australians' [immigrants] as they were called.

30:30 We had a family moved in up the road – the Forbsies. Mr Forbes came complete with a sidecar motorbike. There were no cars in the street; people didn't have vehicles. Mr Forbes – he was a builder or something – he was called upon anytime a kid got injured.

31:00 He would come down on his sidecar and load up the injured kid and his Mum and off they'd go up the street to the hospital or the doctor's surgery. He was amazing – the local transport for any injured kid, the emergency transport if needed. He was lovely. The family was lovely.

Where had they moved from?

Came over from England. I think he'd been in the British Army and part of the new settlement plan – the 'ten pound plan' I think it was called; you know, come over to Australia and help rebuild Australia and

31:30 that sort of thing. Being a tradesman or builder he got over quite easily and ended up at Dapto.

Did you ever get a ride in the sidecar?

Oh, yes! I fell off a swing at one stage and got concussion. I was lucky because I was playing with his daughter. So off she went and got him and off we went to the hospital. I was fine.

32:00 **If there were no other cars in the street, were there ever circumstances where injuries were made out to be worse than they were so that someone could get a ride in the sidecar?**

I'm not sure. Mr Forbes was so great. I can remember one day he loaded up the sidecar and back of the bike with kids and he took us all for a ride around the street. So we all had a ride. But he had a large family and when they'd go out on their family outings. All you could see would be Mr and Mrs Forbes on the bike and all the kids piled into the sidecar. It was lovely.

32:30 **What was the condition of the roads?**

They were dirt roads for a period of time because, again, the area was still being built. Mum used to say that it was such a struggle. I mean, only recently they've put in a foot path down the street; before it was just a grass verge. She said she could look out the front window – because our kitchen window had a large table in front of it – and see all the women struggling with their strollers

33:00 and when it rained it was a quagmire.

What did the family do for entertainment?

We had a wireless. The first trip that Dad had to Japan he brought back a blue wireless. It was amazing. He built a shelf in the corner of the kitchen and put it there; and we'd come home from school in the afternoons and listen to our favourite programs.

33:30 There were things like, The Sunset Trail and Roy Rogers. I believe there were other sorts of shows like those but I didn't get to listen to them. It was probably time for my brother or sister to get the radio. I remember Sunset Trail though, and the cowboy music, and sometimes the news. There weren't many news channels though. I think it was mainly

34:00 things like the Australian Broadcasting Commission in those days. But it was only for a few hours in the evening. Then the people up the road – the Chaneys – got a new television, a black and white television! They'd come over from Scotland. Mrs Chaney, she was an amazing woman. She could smoke and drink the local men under the table; had the broadest accent and the loveliest, loveliest nature.

34:30 Well they got a television, and we could go over there and watch it for a couple of hours every night. I got to see my favourite, favourite radio song person that I had been listening to – because we had just started getting rock and roll music – I saw Crash Craddock do Boom Boom Baby on a black and white TV. And this was in the days where they had those Elvis impersonators; you know, with the dovetails, or ducktails or whatever. Crash Craddock came on, and he pushed the sleeves up,

35:00 and sang Boom Boom Baby. And I bought a Crash Craddock CD [Compact Disc] last week. I found it in an old shop and it's got Boom Boom Baby on it. Sam said, "Do you really like this music?" Fifties rock

and roll. It's great.

What other sort of music were you listening to?

I think I might have been a little bit weird, because I liked a lot of the slow things like Paul Moyarnt and the Beatles, who were just coming out. But I wasn't much of an Elvis [Presley] fan.

35:30 Mum was an Elvis fan and I think my sister liked Elvis. Most of the groups were like the American black entertainers who were starting to come out. We were just starting to get their music. But there wasn't a lot; there wasn't too much on the radio. But the Beatles were the big thing. To get a little Beatles EP [extended play record, 33 rpm disc] you had to do a LOT of chores, to save up the money. I think my first Beatles EP was 'Yeah-Yeah-Yeah'.

36:00 I think most of the groups – all the 'The' groups like The Shiralees, The Vogue, The Executives were popular. The Executives played in Wollongong one day and we went down and saw. them Then there was Jan and Dean – they actually came down to Wollongong. Mum thought it was time we got a bit of exposure to the world, so we got tickets and went to this 'big' rock concert at the Wollongong Centre.

36:30 In those days you'd buy the tickets at the door, but the first show was full. So we went and had a milkshake down at the dairy shop, then we came back and got in and saw Jan and Dean. Mum said you couldn't hear a thing because all the girls started screaming when they came on stage. She said, "I saved up money to bring you kids here and we can't hear anything!" But we could see these guys up on the stage doing Jan and Dean surfing stuff.

37:00 So, the music generally ... we were just starting to get into the rock and roll thing. There wasn't a lot, and it wasn't until I joined the navy that I started listening to other things, new styles. It wasn't because we were restricted at home, just that the new music didn't come down our way much.

37:30 **When you'd go up the street to the Chaneys to watch TV, what were some of the shows you saw?**

Things like I Love Lucy and Wagon Train and Circus Train with Mickey Dolenz, who became one of the Monkees. He was blonde in those days. There was a show that I can only remember the song ... 'Go westward ho young Jamie-o' – it was about a wagon train out west and the Osmond Brothers were the boys in it. They were the sort of little

38:00 cowboys in it going west. Jamie Osmond sang the title. Then there was "The Honeymooners" ...

When you'd go up to the Chaneys to watch TV were there kids from all over the neighbourhood there?

Standing room only sometimes. Then your Mum would call you because it was time for your tea, and Mrs Chaney would grumble something. I think it meant in Scottish that it was time to go.

38:30 She'd sit in that chair with her cigarette and that accent was so broad. Mum used to say to us that we didn't understand her for years but we all knew what she was saying. It was an amazing time because we didn't have a lot, yet there were all those kids sitting there watching TV – the Levys next door, the Forbsies as well, the Camayans across the road. There were all tribes of kids watching.

39:00 **Did you see the landing on the moon?**

Mum said we did but I can't remember it. What was it, '66? No, I can't remember. I know that at school it was broadcast, and there was a song that came out about it – 'Walking on the Moon'. But I can't actually remember sitting down listening to it, not at all.

39:30 **Where did you go to school?**

To Dapto Public, which is no longer there. They've actually just moved it this last Christmas. Then Dapto High School, which is still at Dapto.

Do you remember starting school?

You mean being dragged there, yes. I was painfully shy, and although nobody believes that now, I used to stutter at the mention.

40:00 If you sort of asked me to talk to a boy I used to stutter and go red. But I can remember Mum walking me to school, and I remember standing in line and we were all very nervous – Carol Adair was standing behind me and the school – because there'd been a lot of new people moving into the area they had to bring back a lot of the older teachers, and I think this old lady was named Miss Burns. If you can imagine an English woman with one of those caps pulled down over her head,

40:30 and an umbrella even in the sunshine, and sensible brogues, and a jacket, then that was Miss Burns.

Tape 2

00:30 **So we were talking about starting school.**

As I said there were a lot of new kids in the area so it was quite big and they had to bring back some of the old teachers like Miss Burns. So we were standing in line and Mum said she must have pulled me or pushed me. I was very shy and nervous and got upset and started crying,

01:00 then she yelled at me and Carol behind got upset by it all, and threw up all over me. I can remember the teacher dragging me out and hosing me down then standing with my back to the sun on the school verandah to dry off. But my Mum – and I still carry this tradition today when I go away anywhere – my Mum had packed in this little suitcase

01:30 a change of underpants – because you always had to when you were going somewhere new, and a pair of clean socks. So they put me in this underwear and I can remember seeing my little knickers on the line and thinking, "This is not right, this is not right. How am I going to tell my Mum?" Mum said it was just because I was nervous and this new teacher had pulled me into line and upset the girl behind me. So that's how I remember my first day at school.

02:00 **And you were the oldest, so you'd left your brother and sister at home?**

Brother and sister at home; yeah, I was the oldest. But I can remember being late for school one day, too. We'd have to walk about three blocks and if it was raining we'd still have to walk it. Getting to school late and getting into trouble; having to stand in a corner. I can remember having to stand in the corner with two or three other people and then getting a slap on the hand with a ruler for it; for being late.

02:30 And I remember thinking, "But we had to walk to school and it was raining." But I still got the cane. The boys got the 'cuts' [strap], but I got the cane on my hand for being late. Why? I'm not sure if Mum came up to the school to speak to someone about it, but it was very strange. I still remember standing in that corner ... persecution at an early age, ha ha.

03:00 **Would Dapto Infants School have been fairly new?**

It was a small school, and the little plaque at the base of the school building said 1876; a tiny little wooden building, then another tiny brick building. So 1876 was the plaque at the steps. But it got bigger. Dapto being

03:30 just a country community school it was small until a lot of the New Australians started coming over. Then it got bigger, then in 2003 it closed down and moved to West Dapto. I believe it's going to become a Woolworth's car park now.

How many kids would have been at the school?

No, not sure. Quite a lot. About three classrooms for infants, then two first classes; two second classes.

04:00 I don't know how many they've got now.

Did you enjoy school? Primary School?

I was very shy, so painfully shy. People don't believe that now, but I was. I remember having a really good friend – Brenda Evans – who came over from England on the 'Ten Pound excursion' [government assisted passage]; she and I became great friends and in fact we're still good friends now, even though she's moved back to England.

04:30 Brenda was my best friend, and when Mum wanted to meet the family we walked from our place to theirs – which was about three miles out into the country – and her Mum and my Mum became best friends to the point that when they moved back to England, the eldest girl – Chrissie – stayed with Mum and Dad. Dad actually gave her away at her wedding.

05:00 So they stayed good friends, as Brenda and I had over the years. But we were sort of cheese and chalk [very different]. She was a little round-faced blonde, and I was a little round-faced, auburn haired kids with freckles. She had no freckles.

How did being painfully shy play out at school?

Well you never got chosen for size in basketball! Janice Ian had a great song that talked about being chosen for sides in school sport. I wasn't

05:30 chosen for many things at all. Eventually the teacher would come up and say, "All right, you're going onto that side," and they had things like tunnel ball. In primary school you'd have your two captains, and they'd pick all their friends. The nerd kids would be left over, and the teacher would have to distribute them. I never got picked in the favourite team for tunnel ball.

06:00 **What other sorts of sport did you do at school?**

Mum wanted us to play tennis; for our physical fitness. We used to go down to this house where they had tennis courts and we would learn to play tennis there. My sister was quite good. She went on from tennis to play squash, but I was a bit of a numfy [failure]. I really sort of didn't find what I was good at, but I liked the tennis. Then at school we had round-robin

06:30 games – you know, throwing, ball games. In those days you would stand in line and do callisthenics and things like that. There weren't a lot of heavy games. The boys would have more of the running games whereas the girls would have the more dainty games. Just running around or catch, and things like that.

07:00 **Are there any textbooks, or books they made you read that stand out in your memory?**

I can't remember the names, but you were given little books by the school – little textbooks. At certain times of the afternoon we'd listen to Radio Australia – an education program – and you'd open up the books and there'd either be stories, or scenes, or little radio plays. I think it was ABC Of the Air or something. And you'd listen to those sorts of things. I can

07:30 remember years later there was the Elvis Presley song Muss I Den; that was in one of the books. In Social Studies sessions they might have a song from another country and they had the German version of Muss I Den. You might only have a couple of stanzas, but you'd have that.

08:00 **What are your other standout memories from primary school?**

There weren't a lot. I can remember I expressed an interest in learning how to play the piano, and Mum scraped together the money. But I thought she was going to send me to the lady who all the other kids were going to. But Mum had found cheaper lessons with the Catholic school. So she got

08:30 me up there. Sister Agnes was the teacher. I was really excited. But Sister Agnes had come from a long line of Irish, ah, Irish barbarians I think, because she had this long red pointer, and she'd be sitting there, and if your hand wasn't placed right ... well you can guess what happened. Eventually it got to the stage where I wouldn't go to music lessons. I'd sit

09:00 round the corner in the lane and hide out for what I thought was an hour. Until one day they sent a note home to Mum, asking her to come up and explain why I hadn't been going to music lessons. And she said, "Why aren't you going to music lessons?" And I said, "I don't like going there, I don't want to learn to play piano." I never told her for years that this red pointer had been whipped across my knuckles. Mum said, "Okay, you've got one more session to go

09:30 and you can take Brenda with you." So I took Brenda with me because I thought there would be safety in numbers and we ended up weeding the garden instead because the nuns needed the garden weeded. When we'd finished – and I'll never forget this – she came out and gave us a Nice biscuit each. To this day I'm not really good with a Nice biscuit!

10:00 While you were sitting having your piano lessons it was time for their prayers, and this bell would tinkle in the background, and this woman would get up, and off she'd go down the corridor. You'd be sitting there and you'd hear this murmuring in the background, then the bell would ring again and in she'd come and sit down. Nuns were still in those habits – those long thick brown habits ... spooky times! So consequently I can't play the piano.

10:30 **Did you enjoy having your brother and sister at the same primary school?**

We kept to our own crowds. Because I was shy – my sister said I was a bit of a nerd – but she had quite a following; doing all sorts of wild things. But my brother, he was popular with the girls, who could beat him up easily. My mother had taught him that you don't hit girls, and my brother growing up, well he believed that if he ate spinach he was going to be like Popeye

11:00 and if you wore a knitted pompon hat you would be protected from things; and he had this flannelette shirt that was his favourite shirt. As he grew older and the sleeves would grow shorter – never mind, he still wore it – he would wear this pompon hat with his school uniform and the girls would chase him around the playground and steal the hat.

11:30 They called him things like Jellybean and Buttercup. Anyway, one day Mum said, "Enough's enough, you need to show them that you're not a pushover. So if they grab your hat, grab the girls and tell them not to do that." So he did that and I think the first girl slugged [hit] him. So he came back and said to Mum, "What'll I do?" She said, "Okay, if they do that you can hit back, though not in the face and not hard – only on the arm or the leg."

12:00 So he did that and they stopped. But apparently this girl was in love with him; a little school yard thing. He was about six or seven and of course didn't understand. Yeah, we laugh about it now, his pompom hat and being called Jellybean and Buttercup. But my sister, she was into everything. She was good at sports, and eventually became a very good horsewoman.

12:30 But she was keen on sports and had a very good crowd. And she was always picked for teams.

What were the school uniforms like?

I can't remember, I think it was a blue check; a blue uniform. The high school uniform was a maroon tunic with a white blouse for winter, with a yellow and maroon tie

13:00 and the summer uniform was a cotton version of the maroon. With white socks with lace up shoes.

And that was Dapto High?

Yes, Dapto High.

And what was that like?

Ah, dear me. I wish I could go back to school with what I know now. I was shy, and teenagers can be pretty hurtful. But I was quiet and had some nice friends. I think I just plodded along at school.

13:30 I liked English. I was very good at English. Very good at what we called geography and social studies. Maths and science was a foreign language to me. We did home economics and sewing. Home economics I was quite good at. But I would have loved to do woodwork, but again in those days it was quite segregated, and I can remember our next door neighbour Stephen – because he had planned his career as a chef –

14:00 wanting to do cooking. They made a special allowance for him to go into the cooking class. He had a clear direction. But for everybody else, we were quite segregated during those days. But we had a teacher – Miss Branch – she was the arts teacher. She had a stiff back, extremely formal. She would get the girls to kneel down in the playground and with her ruler measure that the dress actually came to the knees.

14:30 In those days – with the English invasion that had started in the pop world – so there were girls with the side bangs and the black mascara. They'd teased their hair up high, you know, with the kick curls; and the socks! So they'd come out of school and roll their uniforms up to the mini length, or when they got to school they'd pull them down to the correct length, and roll their socks down.

15:00 Out of school you would also pull your socks up, up high. But Miss Branch would measure everyone. She was a strong disciplinarian. There was no chewing gum at school – the girls had to act like ladies. Very strict.

What was the dating situation like, being at a mixed school?

15:30 **I never got dated. Though I laugh now with my girlfriend Leonie that we were always invited to parties to change the records. I never had dates because I was too shy, too painfully shy. And I was quite chunky, well, a bit chunky and with freckles and pigtails [braided hair]. I can remember joining the Girl Guides and being invited to a birthday party with boys there. They played 'pass-the-parcel' and**

16:00 **when it stopped you had to kiss the person beside you. Not being okay with kissing games, I turned around to kiss this guy and I think I kissed his ear. Then the next time I think I kissed his teeth. I can remember thinking, "This is not what it's cracked up to be!" For dating, well, we never dated. It wasn't that we weren't allowed – I mean, my sister had loads of dates all through school – but I, ah, just didn't know how to.**

16:30 **It was all a huge chore, talking to boys. Anything to do with boys was such a huge chore. But on my last week of school some of the guys in class were going out to a drive-in movie [open air cinema] and they asked me to come along – one of the guys had a spare date. When we got to the movie everyone settled down in the seats and there was this trick with the arm,**

17:00 **you know, the stretching and the arm coming around. That was it, I didn't know what to do. I thought it was a good idea to go to the toilet, because I was getting nervous. I came back, then the arm went round again and there was some nuzzling in. I thought, "Hmmm, what's going on here?" then went to the toilet again. Came back, then it started again. And before I knew it this guy was all over my face, kiss. kiss, kiss, kiss, and I was thinking, "Whoa, this is not what I like!" So I pushed him off and said,**

17:30 **"Gotta phone my Mum." Then I came back and said, "I have to go home now." And everybody said, "Why?" So they drove me home and dropped me off at the corner, and I ran all the way home. So that was my introduction to dating.**

What was there in the way of sex education?

Aaagh. There's a video that you sometimes see on television about a Country Women's Association lady, in a straw hat with Dame Edna Everidge [satiric entertainer] style pointed glasses, gloves,

18:00 standing there saying, "Now ladies, we're going to talk about you being a woman. Now, you know that we don't let boys touch you 'down there', do we?" Well that was it, THAT was the sex education. In the year that I left school – our school was a bit fast-thinking or progressive or something – and we actually had some very good science lessons. We'd done the birds and the bees

18:30 in science – pollen carting and that sort of thing – the teacher actually got a video on sex education. It was a co-ed class and it was excellent. I look back now and that for the school to have done that in the '60s, it was really good. The church also started doing mother-daughter and father-son activities where you'd go up and have the sex education and what have you. And I can remember that Mum had a very big medical book.

19:00 I'll never forget this! I was sick, home from school, and Mum said, "I think it's time for you and me to have a talk," and I said, "What about?" And she said, "Y'know, about the birds and the bees." I said that I knew about it, and was doing it in science, but she said, "This is a little bit more, about sex education and where babies come from." I said, "From hospital don't they?" – but you've got to remember that I was a slow bloomer [developer] here. Well, started in on the sex education.

19:30 In the end I said, "What, we have to do all THAT, so that babies can come along." And she said yes, and explained how lovely it was, the whole process, and about love and marriage and the whole box-and-dice. And I said, "But what happens if you don't want to do it?" and she said, "Ah, well that's another story." So that was part of the sex education that my mother gave me from books and such. It was funny, because Mum had to do sex education for my brother as well. When it came to my sister, she said, "Nah, I know all about it, we learn it at school now."

20:00 But for me to sit in a co-ed science classroom with the video and that – I'm glad it was in the dark so they couldn't see me blushing – it was pretty restricted. But we had a good Mum. She got the books out and talked to us.

Let's talk about your Mum. What was she like?

My Mum's still alive and in her early eighties. She was actually born in Sydney in 1922. Her mother came from a little town in

20:30 New South Wales called Tingha which was a tin and gold mining town. She had a brother Harry, whose nickname was Raz, and a sister Yvonne. The family moved down to Port Kembla when her Dad bought a little shop. She lived there until she was five. Unfortunately her mother died when she was five, and the father, not being able to cope with the

21:00 children, called her parents who were still in Tingha to see if they could look after the three kids. So, my eighteen year old great aunt who had never been out of Tingha, got on a train to Sydney; changed buses, changed trains. I think there was even a horse and dray ride somewhere along in it.

21:30 Came down to pick up these three little kids and catch the train back to Sydney, then arrange transport to Tingha. Mum was saying that she had to get off the train because my uncle was still a babe in arms. So whenever the train would stop she'd have to get off the train and forage for food for the kids. In those days they used to have a little area where you could go and get a cup of tea

22:00 and things like that. So she'd get milk for the baby. Mum was raised in Tingha by her grandparents. They had a large family there in the house as well. So she was raised by her grandmother and grandfather who were really nice country people from what I've read about them. They had a great sense of humour, a great sense of fun, and they were on their own property where they could grow things.

22:30 As Mum was growing up she'd help in the house. Mum was telling us one day a story that she can remember that showed her grandmother and grandfather having a great sense of humour. The local doctor had to come to visit one of the girls. He had a 1920s car with a sideboard; a running board I think they're called. The doctor wasn't in town very often, so getting the doctor out to this little country house was unusual.

23:00 Unfortunately, one of the kids put an old dead, black snake on the running board, and after he had visited the family he came out to get into the car, saw the snake, and screamed and yelled and tried to kill the snake. Then he cursed the kids, chased them up the road, and swore he'd never come back. Meanwhile

23:30 my grandmother and Mum were hiding behind some bushes because they'd heard the kerfuffle [noise]. She said they were laughing so hard that they had to sit down. But none the kids got into trouble and even though it was not the right thing to do, everyone around the kitchen table laughed about it all. My grandfather apparently, was very protective. I think there were about ten girls in the house and he was very protective. But they were all very independent women, ahead of their times I think. The grandparents, they wanted the best for their

24:00 family. They were very strong on family values. But they wanted the girls to get out and learn things. So, Mum grew up in the little town of Tingha and when she was older the family moved to Inverell in New South Wales and then as she was growing older she was at a school – a little old local school – where you had to ride a horse to get to school.

24:30 She helped the house. There were WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, horse, and produce. She stayed in Tingha for a little while after she left school, worked as a telephonist for a while. But her grandparents thought that she really should get out and see the world. They knew about some work in Sydney, so she was sent there – not because she wasn't welcome in the house, but because they wanted her to get out in the world and see what she could of it.

25:00 In Sydney, she actually joined the air force in Sydney and was a telephonist there. She went to different places around Sydney and Melbourne, I believe. We always thought that Mum had only been in the air force for a couple of years during the war. But she was in for quite a long time and was one of the last forty women to leave the air force when it closed down.

25:30 **What had she told you about her service?**

She loved it. It was sad times because during the war they actually did training of the pilots where she was posted. She met a fellow whose name was – see, we read a lot of the mail now. We're allowed to now that we're older. I think his name was Peter Schlenker, he was a pilot and she was in love with him. But he was killed in Britain, in the air force.

26:00 But she wasn't welcome in their household because she came from a poor background and they were quite wealthy Sydney-ites, you know, 'society people'. But they were actually engaged. The air force years – she said they were both sad and happy for a girl from a small town. There was the training and she was learning things, meeting people. You'd meet the pilots, and then they'd go away and you might never hear from them again – they'd go over to England or off to war.

26:30 She said they were fabulous years because she learned so much and she grew up. She was still a small town country girl and didn't drink alcohol. She met Dad not long after she got out of the air force. She was working for TAA [Trans Australian Airlines] in those days doing their switchboard, and she met Dad at a party. Dad was younger than her and he tricked her with his uniform

27:00 and his suave charms. So they started going out with him, and they were married in Sydney before he went to Korea. Even now, she's very much 'family' – you know, 'family is everything'. I think she could have gone off and done amazing things, because she was quite a talented lady – what with sewing and cooking and raising the family on her own whilst Dad wasn't there – but she's very much 'family' from the old school. She saw the way her grandparents raised their children – family should

27:30 always stay together. Years down the track when the family started coming back -my sister was divorced and needed a place to stay; and when I went through my divorce you could always go home; there was always an open door. It was never a case of, "Well, you made your bed so that's the way it is." It was rather a case of, "Well, this is your home, there'll always be a bed for you here."

28:00 You were never afraid to bring your friends home, never afraid to come back home – it's the same now, still. Mum says it's funny now to be greeted by a really tall kid in the street, who in years gone by had been sitting at the kitchen table as a child, eating cookies after school. It was amazing, because they'd talk to Mum – she was the sort of woman you could always talk to. Even though she didn't have a lot of education, there's a lot of home knowledge there.

28:30 There were times that you could actually sort of say, "Mum, this is not the Brady Bunch, [TV comedy show] we don't work this way in the real world." But at the core of her everything are her ethics.

How do you think she coped with your Dad being away so often?

She never complained. We never heard Mum or Dad complaining about their lifestyle. But I think now, years later, she might have hated it. In those days – I think Dad was away in Korea for about thirteen months –

29:00 and I think she hated it, raising three kids by herself. She said they were lonely days, very lonely days. But we never heard her complain; never complained about Dad's time away.

You mentioned before that she taught your brother to box?

29:30 Well, I think I was probably his first victim. Peter was a really nice kid when he was growing up – gentle, gangly, freckle-faced, a mop of auburn-coloured hair. But I think he was picked on [bullied] at school. Mum would say, "If you've talked to them about it and they're still picking on you, then I think we need to do something else."

30:00 So she taught him how to box. I think she'd seen how they do it on the movies. So she'd say, "You put up your dukes [fists] and this is what you do." Apparently I used to tease my brother and sister quite a lot, and I was teasing my brother one day and I teased him to the point that he just went THUMP, right on my nose. It just got too much for him.

30:30 My nose and lip apparently swelled up so much that I couldn't go to school the next day. My Mum didn't go off [scold]at Peter so much about it. She'd say that, "You weren't allowed to hit girls," but Peter said, "But Mum, she's teasing me, teasing me to distraction." And Mum said, "There you go, that's what happens; he told you to stop and you didn't." So I got it, in the face.

31:00 And the note to the school teacher next day apparently read, "Please excuse Jacqueline from school today as she has a fat lip."

Do you remember actually teaching him?

On the front lawn. I can just remember one of the sessions where you know, it was 'put up your dukes'. Mum's not tall. I mean I'm five [foot] three [inches]so she'd be about five foot. My brother was gangly, so it was put up your dukes. I think Peter got the giggles because she had assumed this squatting stance, you know, down a bit.

31:30 Peter got the giggles and that was it.

Were you old enough to remember your Dad going to Korea?

Not going off to Korea but I can remember him coming home from time to time. I can remember this one night when I could hear men's voices in the kitchen. I snuck out to see who was in the kitchen, and I looked around and could see two men in navy uniforms at the sink washing dishes.

32:00 The tall one of the two was talking and laughing and I thought that was my Dad. Went back to bed and when I came out the next morning the tall man was still there and he was a friend of Dad's. He was talking and laughing. But the short man was my Dad. Mum used to say to us that Dad often said that he missed a lot of our early years. There were things like we had own plates and saucers and that. One day he was getting breakfast for us and he put my brother's plate in front of my sister.

32:30 And my sister burst into tears and said, "But that's not my plate, Daddy, that's not my plate!" That upset him a lot apparently, because he didn't know about these little foibles in the home. Yeah, but I couldn't work out who my Dad was that time, standing at the sink.

What understanding did you have about why your Dad was away?

33:00 He was working; all I knew was that he was working. Didn't quite understand the navy. I knew that he wore a uniform, but then, the men back then wore a bib and brace or the overalls, so it didn't – see, because we hadn't moved around much like some of the other families you talked to, like my friend Leonie whose Dad was in the army – they moved around a lot. Leonie used to say that you were never stuck with anyone to play with because you had all these brothers and sisters.

33:30 I didn't know what that was like because Dad didn't want us moving around. Which made it difficult for him to be home often. I think it was a bit of strain, like, emotionally, we weren't 'close'. I didn't quite understand where he fitted into the picture, because he was away so much. It was a bit strange when he finally came home – I was sort of into the teenage years. I don't know how it affected my brother, because he had always been considered the man of the house.

34:00 But when Dad was home he was a good Dad to us. You know, we never, ever had any worries with Dad at home. In fact I can remember being in trouble one day and not getting a smack from him. He actually talked to me, explained why what I had done was wrong. I think I had beaten my sister up. So he said, "You don't do this and that" and so on. We were often told as children, "Wait till your father gets home; I'm going to tell him ..."

34:30 But that was in later years. We never got it as youngsters. When I did get into trouble it was a talking to, not a smack on the bum or anything.

Tell us about your Dad?

Well my Dad grew up in Mildura in Victoria. They were on the river bank. I believe that in those days we had relatives who used to run the riverboats – you know, the Murray River; the mighty Murray.

35:00 Dad was the second youngest of quite a large family. His mother – Matilda Douglas – was a Scottish Protestant, and his Dad – Jack Fitzgibbon – was a Catholic. These two people met, I believe, at Illawong in Victoria, which was a very big Irish community. When they met, well, it wasn't a good idea because the Protestants and Catholics in those days didn't come together.

35:30 But they married and had two children, then moved up to Mildura because the two youngest children had TB [tuberculosis]. A lot of people moved away from that area because they were Protestants and Catholics married together, which was a no-no. Dad grew up, basically, along the Murray. The family was Catholic, and there were lots of brothers and sisters.

36:00 He was pretty much raised by his sister Patricia who took it upon herself to look after him. Unfortunately, when the next child came along his mother died, and the father at the time couldn't look after the baby. So the baby was put up for adoption; adopted by the doctor. But Dad had, I think, a pretty spoiled upbringing because his sisters doted

36:30 on him and he could do nothing wrong. He had this mop of thick, curly hair and was a bit of a rogue – boy on the riverbank and that sort of thing. He went to a Catholic school and would often take days off to play along the riverbank. He said those days were pretty hard times because the family wasn't wealthy, and the older kids were out working ... He was

37:00 a bit of a rogue. I think at twelve he showed an interest in photography. If there was money around he might even have become a photographer, but there wasn't and instead he had to go and chop redwoods; had to work in the bush with the labourers and chop the redwoods so he could work and bring some money home. So at a young age he was out working which didn't bother him to be away from the nuns, because he was

37:30 flogged by them often ... must be in the blood I think. Yeah, so ... the interesting thing is he found out from his younger sister that the family were very social, especially on Sundays after church. They'd come back to the old house and roll up the carpet and sing and dance in the parlour – lots of Irish music. I think that must run in the blood too, because our whole family, now that we've got older,

38:00 like the singing and the dancing too. But they were very social in that sense. Dad left home at sixteen to have a look around. I think he went to Tasmania and then joined the navy at an early age; the '50s I think. But he didn't go to Korea straight away. He had a few other ships I think.

38:30 He trained at Flinders Naval Depot which is HMAS Cerberus, and from there went to the different ships and establishments. But ... he was a bit of rogue back then.

And what do you know of your Dad's service?

Dad's favourite ship is HMAS Warramunga and I think he was on it in Korea. He was paid off the navy as a petty officer quartermaster gunner,

39:00 and I think his roguish, boyhood ways might have stayed with him in the navy. He played a lot of sports; I have some photos of him playing basketball and hockey, and I actually have his hockey stick because I played hockey in school. He liked football and played a lot of sports

39:30 like cricket. There's actually a pen drawing of him walking onto the field, waving to the crowds, and the crowd is yelling, "Fitzgibbon will save the day!." But he was quite good with sports. He did training down at Cerberus where he was the Parade GI, which is the fellow who walks around with the whistle – ooh, I shouldn't call it a whistle because it's a Bosun's Pipe –

40:00 and brought on the Garden Band and did all those sorts of regimental things. I believe he did all that at Cerberus, though he wasn't there when I was there.

As you were growing up, did your Dad talk to you much about his work?

Not a lot; we knew that he went to Japan, and we got some lovely presents from Japan, but we didn't hear much about his career until later when I was out of the navy. He talked about some of the establishments he'd been to, like HMAS Penguin and Kuttabul.

40:30 He talked about – it's funny, because years later I had some friends in the navy who were the sons of some of Dad's friends, Dixie Ford and a few others – and they had all worked at HMAS Rushcutter which was at the time used for the navy divers. It was funny mentioning names to Dad, like Dixie Ford said this or that. And they'd all been friends in the navy.

41:00 It hasn't been until the last few years that Dad has been talking more. Korea was quite hard, and now that Dad's started talking about what happened in Korea you can understand why he kept it quiet. They just weren't encouraged to talk about the hard times in the navy at all.

Tape 3

00:30 **Okay, tell us about your Dad going to Manus?**

Dad went to Manus Island for approximately twelve months. I can remember getting photos of Manus Island. He has some very funny stories because he had his own team of local people. I think in all honesty these people were ahead of the times with their humour, and Dad's

01:00 pidgin [New Guinea lingua franca] was brilliant; but he was telling us that one day he asked for some eggs from the locals. The local fella said, "Yeah, no worries, boss," and went off to get the eggs. The only trouble was that they were still inside the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK . Dad was having a rest in his donga – his bedroom – that night, with the mosquito net down and all that.

01:30 The local fella came in and said he had the eggs. So Dad said, "Well, just leave them here, they'll be right." So the local brought in the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and chucked them inside the netting, and off he went – he'd done his job. There was a lot of screaming from the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, and Dad was swearing and getting wrapped up in the mosquito netting. So he got the eggs – still attached to the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s. You hear

02:00 some lovely stories. He had a wash-wash woman who'd do all the washing for the fellows. Later, when he was home with us – Dad would sometimes talk to us in pidgin. He'd teach us, and even the grandkids and great grandkids a bit of pidgin; if you've had enough to eat then it

02:30 was 'enup', and just little stories like that.

When your Dad started telling things, did he volunteer it, or did you have to dig it out of him?

The funny stories came easily. But the more serious things – especially Korea – only came out when we were older. He hasn't really talked to anyone about. He was actually talking to a girlfriend

03:00 of mine about it in Sydney one day. They were just sitting at a table having a beer and Dad started to cry. He was talking about Korea and what it was like to have the continual firings on them. He calmed himself down and the rest of the afternoon went nicely, and when he left I said to Patricia, "I haven't heard that story before – I didn't know that Dad was in

03:30 that sort of thing." In fact, I'd never heard much about the sailors in Korea at all. Fair enough about the soldiers – there were lots of stories about the soldiers, but not the sailors. So that was quite hard. I

believe that as he's got older, more stories have come out.

As a kid, when he was at home, were there occasions when he'd have his mates over and things like that?

Not a lot because most of the men had such short shore time, and our house being so far away from Sydney, which is over an hour and a

04:00 half by train even now; no, you didn't have a lot of mates over. People would call in. From time to time you'd see these strange characters in the lounge room. They'd be laughing and carrying on. Now that I'm older I actually still catch up with some of them. I think there was a fellow called Herbie Waller who was Dad's best friend, and another Warramunga friend from Perth that we keep in contact with.

04:30 Dad's actually expressed concern that he hasn't received a personal invitation to the big navy reunion in Sydney for 2004. He reckons there's a reason for him not being invited – too wild and woolly. So he's probably not going to receive a 'personalized' invitation.

So, are the memories of your Dad being at home checkered?

They are not as full throttle [enthusiastic] as some other kids.

05:00 Y'know, I suppose because he wasn't at home a lot when I was growing up in the fifties, and then in the early sixties when Dad was still in the navy as a reserve sailor, when there was also a lot of time away. So I don't remember a lot of times with him. I know that when he was at home he'd borrow a car from time to time. We used to go down to a creek for these little picnics.

05:30 As I said, Mum made sure that we had a lovely, happy family, and Dad fitted into that when he was home. I don't know if there was any animosity or any dramas between Mum and Dad in the early days because we never heard them fighting. But yeah, when he was home it was good.

Did you notice your Mum's mood change when he was at home?

No, not at that age, no. She was a proper Mum. I think she'd read all the manuals that explained what a proper Mum should be.

06:00 **Having been in the navy yourself, do you think there were things from navy life that he brought home or that flowed into the family life?**

No. He was really good. Having not only been in the navy and working in defence for so many years, you see so many organisations – Defence Community Services for example – that assist the members now. There wasn't anything like that in the old days. It was just the community of the street that looked after each other.

06:30 If there was drama, for example with the Voyager, it was the community spirit of the street that looked after the families that were affected. It was the community spirit that enabled the women to look after each other in those days. I can remember Mum telling a story that she was heavily pregnant with my brother Peter, and there was a lady that lived next door to them at the time

07:00 that was very, very mean. I think one of us, one of the kids had followed a ball that went into her yard, and she was really, really mean to us. So Mum approached her and said, "You don't talk to the children like that." And the lady grabbed Mum – and Mum was tiny – and Mrs Carmain from across the street – a big, big woman – came hurtling across the street and said, "You put that little woman down, she's pregnant!" So, that's the sort of community spirit I mean.

And with Dad away, did that mean all the kids had to pitch in with chores?

07:30 We had our chores. Dad made up what he called the duty watch. That duty watch lived behind the door. It had our names and what chores we had to do. We would get maybe five pence pocket money or something like that. The list had the washing up, the drying up, tidying up our rooms, things like that.

08:00 Though when Dad came home we were allowed to leave the washing up or whatever until after a particular show – we had a black and white TV by then – and we would wrestle for the right to do or not do the washing up. I don't know why we were all such shy, nice kids – we had to wrestle to go to the loo down the backyard, and we had to wrestle to do the washing up. My father could never understand what this, I mean, who would get to do the bottoms and who would get to do the tops. Whoever

08:30 was washing up got to leave the kitchen early, which left the other two to do the wiping up, which was a real drag. But if you were doing the tops, then you got to get out of the kitchen a little faster, because the bottoms were always dirtier. And for years Dad would say, "What's with this tops and bottoms?" Well, the tops were all the crockery that would go on the top shelf, and the bottoms were anything from the bench down, mainly the pots and pans.

09:00 And for years Dad said we had red walls because it hid the blood from when the kids beat each other up. And he'd say, "I can't believe it; I don't know where the kids got these boxing abilities because I'm such a gentle man."

And what do you remember about going into Wollongong?

We would go into Wollongong if there was a special need for some uniforms or something for school or something like that. And we'd go to

09:30 the shop – it was Anthony Horderns [department store] or something – but they had a little restaurant out the back. The restaurant was a hole in the wall with a list that said 'Cup of Tea ... Pot of Tea ... Sandwiches ... Pie and Peas ...', and for a treat we would go into the restaurant and have a pie and peas – mushy peas with a pie. That was a big treat! That was a big day out in Wollongong.

10:00 **How big was Wollongong back then?**

It wasn't a big town; more or less a town that was looking after Port Kembla. Because they had the steelworks there, and the steelworks were coming ahead with more contracts for overseas steel; it wasn't so big. But we had the big mines on the south coast. So we'd have the mine workers as well. It wasn't a big town, but.

10:30 It's only really developed into a city since I left, but it was still the largest town in the area, one where you could buy furniture from Watters, and they had the library and picture theatre, and the better shops.

11:00 **Can you remember it later on, when you were able to go there alone?**

Oooh. Going there on my own. I can remember when I left school I really wasn't the sort of person who travelled on my own but we'd started going to the beach. These were the days when you'd go with your friends; Cheryl Stanze, Christine King – we'd go to the beach. Now we had started developing – you know, getting little boobies and little waists, although I was still quite chunky.

11:30 Though, I had this big towel that went from neck to knee, and you'd go to the beach on the bus together – you weren't allowed to go by yourself – I think it took an hour to get into town. Then you'd go to either South Beach or North Beach and you'd lie there in the sun and get so sunburnt, then come home. But the whole time you were lying on the beach – you know, if you weren't in the water – you'd be wrapped up in this huge towel. That was about it.

12:00 It wasn't until I starting working at OPSM [Optical Prescription Spectacle Makers] at Wollongong, as a receptionist, that I would travel a heck of a lot more.

That was your first job?

Yes, at OPSM, my first job from school. In fact, we used to have an employment officer, you know, they're modernized nowadays with big modern offices but then it was an employment officer. I was in the Girl Guides – Kay Green, who was my friend in the Girl Guides – her brother

12:30 actually worked in the Workplace Office. And he got me a job with OPSM as a receptionist, with Kay. It was really good, and Mum came with me to the interview. All good Mums went to the interview. And before I went in for the interview

13:00 Mum pinched my cheeks and said, "That'll give you a bit of colour." Then she actually came with me to talk to the man – Mr Wardell – and he thought the mere fact that my mother had come in with me showed that I was a responsible person.

That would be unheard of now, wouldn't it?

Yeah.

13:30 **So, before you left school were you thinking about what you might like to do in the future?**

I had been in the Girl Guides and then I went on to join the Sea Rangers. I liked that sort of thing, what with my Dad being in the navy. I expressed an interest in the navy, but I hadn't honed in on it as such. Mum and Dad didn't want me to sort of die in a small town.

14:00 I was taken out of school early because on the IQ test [intelligence quotient test] that I did at school the teacher said that I should go down to the little Coles or Woolworths store they had at Dapto and get a job on the checkout; because I wasn't that bright and shouldn't expect to go far, and probably should get myself a husband as soon as possible.

14:30 The main industry at Dapto was either the farming sector or a clothing factory called Crystals. I didn't want to go to Crystals. So I was quite nervous. It seemed like I wasn't going to ever make anything of myself. So Mum and Dad pulled me out of school. And, ah, I really liked the school and was thinking, "If Einstein could blossom later, why couldn't I."

15:00 So, taken out of school. I said to Mum, "I don't want to work here." So we went and saw my friend at the employment office and he got me a job with OPSM.

What year would you have been in when you left school?

Joined the navy in January '69, so it would have been late 1967.

Can you tell us about Girl Guides?

15:30 My mother had been an instructor for the Girl Guides. She believed in community spirit and that sort of thing. My sister had been a Brownie [junior Girl Guide] and my brother had been a Boy Scout, but I was too old for the Brownies so I went straight into the Girl Guides. I learnt really interesting things like how to put up a tent, and how to sing songs around a campfire; you know, camp out at night. We also learned

16:00 how to cook over an open fire. But it was good because it got me out a lot more; good for me being shy and all. I think a lot of the areas that Mum earmarked us for, or guided us toward, were to help us get over our shyness and that sort of thing. Then I went on from the Girl Guides – just followed the other girls – into the Sea Rangers.

16:30 Again, Dad had been in the navy and I liked the seafaring stories and that sort of thing. But as I said before, I hadn't thought about going into the navy. It was just that the community style of going out and mixing with others, like the Boy Rovers – that was good. And they were a really nice crowd.

17:00 They were older and all the mothers loved the guys. They were a tight little group of Sea Rangers. Everybody knew everybody and if they were taking you out then they'd come and sit in your lounge room first. There was none of this, "I'll meet down at the corner," sort of thing.

Can you expand a bit on what Sea Rangers was all about?

17:30 Sea Rangers was the older form of the Girl Guides; reiterating the nice values, the crafts that you could learn, how to hoist a flag, how to go camping. We learned about the Constitution and the flag and groups in other countries. It wasn't like the church brigade, more like a modern bushcraft organisation.

18:00 When Baden Powell first started the Boy Scouts and that it was an outdoorsy thing – adventure, build fine minds and bodies and that sort of thing.

And when did the 'sea' part come into Sea Rangers?

I'm not really sure. It had been going for a fair period of time and I think they were the forerunner of the Sea Cadets. I'm not sure whether if you'd

18:30 been a Sea Ranger you'd go into the Sea Cadets. It was an adventurous, get out and about, 'be real people', don't sit at home watching TV, sort of thing.

So what sort of watercraft things would you do?

Would you believe it, I think I only ever went in one sort of whaler and that was just to sit in it and do some rowing. We didn't do a whole lot of sea craft other than ropes and knots and semaphore and that sort of thing.

19:00 We didn't learn Morse code. Again, it was more bushcraft stuff.

Can you remember the leaders you had in those organisations?

I can't remember them at all. Mrs Carpenter, she was one. Her assistant was named Pat. I think Mrs Carpenter had been a schoolteacher somewhere along the line.

You said your Mum was involved in the Girl Guides. What sort of things did she teach?

19:30 She was what they called a tester. So when the girls needed to get another badge – sewing, cooking, or something like that – then she would test them. They'd come home and she would run them through the test, and they would get a little badge for their sleeve. Eventually, if you got enough badges you could become a Queen's Guide

20:00 which was where the Queen would recognise their service to the community. Now you look back and think – I mean, that was the '50s and '60s – so they encouraged all those 'women's crafts'.

Raising three kids and all, did your Mum ever have any spare time to herself?

To get a few extra pennies she got a part-time job doing mailbox deliveries. She'd have a whole load of pamphlets which she'd deliver all

20:30 over Dapto between ten in the morning and three – because we came home from school around three o'clock.

21:00 Years later she'd tell us how she was chased by dogs and all that. So, she got a few extra pennies from mailbox deliveries.

Can you remember at school any history about Australia's involvement in World War One and Two?

21:30 In all honesty I can't remember it, other than Anzac Day which I knew was very, very important. I remember that we had Remembrance Day and Empire Day with a little red, white and blue pin or tin medallion with a ribbon on it. A lot of the British royal days were celebrated as well. I think we had

Commonwealth Day, but not a lot war history. We knew when it started and finished and we knew about Korea, but it was made out that these were 'nice' wars,

22:00 you know, yes there were killings, but we were 'right'. A lot of the despair side of it wasn't talked about.

Were your Mum and Dad involved in Anzac Day?

Yeah, Dad was, yeah. I think Mum used to make sure we wore [a sprig of] rosemary [for remembrance], and Dad went along to most of the ceremonies, but we kids didn't. War wasn't a really big thing in our house.

What about Anzac Day at school?

22:30 **I can't remember them doing it at all. I can remember the one minute's silence. That was always done.**

Can remember the feeling at the time about Australia's allegiance to England?

I remember it being – again, remember we're talking about a small farming community – basically, the Empire and Queen and Country,

23:00 these were the 'right' things. That was the way to go: you respected the Queen and the flag and what the government said was correct; those in power were only ever thinking of our wellbeing. That's the sort of feeling I get from that period of time. I can still remember, when I went into the navy, that Queen and Country was all singing and dancing.

23:30 Mum and Dad and Queen and Country – they were all there together!

Do you remember at any stage talking to your Mum and Dad about joining the navy?

I think I mentioned it and the response was sort of, "Ooh, she's going to go, she's going to go!" I had the application forms sent to me and they quite happily signed them. My brother reckons that they'd already sold my bed and rented my room. But no, I think what they wanted was something

24:00 more for me. They didn't want me stuck in a small town. They had been encouraged to leave their small towns because their parents had more for their kids.

And what sort of opportunities were available to women in the navy?

When I went in it was still just a basic thing for women. I went in as a

24:30 medic – there were male and female sick-berth attendants. I think pretty well everything was open, except for going to sea. Sea-time was out of the question.

How did you feel about that?

It was fine by me. I didn't turn into a rabble-rouser till later. Being shy and everything, I thought it was fine. I wasn't one of those women who thought we could do better and all that.

25:00 I was quite happy just to coast along.

Can you remember if your Mum and Dad's experiences in the armed services had influenced you?

Maybe. Because when I was doing the hand-on-the-bible-sign-allegiance thing, Dad was doing his reserve time, and Dad came into the recruiting office and everybody knew him. I thought that was amazing. When we left on the train the next day, Dad came down to see me off. He was in his uniform.

25:30 I thought, wow! I don't think it hit me for a long time that I was going away into the navy, because the first few weeks at HMAS Cerberus were ... well I thought, "What am I doing here? I don't want to be here!" I didn't like it at all. I thought it was really strange.

26:00 **Did you at any time feel like you were doing it for your Dad?**

I did at first. I thought I would get his approval for being in the navy, and it was important because I hadn't seen enough of him when I was growing up. So yeah, I thought, "I'm doing this for him." That flashed through my mind a lot in the early days, at least until I started getting out of my shell.

26:30 **Can you talk us through the entire process of going into the navy?**

The biggest thing that I remember – and I'm sorry that we're going to talk about loos yet again – was being given this little cup and being told to go and fill it with urine. I thought, "How am I going to do that!" But the sailors had made this kind of tricorn thing that you placed

27:00 over the toilet and you could put the cup in, and ... you were fine. My early recollections of joining the navy were weeing into the little cup and then the next time signing on. That was all I can remember, at least until I got to Cerberus. I mean, my mother dressed me a lot in those days and for the trip she'd dressed me in a frilly blouse, a red jacket, and a grey pleated skirt with black shoes and stockings.

27:30 I can remember walking from the train station with my suitcase to the WRANS' quarters. Everything was so strange – you know, putting you into lines with no talking; and marching here and marching there. And sailors whistling at you wherever you were going. They had the little training school for the WRANS at Cerberus, and you had particular WRAN officers

28:00 who'd come and give instructions. Then you'd have characters like Lenny Maiden who called everybody a sheila. I had a habit of twiddling my hair, and I can remember Lenny saying, "Who's that sheila sitting down the front twiddling her hair? It's annoying, don't do it." And I thought, "Oh my, oh dear." I was very timid. We learnt wonderful things like how to keep our uniforms crisp. We didn't learn seamanship as such,

28:30 but we learnt basic things like, "This is a ship; this is a boat." Things like ropes and weaponry – we weren't introduced to any of that at all. We learnt about shore establishments – who was the commander, where the navy fitted into the defence forces, all that sort of stuff. And then we were sent over to the parade ground

29:00 to learn how to march properly. We had a Parade GI [instructor] – who it turned out was a friend of Dad's. There was this west Australian girl who was so tall – a heat-seeker right way, she was so tall – but none of us could remember left and right. And when you're nervous the more you try to concentrate on what's left and right, the more nervous you get. Plus the fact that you always have some gigglers in the crowd.

29:30 So, we were marching along and he called, "Halt!" Well, some of us stopped and some didn't and some turned around and said, "What?" He very quietly came up and said, "Ladies, I don't think that's right, let's try it again." Anyway, so we continued, and we just ambled along, which brought a huge roar from him, and we had to start again.

30:00 Anyway, march, march, march. He called, "Halt!" again, and this time everybody stopped except the tall west Australian girl. And he didn't call her back, so she just kept marching, almost up to the road at the end of the parade ground. Well, she looked back and there we all were, half a block away.

30:30 So she ran back, and he yelled out, "Have I told you to come back?" And she said, "No, but …" and then it was, well, he yelled at her some more. Anyway, I've always had trouble with left and right. So it was back to the marching – left turn, right turn, amble along. I remember at one point turning, and coming face to face with my friend – Nancy Phillips – and she was giggling. And he came up behind me and whispered, "Don't you know your left from your right?" So I turned around to answer him and said, "Well, daaahhh" and he went, well, he did the Parade GI explosion as you would expect.

31:00 Jenny Bull was another girl we were friends with there. She used to faint on the parade ground. The parade GI used to say, "March on the gardenban! March on the gardenban!" And she'd say, "The what?" He meant, "March on the guard and band." Then she'd say, "Nah, I'm gonna faint." And he'd say, "No you're not; wriggle your toes." But down she'd go, face down.

31:30 So parade work was very interesting. It was getting the formation to look good – that was the big thing. You had to have your uniform right and ready. There were all these little things you had to do to your uniform to make you look spiffy [smart] because you'd have an inspection before parade. Going through all the screaming and yelling, that was the hard part. The Parade GI would be yelling out these instructions and you didn't have the foggiest idea; you know, it was strange talk.

32:00 But if you sort of stretched out what he was saying you could work it out. You know, 'Gardenban' became 'Guard-and-band'. Funny, though. I can remember stepping over Jenny.

So from signing the piece of paper – where did you do that?

At the recruiting office in Sydney.

And then did you have a lay time before …?

No, next day. The recruiting process was such that you went into the

32:30 recruiting office with your paperwork and did the physical and sight test and that sort of stuff. Then if they were satisfied, they'd call you up and say, "Righto, you're going into the navy – you need to be at this place on such and such a day to sign on and take the pledge. You'll be leaving for Crib Point tomorrow on such and such a train."

33:00 **And what did your Mum say to you just before you left?**

She was happy for me though there were some tears. She said to me, "Have a good time and don't forget to write," and that sort of thing.

What about Dad's words of wisdom?

No, it was just, "See ya." He was at the station though. I can remember at Central Station – you know, where they have all the old trains – I can remember seeing Dad walking down with his sort of saunter

33:30 almost as though he had been a submariner and had that sway-walk. So he sauntered down and said, "Y'right? Everything okay?" and then started chatting to someone else.

Did the recruiters ever go to your school?

No. But they do nowadays. I know they have recruiting wagons now. I know that because before I left the navy

34:00 I was actually on a recruiting wagon that came up to Brisbane. That was late sixties, early seventies.

Did you ever get an inside look at the navy before you joined?

No, only with the navy family days that they had. From time to time the families would have a day out at sea. You'd spend most the time throwing up.

And you did?

Ah, yes. I was good at that. I can remember one year we had [aircraft carrier] HMAS

34:30 Melbourne come alongside – or it may have been Sydney – and we went down and got a present from Santa.

And besides the sea-sickness, what were family days at sea like?

That's all I remember really – going to sea, firing the guns, throwing up, then coming home. And there was lots of food. My brother used to enjoy the food.

Does the navy still do this?

Yes, yes they do. They're very family orientated, even more now than back then.

35:00 **Did you notice at the time whether a lot of the navy kids were joining up?**

A lot of the boys did. Amazing how many of the boys went into the army as well. Not so many navy though. I can remember three sailors that were in my class at school who joined the navy. Mainly army though for most of the boys.

35:30 **How were careers in the services regarded in those days?**

Excellently. The big thing was that you were taught discipline and you learned a trade. When I was doing my medical training you didn't end up with the same certificate as you got outside – because you didn't sit for the same exams – so you came out of the navy with a 'nursing aide certificate'.

36:00 It's changed now.

And when you went in, did you know you were going to be a sick berth attendant?

Not really, although I liked the idea of being a nurse.

So at what stage did you know that that's where you'd be going?

When I got there and found myself marching up to the hospital! It just

36:30 seemed a lot better than being a steward or a cook.

So, can you remember how you treated when you first marched in?

Well, they were nice to us at the station but after that we were yelled at and tricked. "Get in two rows. Come on you sheilas, get along there." And then in the classrooms, it was, "Be here at a certain time, be there at a certain time," and, "Get that uniform looking like this." There just wasn't enough

37:00 hours in the day to read up on all the things you had to do, like getting your uniform exactly the way they wanted you to have it. I could never get the ironing right. And then on the weekends you'd have the chores and that. Huh, I don't know how I survived those first few months! I was a numfy.

37:30 **Can you remember getting your uniform issued?**

Ah yes, We went up to the clothing store and – still to this day I don't know how the clothing store people do it – they look at you and they straightway know your size and shape, your hat size and what have you. They got a few wrong, but most of them generally got it right. You started off at this long trestle table thing with clothing all along, and you'd go there and they'd be slapping clothing down along, and then it was all put in a suitcase.

38:00 So you had a suitcase, and a little overnight bag.

And they were issued as well?

Yes. Excellent. Still use it today.

Did it overwhelm you, the amount of stuff you got?

Yes. Especially when you had to mark it all. And everything had to be folded in a certain style. You'd often get – all through your navy career – 'kit musters' where you'd have to stretch all your gear out.

Everything had to be folded to a certain style and laundered in an exact way and

38:30 marked with your name. We often got kit parades, and nine times out of ten, when you were having divisions or parades, different people were ‘selected’ to have a kit muster after the parade. That could’ve been because your uniform wasn’t up to scratch, or because you happened to be the lucky person that got selected.

39:00 You’d have to make sure – before you went on parade – that you had your kit ready. Because you just didn’t know if you were going to be called out for a kit muster.

And, to a degree, you would have been ‘known’?

Ha ha. By the Parade GI at least. But I must admit, I think I only had two kit musters. More at Penguin though. They were much more heavy on people who talked a bit too much, so I had a few more kit musters there.

39:30 **What were the instructors like?**

The instructors at Cerberus were excellent. Though as a WRAN Sick Berth attendant we didn’t stay in the recruit school very long. After we did our initial recruit training we went straight to the hospital. You thought yourself a bit more elitist because you didn’t get involved in the WRAN activities much. If there was trouble you’d usually go through your DO – your Divisional Officer – at the hospital. So the WRANS lost control of you. It was more the

40:00 hospital that you came under.

What was the ratio of male to female instructors?

Not sure. While we were at the recruit school it was mainly females, except for the Parade GI. We also did fire-fighting drill. The ‘firies’ [fire-fighting crews] took us through that.

Tape 4

00:30 **So, how were the female instructors? Were they motherly?**

No. In fact, I can remember sauntering up to hospital one day with a group of girls – we were supposed be marching in formation and it was my turn to lead the girls – and there was this female officer walking along the road. I didn’t swing an ‘eyes-right salute’, I just kept marching.

01:00 This officer called the group to a halt and came over, “You are supposed to salute an officer,” and so on. It was right in front the male quarters, so there were all these sailors leaning out the windows watching, and she said, “Can you salute? Show me a salute.” I did it, and she said, “From now on you will salute me.” I was so embarrassed. So, off we go again. I don’t think I got on very well with the female officers. I don’t know.

01:30 They didn’t like me. Maybe I was sort of starting to come out of my shell and develop a personality. Or maybe I was too quiet and shy ...

Did you notice at any time in basic training where the women were treated differently?

Very much so. There were still a lot of restrictions in those days. If a girl

02:00 got pregnant or married she’d have to leave. Sad to see. I remember one of the nicest girls – she was a driver – she had to leave because of being pregnant. Hard times, almost like they were at fault. You never really saw, well, this was the father of that girl’s baby walking with them. None of that. They were always on their own.

What were the rules on fraternisation?

Oh no, you weren’t allowed to. No frat, no frat. You were not allowed to

02:30 sneak out of the WRANS’ quarters at night, nor climb through the hole in the fence at the cinders track, and meet the sailors on the other side. You were not allowed to do that. The young cadet officers from the naval school across the road were not allowed to frat with junior sailors. So they were not allowed to sneak out of their cabins and come across the back of

03:00 the cinders track and meet the girls under the hole in the fence. Oh no, there was no frat (chuckles).

So how often did you get caught?

I didn’t because I was shy. But it was so strict that when we first joined as recruits we had to wear a heavy coat over our uniforms so that you couldn’t see ... so that no ‘form’ was displayed.

03:30 So we would be marched up to the movies. The movies had the nickname of ‘the dits’. We would have to sit in the two back aisles, which were called ‘the virgin aisles’. And when new female recruits arrived

they would be allowed to go to the movies on their first Friday night. Every sailor on the base would go to the movies to suss out [check out] the new arrivals. You'd hear, "Hmmm, that looks good, that's okay," and so on. So we would be marched up the movies and would sit in the virgin aisles and you would have to sit there,

04:00 just sit there, while the sailors were walking around having a look. Then you'd be marched back home. That's how strict it was. When you're allowed to date – if you were lucky enough to get a date after your initial training – you could be walked to the movies. First , the sailor had to go to the regulating office. And then you'd be piped down, over the

04:30 loudspeakers, "WRAN Fitzgibbon to the regulating office," and that sort of thing. You'd go down there and there would be your sailor, and everyone else watching. You'd have to sign out, then the sailor would walk you up to the movies. Then you'd fight him off during the movies, then you'd walk ever so nicely back to the WRANS' quarters. You might even be allowed a quick kiss in front of the WRANS' quarters. Though, if it got too hoity-toity or frisky [passionate] then the duty regulator would come out with a light and shine it on you.

05:00 Then you'd go back into the WRANS' quarters and sign back in. That was dating!

So did you know of people scarpering [sneaking] off to play up?

Oh yeah. We had one lady – I won't mention her name – who was a little more experienced than the other girls. She had been to Hyatt Ashby in

05:30 America – you know, an amazing life. What she didn't know about life! No lot could hold her in. If she wanted to go out and have a drink and meet the lads then off she'd go. She'd go out this door; she'd get out of the place in some amazing ways. So, some of the girls had some very interesting ways of getting out of the WRANS' quarters.

Did anyone ever get caught?

Oh yeah, all of the silly ones got caught. But the experienced knew what

06:00 to do; knew the times, knew everything. We younger ones didn't try it at all.

And what was the punishment if you got caught?

Depending on the crime – you could end up 'marching with the dogs' – which meant marching after-hours; or extra duties; or you could be charged. I don't know if they were doing cuts – pay cuts that is – back then. You might have lost a day's pay or have to do additional hours. Or you could lose your rank or anything.

06:30 **What sort of PT [physical training] did you do at basic?**

Running, jumping. Never with the boys. You had those wooden horses, and you'd have to jump over them. Swinging on the bars – the PTIs [physical training instructors] would get you on all that sort of thing. Its funny. There were two PTIs

07:00 and they were really big. One of them was the spitting image of Sylvester Stallone. That was John Lacey. And his friend Reg – Reg Hatch. Everybody was in love with them because they were tall and big and really nice guys. It turned out that a girl who was in the class after me, married John Lacey. Anyway, they were really lovely. They looked great in those tiny shorts too.

07:30 Later on they used to say they tried to see who could fit into the tiniest shorts just to tease the girls.

What was the PTI's uniform?

Tiny blue shorts, and a white T-shirt with navy ribbing on it. And sandshoes and socks and ... ahhh ... really nice bodies.

And duties – what sort of duties could you expect to get?

As a recruit you'd have general duties like kitchen, or working in the regulator's office being the dogsbody – running messages and that sort of thing.

08:00 And there was cleaning – there was always cleaning to do. So you could be a convict to any of those. Once you went to your particular fields then you'd have different duties there too – ward work under training, nights, weekends.

08:30 **How long was basic training?**

I can't remember – just a few weeks.

Did they have a marching out parade at the end of it?

Nothing big, nothing like they do now. I think we just had divisions and that was it. Some of the girls were going on postings straight way.

So did you get any leave at all during that time?

In the later part of your recruit training you could have a weekend out.

09:00 Which meant you had to catch the train from Crib Point up to Frankston, change trains to get into the city – if you had put in for leave. You had to put in for leave, and if it was approved then you'd have to stay at an approved 'house', like the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association]. You had to arrive in uniform and leave in uniform, and the woman there had to sign you a note saying that you had in fact been there and had been a good girl while you were there.

09:30 You were on a curfew too, which meant that you couldn't stay out all night, and if you had a gentleman come to call then you could go into the parlour. This was 1969. But the parlour was in view of the office. There was no touchies [touching] or anything.

Did you often ring Mum and Dad?

Oh yeah, lots. Lots of letters backward and forward. It wasn't a case of

10:00 ringing so much, though every now and then you'd go to the public phones. There were no mobiles then, just the public phone.

So how did you handle this first big time away from home?

Recruit school was a bit of trial for me because I was away from home and I was nervous. Going from Sydney to Melbourne overnight in a train, and being in a whole new area; a whole load of new people were responsible for you. plus there was a whole load to learn – the lingo [language]

10:30 for example. You didn't go for dinner or what have you, you went for 'scrans'; you didn't have a shower, you had a 'dovey'; so there were all these little slang terms and what have you. It was all quite different, and a bit daunting and overwhelming. I was actually more frightened of chucking it in and having to go home and face Mum and Dad.

11:00 The fear of having to go home and face Mum and Dad got me over that hump stage.

Did the training bring you out of your shell ?

Well did it! I was a little bit chunky before I went in to the navy, and before I left I'd got a short haircut, and then with the training and the PT, and having to talk up to people – I mean, if someone spoke to you

11:30 you had to answer clearly – you know, be given instructions and recite them under training. So I started to develop a personality and I was losing weight and people were noticing me outside of the WRANS' quarters. They were talking to me. Yeah, I was coming out and starting to get a voice. And when you're mixing with sailors in the training area – these guys had been around – they'd sort of say things

12:00 and you'd have to answer back. A girlfriend of mine that I've just met up with again – Loren – she was the quietest, quietest thing. Now you can't shut her up. To go to the training school you'd have to pass the medical ward

12:30 and next to it was this cottage – the Rose Cottage it was called. Now the Rose Cottage housed sailors who were getting over venereal disease, and these sailors, as far as I knew about venereal disease – I thought these sailors, if you passed within a hundred yards of them you'd get it, because they could breathe it on you. So we used to walk past the Rose Cottage, and the guys would be there leaning on the window sills having a cigarette. They'd say, "Morning, how's it going?" and you'd toddle along

13:00 past, thinking. That's how naive I was.

Did they show you any ghastly films at basic training about that sort of stuff?

They did; some horrific films under training. Because of Vietnam, we were getting a lot of the Vietnam movies. We went into the training room one day and first off we had the Vietnam one. That was the medical team, the triage team, the field team – what they were doing in Vietnam

13:30 and how they worked with nothing. There was a particular scene of an American soldier with a shocking chest wound and they were cleaning it out, and the doctor had put his hand in to get some shrapnel out, and we heard this thud behind us. It was this red-haired, pasty sailor who had just fainted. Then the next movie was the venereal disease movie and how it was such a big thing in Vietnam.

14:00 Now, a lot of these guys had been to places like Singapore and Japan and venereal disease there was quite big. So it was important to get them to use the condom. My introduction to the condom wasn't the usual way! I was the medic in outpatients at HMAS Cerberus, and we had a fellow there – Pete Lansky – who had typed on a card on the dispensary drawer the words

14:30 'Sporting Equipment'. Anyway, this sailor came in and he was looking lost and lonely, and I said, "Can I help you?" He said, "Is Pete there?" and when I said no he said he'd come back later. Then another sailor came in and the same thing happened. So I went and found Pete and asked what was going on.

15:00 He said, "They just want some sporting gear; get it out of the drawer for them." And I was thinking, "Well, you don't put bats and balls in a little cupboard, what's going on here. Maybe it's face masks or something?" So I pulled open the sporting gear drawer and it was full of condoms and the little brown

paper bags they were given out in. Anyway, the sailor came back and I said, “Are you after some sporting gear?” And he said

15:30 “Yeah,” and I got it for him ... but I was so embarrassed. I had to try and act really, “I know what this is all about.” But the thing was, sailors could get issued condoms but there was nothing for the girls – no pill, or anything like that. For a lot of years contraception in the navy, well, there was nothing at all.

Did the girls ever get condoms themselves?

16:00 **Well, I never handed them out. You could buy them ashore. But it struck me as a little bit strange that the girls weren’t offered the same sort of contraception.**

How many did you give the guy, on average?

I gave the first guy, two. And he said, “Okay, so that’s for the first night, how about the rest?” And I thought, “Oooh, yuk. Bit strange.” I said, “So

16:30 how many does Pete usually given you” and he said, “Err, a dozen, or maybe half a dozen.” So I said, “Here, you can get them out yourself.” I was very naive then.

And what was the military issue? What type of condoms?

I don’t remember. The same people that make rubber gloves. Durex or

17:00 Ansell or something. They were basic. No colours, no attachments, just the basic.

So you mentioned the Vietnam films. What was the ‘buzz’ around the place about what was happening in Vietnam?

Down at Cerberus it was, “This is really great; a great experience; the guys are practising their trade.” It wasn’t until we started seeing the movies and the other side of it all that we – see, Mum and Dad had never

17:30 told us about the horrific side of war. With the Vietnam movies we were getting as sick berth attendants under training though, it was horrific. I don’t know if you’ve ever seen the show MASH, or China Beach, yeah, then you’d get a bit of an idea about what it was like. The movies were quite horrific. There was one guy who had been shot, and they were cleaning him up and that sort of thing. And what sort

18:00 of equipment they were using, and how they had to get them in and out really quick. You always think of handling a patient tenderly and gently and with a certain degree of compassion, but out in the field the helicopters would come in and the guys would load the wounded – just chuck them in as fast as they could. I didn’t understand because there

18:30 was for me, in the navy, no introduction to war or anything like that – like, this is who’s fighting who, or these are the reasons. There was none of that. There was a lot of assumed knowledge, assuming that we had read the papers or watched the TV. But I never did. But yeah, the movies were quite horrific.

You didn’t really have any idea what this whole Vietnam thing was all about?

I thought that the Americans were going in there to free the people. That’s what I thought. From the things that I had read and the limited information that I had been told,

19:00 I thought that the Americans were there to free the people from oppression; that they were being invaded by communists who were really, really nasty people. But, for everything there’s another side of the story and as you get older and read other things you find along the way. I think if you ever saw the movie Good Morning Vietnam where Robin Williams and

19:30 the Vietnamese fellow were chasing each other; and they stopped and faced each other, and Robin Williams said, “Why are you doing this to our men?” And the man said, “You’re in my country – why are you doing this to my family?” And if I had seen that back then, it would have opened up a lot more thoughts and feelings.

Did you notice at the time whether the buzz in the navy was perpetuating that whole communism threat?

20:00 Not from down at Cerberus, so far down there. It was far away from it. It didn’t hit me till I was posted up to Sydney, although there was a big moratorium in Melbourne that had turned quite nasty. If you’d go to Melbourne on weekends you’d see people on soapboxes saying, “No war. War is killing innocent babies.” And you’d think, “What are you talking

20:30 about? We’re over there helping these people. We’re over there helping the Americans and Freedom.” You’d see the crowds of people demonstrating and what have you. It was interesting, because you weren’t allowed to go ashore in uniform. I think there was an incident where a female driver was chased down the street by some protesters and a couple of coppers [police]

21:00 grabbed her and protected her. But it was interesting because if you went ashore at the weekends you’d see the same people on soapboxes, and at the moratoriums you’d see the same crowd up on the podiums. It was almost like they were just agitating.

21:30 As you get older you think that well, there must be paid agitators in these groups. But I didn't think that at the time.

The first time you went into town in your uniform, how did it feel?

Pretty proud. You looked spoofy, and everything just sat nicely. The night before, just to make yourself look really nice, you washed your hair and put it in side bangs, with stickytape on your face to make them curl.

22:00 We had a girl in our cabin who knew how to put makeup on. You weren't allowed to wear makeup in the navy, other than really really light lipstick. So when we went on the trip train she'd show us how to put on makeup. There was this little black thing that you spat into, and then you could paint on a black eyeliner. It was really good, and you'd look so spoofy. The only trouble was you'd still have a red patch on your cheeks.

22:30 And when you went into town you'd always remember to walk smartly, properly; never slouch. But inevitably some soldier would sidle up to you, because with Vietnam going on you'd have a lot of guys in uniform too; a lot of soldiers around.

Well, we all know that guys in uniform melt the girls, but what about the civvy [civilian] blokes?

Well, when you think of the type of community that Melbourne had – because you had a lot of ethnics – is that the right term? Anyway, New Australians in

23:00 Melbourne. There'd be the Greeks and Italians and they'd always whistle at you and look. But, oh no, they were 'civvies' ... what would ... no, not civvies. Then the soldiers would come up to you and they'd be chatty. Then the sailors would come along. It was all just fun.

So, would you have been inclined to go after navy blokes or army blokes?

23:30 **In those days you tended to stick with what you knew. I remember one time Nancy Philips and me were out and some National Servicemen were chatting to us. They gave Nancy the nickname of 'Sluggo', because she looked like the cartoon character of that name. She hated it. But they would just sit around and talk, and we'd have tea with them – because we weren't old enough to go into the pubs with them – and we'd just have tea and talk, and**

24:00 **then they'd go on their merry way. It was pretty easy to see that we weren't sort of 'easy ladies'. We were probably not what they were looking for. But we usually ended up with the sailors that we'd come across in our recruit training or through work or what have you.**

And I've heard about the blokes having 'tiddly suits'; was their a female equivalent?

24:30 **The guys' tiddly suits were made up in the Far East. They were beautiful. But the girls, no. Though, if you were lucky, you could have your white front made tiddly – they called it sharkskin because it shimmered, and moved really well. But no, you might have the tailor take something in so that your uniform was**

25:00 **more fitting, but that's about as far as it went. Some of the tiddly suits were beautiful. The guys would fold back the sleeves and there were these beautifully embroidered dragons on the cuffs. Beautiful.**

So how did they introduce you to your nursing studies?

25:30 **We were sitting in the training school with the guy medics who had already done sea-time – in those days in the navy the guys were sent to sea as soon as they'd finished their recruit training so that they could learn about the sea – then they would come and do their courses. And it was really hard for the guys because there were only so many slots open to do some of the courses. They might have to wait a long time.**

26:00 **We had a group of guys that came in and they were wild. I had never seen a guy do an Elvis impersonation, and this guy – Leo Canar could do Elvis, and he could do a dog. There was another medic – they just sort of matched up; one was the dog trainer and the other the dog. We'd never seen anything like it, having been kept away in the WRANS' quarters**

26:30 **and then down to recruit school with these amazing guys. They introduced us to wonderful things like gambling – you, know, how to place a bet. I wonder where they are now? Because these guys had been at sea they'd seen more interesting navy things. Some of them had been lucky enough to get time in the sick bays on the ships so they**

27:00 **knew more of what was going on. For the girls who hadn't had any nursing experience, it was all a bit beyond us. For the first few weeks it was anatomy and physiology, skeletal structures, then different procedures, then care of the patient.**

27:30 **We studied particular diseases and drugs – how to handle drugs and that sort of thing. Some people expressed interest in the operating theatre, and when you'd finished your training you**

could do on-the-job training there. I liked the ward work. You might even be lucky enough to get medical

28:00 **escort in the ambulance, or into administration. I preferred the ward work and administration. And the ward work turned out to be quite interesting because you had a variety of different patients; army guys as well. The injuries could range from simple burns to simple breaks. There was actually a guy who shot himself in the arm**

28:30 **so that he didn't have to go to Vietnam. At the recruit school though, well, it was coughs, cold sores, and holes basically.**

Please explain?

I learnt about that later, with submariners.

So, how 'full-on' was the training?

It was very full on. You had exams; you had ward work; you were

29:00 marked all the time. There were lots of assessments. Years later you wondered why you didn't come out of the navy with more certificates. But, you could understand that since you weren't doing the State exams you couldn't be accepted into the State system. The training was very good though. You might be doing drips – putting drips in; Robin did a lot of work in the operating theatre, and there was work the psych [psychiatric] wards – you still had your psych patients.

29:30 And you did infectious diseases, and worked in the ambulance section. It was pretty full on.

Would it have been on par with the State system?

Very much so. In fact, a lot more was expected, and you didn't have as long a time to learn it. It was quite fast. I can remember we had a nursing sister who was Royal Navy. I was pretty sure she was the original British bulldog. She came in one day and one of the sailors – Bob Greer I think his name was – he was sitting down the front.

30:00 She was talking about the consistency of urine, so she had this container with a yellow liquid in it, and she said to the class, "How would you tell if this urine was alkaline?" Anyway, 'Blue' Greer who was sitting there said, "Well, you'd do this test or that test," and she said, "Well that'll take time, won't it? How about we just dip a finger in and just taste it?"

30:30 And she did just that! Blue Greer – red hair and freckles – he's sitting down the front and he just turned inside out; put his hand over his face and off he went. As it turned out she had cool aid in the bottle. But she said, "If you're out at sea and you don't have the facilities to test, then

31:00 taste is the other way around." But it was so funny, it just turned this guy inside out. Yeah, she was very regimental, very British Navy. You'd go into her ward, and the wheels on your trolley would have to be facing the correct way, and you could walk down her ward and everything would be straight. The blankets on the beds had to be turned a certain way. Even the blinds had to be a certain level; everything was very regimental. Years later because I'd been taught that way, when I was doing weekend nursing

31:30 I was called back to a few places because I was so precise with my ward work. They liked the way I made the ward look.

And were there pranks?

Always pranks. They tied Robin to a trolley one day. Pranks were always

32:00 harmless though – never hurtful or anything. It was always the smallest one. They'd kidnap Robin or tie her up somewhere and someone would have to come and rescue her. It wasn't vicious though, just silly. Like, the guys would get a skeleton and put a WRANS' uniform on it and leave it outside the matron's office – little things like that.

32:30 **Did you get to specialise?**

No, I didn't. Years later the other girls did, but I only did four years in the navy. I would have liked to have gone into the diving world, and when I was up at Penguin, I was doing a lot of work in the diving area. But in those days it wasn't considered – women weren't considered. But Robin became a specialist – she was Medical.

33:00 A lot of the girls didn't specialise in the early days. Most of the guys did because they were going to sea. They had to specialise.

And when you signed on, how long did you sign on for?

Four years. Some of the girls didn't last long, others stayed in a long time and got quite high in the system.

33:30 **Were there any people who just couldn't handle the training?**

Oh yes. Some of the girls left early. There were a few that just took off – went AWOL [AWL – Absent Without Leave] – and they were actually brought back. Though there were at least two other girls that they just didn't go after. They used to say that they spent more money training the men, and they didn't want to lose that. But the girls, they'd either bring them back in the early stages or they'd leave them.

34:00 **Was there a noticeable division between the navy men and women?**

There was, but I hadn't been brought up to sort of think that anyone was better. There were boys' chores and there were girls' chores. So I was not brought up under a Germaine Greer [feminist] style of things, you know, equality and that. I knew that – by the time I was in charge of a ward – I felt competent, and I didn't look at it as a boy-girl thing.

34:30 But there were still divisions. Why couldn't I go diving at Penguin? Because they didn't have girl divers in the navy – at that stage. But that's the way it was then. You could question it, but it wasn't something that was going to break your heart or anything.

That time period you're looking at was very turbulent in terms of women's movements ...

Things were starting to come along, yeah. Simple things, like the condom for instance. Condoms for the guys but no pills for the girls until later on,

35:00 and you're looking at the late sixties where there was peace, love and mung beans. The hippies were about to hit. You know, women's voices were starting to be heard and things were starting to explode. It's interesting that you talk to other people – like my girlfriend Leonie – who finished off as a warrant officer in the army ... what she had to push through to get where she is.

35:30 And that's in the army, which, having worked for the army for twenty years, you can see there's a lot more free-thinkers, they're a lot more forceful. Now with all the services they've moved ahead. Girls can do almost anything now, and there's no real drama. In those days though, all this was just appearing on the scene, rearing its ugly head. Things were just starting to happen.

36:00 **Did you ever know anyone who was really desperate to get onto a ship?**

Well, all the girls wanted to get on the ships. But the guys would say, "Why? It's dirty and it's smelly." But, if you were in the navy, why weren't we going to sea? We went to sea on day trips and it was great; it was fabulous. But the guys would say, "Look, if you're not at a port then it's just sea, and more sea, and more sea." You know, you have activities like watches. Later on, when I had to get up at midnight to do radio watches when I was working in Bougainville, you realise,

36:30 "If only I had done Bougainville in 1969–70 you'd realise how hard it was." The guys – when they're at sea – it's a hard time for them.

Did you get the feeling that guys were happy when they got posted to shore?

Yes. Because it meant they had time to do things : personal administration, catching up with families, living a normal life. When you're at sea it's not a normal life. They might start at midnight, or at four o'clock in

37:00 the morning. It's not a twenty four hour clock as such – that says you'll get up and go to work and at five o'clock you'll finish. So for the guys to have some shore time it meant that they could live a normal life. Administration, families, and do any of the courses that they needed to do. But at the same time, they said that going to sea and to

37:30 ports was amazing. You know, the government was paying them to have some wonderful times ashore, but still, the sea times were quite strenuous at time.

Were any navy women posted to Vietnam in any capacity?

Medical, mainly medical staff went to Vietnam. When I went to Penguin they said to me that I was on a short-list to go. I don't know if that was true, but they did send some of the senior nursing staff –

38:00 doctors and senior nurses who were higher – they did go up.

Did they ask if you'd like to go?

It wasn't a case of being asked. You know, in the early days – who asked? It was more a case of, "Oh, I've got a posting, hmm." No, but I can remember one of the doctors saying, "How do you feel about going to Vietnam? We've got you on a shortlist."

38:30 And then it ended and it was over. I don't know whether that was true or not, or whether the doctor was just canvassing opinions.

And how did you feel about that?

Yeah, I was fine. Again, I was still in that, you know, that, "It would be a good experience." Because we hadn't seen a lot of the after effects of Vietnam, the injuries and what have you. So I thought, "Yeah, that sounds like a good idea."

39:00 **And obviously you started seeing cases coming back from Vietnam?**

When I got to Penguin – not so much at Cerberus which was a training place where there was only some rehabilitation – at the big hospital at Penguin, and being within Sydney itself, yeah, we saw some pretty nasty cases. Some very sad and spooky cases.

39:30 **So how long were you at Cerberus before you came up to Sydney?**

12 months I think, 12 months at the most.

And how did you feel about going to Penguin?

Well it was great because it was in Sydney and my family was in Wollongong. And being in Sydney, woo hoo, it was big time! You had your big establishments around Sydney – HMAS Watson, HMAS Penguin – so it was quite a big navy site. Yeah, going to Penguin was excellent.

40:00 I think there was a bit of a hint that I might have been going to Darwin, but then, somebody else got the posting because their family was in Darwin. So I thought, "Great, I'm not going to Darwin! So what's in Darwin, anyway?" So, ended up in Sydney. Balmoral and Penguin were very good.

Tape 5

00:30 **Now I hear you may have an interesting story for us about the first circumcision that you witnessed?**

Dear me, yes. That was at Cerberus and wasn't long before I came up to Penguin. So it was in the final stages of my time at Cerberus. Not really knowing a lot about the male anatomy in the flesh, and there was a circumcision.

01:00 In those days the older sailors had the circumcisions and they had to be dressed. But I remembered my nursing training and went in there fully booted and spurred – I had the gloves, the mask, the gown, the hat – just to look at a dressing! You didn't need to do that really, just make sure your hands are washed and that. So I walked into the room with my hands up in the air like a surgeon; kicked the door open with my bum,

01:30 like on TV, and this sailor said to me, "What are you doing?" And I said, "I'm changing the dressing on your circumcision." And he said, "I thought it just stayed there." So I pulled the dressing off, and the poor guy nearly went through the roof. Anyway, put a new dressing on ... it was really hard. I had to use tweezers to pull the penis out because it was well and

02:00 truly hidden by this stage. Pulled it out and dressed, almost like putting a rope around a tree stump. So, I was finished up and was just about to walk and the tutor sister comes in and says, "What are you doing?" And I said that I'd just dressed the circumcision. And she went off, "We don't touch anything!" she said. She couldn't stop laughing, because all she wanted me to do was go in and check the dressing, to see if there was any bleeding or infection.

02:30 But there I was, fully booted and spurred ... funny, but most embarrassing.

What's the medical reason for doing later-life circumcisions?

Elective surgery, that's all. It could have been that he was at sea, like in submarines, where conditions aren't all that clean. Anyway, that was my introduction to the male anatomy, in the flesh.

03:00 **That was the first time you'd seen one?**

One like that, yeah. I had to bathe a paralysed soldier one time. The bed baths in those went like this. You put a sheet across the bed, around waist height, and you struggle down their daks [pants] – not looking, you always turned

03:30 your head away – anyway, I washed him from head to waist, then feet to thighs. And it came time to do the other area. So I give him the flannel and said, "Here, you can do the other area." And he said, "What, I'm paralysed! You're the medic – you do it!" So I got the flannel and aimed for the general area, and there I am looking away and washing, washing, washing. And then all of a sudden he yelled out –

04:00 he had this huge erection – and he screamed out, "I've been cured, I've been cured, it's a miracle." So he was screaming and I was screaming, and the sister came down from the ward and said, "What's going on here." And I said, "Something's happening, something's happening!" And the sailor was saying "I've been cured, I've been cured."

04:30 Then the sister said, "Yeah, I can see that something's happening." And she got this stethoscope and whack! – whacked it right on his ... ah ... appendage, and said, "Right sailor, get out of bed. You've been having a bit of a lend of us." He was supposed to be going to Vietnam and the closer the time got, the more frightened he got, and he sort of willed himself into this condition. But I cured him miraculously with a bed bath. But it was the screaming that worried the sister. Ah, they were naive days.

05:00 **With all that training, and the circumcisions and that, was there ever a time when you thought to yourself, "No, this may not be for me?"**

No, in fact, it was a bit ... almost like everything was opening up. Fair enough that I was a little naive, and I wasn't really good with the books, but my ward work was excellent. And I was just starting to blossom within myself

05:30 and things were happening all around me. No, I never looked back and though it wasn't for me. I just kept going, and thought, "Great, this is for me." In fact, I started to love what I was doing because I was developing within myself. There was more responsibility put on me too – like, at night you might be put in charge of a ward – the girls' ward, for example – so there was a lot of responsibility and a lot of expectations. So you did have to grow up

06:00 a lot faster, I think. Things were just coming my way – I was blossoming.

So at the time you left Cerberus, was there a particular level of qualification that you had to get to?

You had to pass all the exams they set for you, and you were appraised all the way through. If you didn't pass the appraisals and exams then you were back-classed. But I managed to scrape through those. A lot of

06:30 the appraisals were hands-on work, which was really good – you know, monkey-see monkey-do, and you could learn that way. I wasn't a great 'book learner'. If I can get in and do, well, I learn better that way. So, I passed all the exams and got posted to HMAS Penguin in Sydney.

Was it sad leaving Cerberus?

Well, it was at the time because there were a lot of faces, you know, that you'd come to know. I never thought that I'd not see them again, and that turned out to be the case with some of the girls. But the guys – you knew you'd run into them again because there'd be

07:00 ships and what have you. But yeah, it wasn't all that sad. More exciting than anything, being posted with a group of WRANS to work in the big hospital in Sydney. It was an exciting time.

Was there anyone from Cerberus who went to Penguin?

There were a couple of girls that came with me – Carol Dupill, who later

07:30 became Carol Lacey, she came with me. Can't remember the other names. But Carol and I remain friends even today. And we went up to Sydney together.

So tell us about HMAS Penguin. How did you feel when you got there?

Well it was amazing because it's quite a big area down there at Middle Head, and you're more or less in the city. There was an army barracks down

08:00 at the end of Middle Head Road; plus you also had the naval barracks. There was a big military hospital there. And they had another area attached, which was the diving school, where the navy divers were taught their trade. So it was quite a big area. Again too, you're looking at the Vietnam years when you had a lot of foreign military personnel around.

08:30 So there was a lot happening. It was go, go, go; and with the feminist explosion that we were talking about earlier just starting, and all the peace, love, and mung beans – well, it was all just happening. The hippie era was hitting us. Penguin was a great experience. There were a lot more activities; you were always learning, a lot more areas you could be expected to work in.

09:00 For example you might work in the lab, or the x-ray department, or the medical ward, or the surgical ward. I started in the lab, assisting with reports and what have you. It wasn't an area that interested me, but you got a chance to work in all the other areas. After the lab – where they did all the tests for the sailors in Sydney, and the army blokes posted north of

09:30 the harbour – then I did X-ray for a short time. That was interesting because at the time we had some British submarines in the harbour. I had never seen a British sailor so poorly dressed in his underwear nor as skinny.

10:00 I was working in lab, doing some paperwork there, and they asked me to go to X-ray and do paperwork there. They were really busy with the flow of ships and personnel coming through. Anyway, they asked me if I'd help some Royal Navy officers with their paperwork; chest X-rays or something. Well this naval officer got changed, came out, and

10:30 he had those old style BVDs on, you know, that old style of underpants. But all the elastic had gone in them. And he had these socks on, and they were held up with garter sort of things, all neat and tidy. No elastic in the underpants though. And I said to the medic in x-ray, "Interesting how he

11:00 spends all his time on his socks but nothing on his underpants." Underpants ... pommies don't call them

underpants actually, they call them ‘dung-hampers’. It had to be explained to me what a ‘dung-hamper’ was. It’s really naughty of me to talk about that, but it was so funny

11:30 that this ‘proper’ British naval officer was more worried about his socks than his underpants. The Royal Navy at the time were over on a submarine called HMS Odin, who were working with the Australian submariners at HMAS Platypus. So as I said before, there were a lot of foreign sailors around as well. We not only had the Australian servicemen

12:00 coming through the hospital but we also had the Poms [British] or Americans on R & R,[Rest and Recreation] as well as those injured from Vietnam in the hospital. I mean, after they were treated in Vietnam they might get shipped to Penguin. You’d get some interesting cases as well

What sort of cases?

The worst one I think was an Australian pilot whose helicopter had landed on a mine in Vietnam.

12:30 It had blown the helicopter apart along with most of the crew, and he – for want of a better term – was basically blown in half. They were doing this new piece of surgery where they were sewing what was left of his good hand inside his body – because the body has a natural repairing ability – so this was a new piece of surgery that was trying to save what was left of his good arm.

13:00 That was very traumatic for him. He came out of Vietnam losing most of his crew, and most of himself. We needed to do what was called a ‘special’ with him – which meant sitting with him all night; taking observations of his sleep patterns, and his medical indications.

13:30 **Was he conscious?**

On and off through the night. He was not in a good mood though – you can understand why. He was very angry, angry with everything. It was hard to nurse him, and being so young and not understanding what was going on outside your own little safety zone; it was sad. You look back now and think, “Gee, I wish I was older and could have offered the right sort of psychological care instead of just the general nursing stuff.”

14:00 **What sort of conversations would you have with him?**

Well, if you’re older and wiser like now you’d tend to excuse the bitterness and be able to talk more – to say to him, “This is what’s going on; this is what’s happening.” And you’d understand that when people are suffering they’re always going to say things that are hurtful; it’s not against you, it’s just against the situation. Instead of thinking, “He’s a bit sour,” and going on with your duties

14:30 you’d think, “Yeah, I understand where you’re coming from.” But you don’t think of that at the age of twenty and not fully knowing what was going on.

How was he expressing his bitterness and anger?

He was just bitter and angry the whole time. There’d be snappy little remarks. Everything was uncomfortable for him. And I think they only had the WRANS on night duty with him in the hope that he was sleepy

15:00 and in the hope that they could be more understanding and sympathetic. It was difficult. There were other nasty cases, and some weird ones too. To nurse Americans is a little weird – to handle their ‘strangeness’, I mean. They were not handling Vietnam very well either. Some of them were a

15:30 bit ‘different’.

In what way?

Well, I can remember doing night duty one time and we had an American sailor in – I think his name was Paris Flowers – and he was quite a large Negro. I think he had been held captive in Vietnam for a time or something. During the night duty you’d check all the beds, and his bed as empty.

16:00 I thought, “Nah, not on my watch!” So – it was midnight or something – I checked around the wards with a torch, and out through the grassy area and that. And I heard this sort of funny giggling – I don’t know if you’ve heard a cartoon dog called Mutley who makes this sort of snickering laugh – but I could hear that in the ward somewhere.

16:30 It sounded like it was coming from under the beds. So I looked under the beds – you, know, those old high, wired based nursing beds, and underneath was all wire. Well he was right under the bed clinging onto the underside of the wire, just giggling. I thought it was time to get the senior staff to come down and get him.

17:00 I wasn’t going anywhere near him. He was big, and this Mutley giggle was a bit much. So he’d had some sort of reaction; he’d gone in a flash-back to when he was a captive.

Do you know why he was ….?

One of the guys had said that when the water was brought into the tunnels where they were held

captive, the prisoners had to hold themselves up high. So that

17:30 was all very strange and different for me. There was another American who came in and he – again, it was midnight, and he'd got out of bed and went outside and stripped down an ambulance. He was looking for a bomb. He found the bomb – which was actually a packet of cigarettes – and he said he had to defuse it. He said he needed to protect

18:00 the patients in the hospital. The whole time I thought the best way to go about it was to work with him, and help him defuse it. So we carried the 'bomb' into the galley. Now, I'd seen enough movies to know that if you put a bomb into an oily basin you can defuse it. So we had a barrel of oily water in there that the chefs used to slush out

18:30 stuff. So we went into the galley of the medical ward and placed the bomb into the barrel. While we were defusing it though, the chef came out. He'd been sleeping in the little room out the back of the galley. And as guys do, he came out yawning and scratching. Didn't miss a beat – I just said to him, "Ah Jeff, we're just defusing this bomb." And he didn't miss a beat, just kept yawning and scratching and said, "Okay, call me later." And off he went.

19:00 I never got to talk to too many of the young Australian soldiers, but the Americans we had in were not handling Vietnam at all. They were very sad.

Were most of them casualties, or were they more there for the psychiatric care?

19:30 A bit of both. We had a few casualties that were up in the surgical work – breaks, broken ankles and what have you, but most of the psych patients were in the medical ward.

Do you know what the time frame was for a soldier injured in Vietnam and them ending up in Penguin?

No. But I've often thought about it. You see those movies like China Beach

20:00 and you'd see that they're worked on straight away; then you see we'd get them. It would be probably days later. I think the closest timeframe I ever came across was while I was at HMAS Watson at Watsons Bay. I came to work one morning and there was a line of Australian soldiers standing outside the sick bay.

20:30 And at HMAS Watson, it's not a hospital – it's actually just a sick bay with maybe a chief petty officer, an X-ray rating, and a dental surgeon. It's very, very tiny. Well, these guys had been brought back from Vietnam to do their discharge medical before they went back on the streets. National Servicemen in other words. Well, I can remember the haunted look on these guys' faces – and they were still dirty, really dirty.

21:00 And years later when I was explaining how I felt and the look on this guy's face – because I can still remember walking up to the sick baby and this guy turned around to look at me, and it was just the most haunted, haunted expression. It was awful. And years later the warrant officer explained to me that these guys would have been on the ground in Vietnam maybe twenty-four to forty-eight hours earlier. So, that's the sort of time frame for them coming down to Sydney.

21:30 **When you were nursing the guys at Penguin, did you ever get to talk to them about Vietnam?**

No, not as such. You'd say, "Where have you come from?" and they'd give you stories about this and that. It was almost like nobody wanted to talk about it then and there; about the in-depth situation. It wasn't till later. Though I think the older staff and the sisters could talk to them, to break through

22:00 that facade. But not in those days, no, I couldn't. It was all sort of new to me.

What were you thinking, going home after a shift ?

Tired. You work hard and it was quite draining. And you stayed on base all the time, so you always had someone – another girl – around you. Your

22:30 life just went on. It wasn't that you never thought about it again, though more times than not I would lie in bed at night thinking, "I wonder if I did this or that procedure right?" or, "Will I get the procedure right tomorrow?" It was all about 'me' – you know, me, me, me, me, me. It was about me and doing my job properly, and otherwise, nothing in depth.

23:00 **How old were the guys coming through?**

Twenties, if that. I was about to turn twenty one, so twenties, early twenties. They were young. They still had a sense of 'fun' – that's not the right word to use really, but they still had something 'alive' about them. I've only

23:30 stopped to talk to one person – an Australian sailor – who attempted suicide. I had a long talk to him, and held his hand and chatted to him, because he was so despondent, so sad and miserable. But I can remember, except for that group of soldiers at Watson, the guys at Penguin seemed to be – they still had a 'spirit' about them.

24:00 **The Australian sailor you just mentioned – did you know why?**

No, I didn't ask. I just said, "Look, there are people around that are here for you."

A lot of the guys we've interviewed that have had posting overseas, they never seem to have lost that Australian sense of larrikinism. Do you notice that?

24:30 Exactly. When you've travelled overseas and worked with other people – like in Bougainville – the Australian serviceman overseas is very easygoing. It's like, "If Plan A doesn't work then we'll go to Plan B." They can do without a lot. And they laugh a lot.

25:00 Which might actually be a fault, like with some Vietnam vets now. Maybe they've held up their end for so long – been so strong – that somewhere along the line they've got to stop and say, "Well, it's 'me' time now." If they'd had 'me' time in the early days it might have helped them a lot.

25:30 But some of the guys – especially the submariners – their humour was amazing. But the conditions they worked under were horrific at times. Yet when you talk to submariners nowadays, they say that they were some of the best times; looking after each other, working hard, playing hard. That's how they got rid of their – dare I say – 'murky waters'.

26:00 **What about amongst the WRANS though? Did they have the same 'Australian-ness'?**

I didn't mix with the girls at Penguin much, because I had my own little circle. It was almost like we were just there for a good time; laughing, singing, dancing; it was almost like the problems of the world just weren't there.

26:30 I think a lot of it had to do with my naivete, from where I came from. The government, the Queen, the powers that be – they were all looking after us and I didn't believe anything about conspiracy theories, and that. We had the attitude, "Someone's looking after us; if we do our jobs then we'll be happy and everything would be all right." That's basically what I thought. And you didn't hear about the problems that were going on with some of the women; you didn't talk about it.

27:00 **What sort of problems?**

Well, some came from sad backgrounds, or abusive backgrounds, or had abusive boyfriends. You didn't seem to talk about though. If a guy wasn't treating you well, then they'd just say, "Oh, what a bastard; get rid of him!" But you never went into the depths of it – like what had caused the problem. Nowadays we have more of an opportunity to talk, and we're more aware

27:30 of what's going on in the world. So we're quite happy to talk about anything now. But then, I just didn't seem to. Everything was going along fine. I was doing my job and getting good reports, and that's all that mattered.

What were the accommodations like at Penguin?

It was like the old Nissan huts, like, those bush huts. There was a brick building for the WRANS' quarters, but a lot of the shift workers had the

28:00 Nissan huts, because it was quieter there, and you could sleep easier. It was like a little old house, for want of a better term. Three bedrooms, a common room in the middle – with a little kitchenette attached, and a little lounge area and a bathroom. You'd have about four of these houses up the back of the WRANS' quarters.

28:30 **And did you have your own bedroom?**

We had our bedrooms, yes. It was easy, because when you were on night duty, the last thing the others wanted was people coming up and down stairs and what have you. It had to stay in the main WRANS' quarters for a while, when I first arrived, but it was too noisy; it was terrible. And the more you complained, the more you got, "Oh, you SBAs [Sick Berth Attendants] are always complaining. You've got it easy."

29:00 That was usually from a steward or chef or someone like that.

What does SBA stand for?

Sick Berth Attendant. So they'd say, "Yeah, yeah, always complaining ..."

What about the meals?

We'd have our main meals up at the main Mess area at Penguin. That's where all the cooks were. We had this big hall – called the scran hall – and you'd have three meals a day. But nine times out of ten, living in our little

29:30 apartments we could have what was called a 'Birko' [electric jug]. You weren't allowed to cook down there, but you could have a Birko. The most treasured possession in the world down there was a Birko, 'cause you could boil water in it; or boil eggs or baked beans. And you could have a toaster if you wanted. So, you could have a little breakfast down in your accommodation area.

30:00 But for your main meals you went up to the scran hall.

What was it, a 'Birko' ?

Yeah, a Birko; it was like a kettle you can cook in. You can still buy them now – electric, with a protected heating element. They're excellent for mothers with babies, because you can go anywhere and boil water in them for the bottle ... very good.

30:30 **What about your social life at Penguin?**

Blossomed, just blossomed. I'd lost all this weight and I looked pretty good ... cute. It was excellent; a great social life. We'd do what we called 'step ashore', which meant going out. You could go to any of the pubs or clubs around Sydney

31:00 and stay out all night, and get a pizza from the first pizza shop in Kings Cross, come back, have a shower, and go to work as bright as a button. You could do that. Woe betide me doing it now. All sailors are referred to as 'payday barons', so you'd get your pay on a pay-Thursday and for those that were sensible enough to save, they'd save; but the rest would go out

31:30 and have a good time with their money. But, if you were on a duty weekend, that was the worst time to do duty – after a pay-Thursday, I mean. Because that's when you'd have most of the accidents come in – the fights or what have you. Sailors were an easy target if they were ashore on a pay-weekend.

32:00 **Why is that – that they were 'easy targets' ?**

Because they had what – as my Dad would say – a pocket full of personality. They had their pay. See, before navy pay went directly into the bank in allotments you got it like this; you'd go to the parade ground on a pay-Thursday and line up. And the Paymaster would be there with his armed guards. You'd walk up to the paymaster, salute, give your number

32:30 with one hand and hold your other hand out; and they'd put your pay in it. Then you'd count it when you were back in line. But that's how you used to be paid. So, you'd have all your pay on you.

So, what were the hotspots when you used to go out?

Whiskey-au-Go-Go – yeah, to-die-for; and the Menzies Cellar. The interesting too is, we started

33:00 going to different people's houses as well. We might go round there for dinner. Especially with my parents in Wollongong and all, I'd go there too. Carol's parents were in Lakemba too, and sometimes we'd go there. But at the time, Whiskey-Au-Go-Go had just started off. They had the go-go girls dancing in the cages and – see, the Americans were in town

33:30 so you'd have all this dancing. The Americans could move, and they had all these amazing dance routines. And dress! Nobody else dressed like them. They had amazing clothes; pink, green. In a book written by that Australian guy – Sex, Lies, and Rock'n'Roll I think it was called, or something like that – they talked

34:00 about Kings Cross in the days when soldiers had R&R, and how alive it was – how alive it was. Everyone in The Cross was making money in the Vietnam years I think. The Bourbon and Beefsteak Bar going twenty-four seven. And in a corner of The Cross they had this flea market going. I think it was the forerunner of

34:30 Paddy's Market. And you could get the long caftan dresses in there, which were all the rage. Incense and a caftan – you could be really cool in your room with them. But it was the music and style of the time, and The Cross was just so 'alive'.

Whereabouts exactly was Whiskey-Au-Go-Go?

In William Street I think.

35:00 **Did you pay admission to get in?**

You paid a door fee or a cover charge. In those days you sometimes got chicken and chips along with the cover fee. So you'd have chicken and chips – I think that was how they got their licence. So you'd get this basket with this dead thing in it, and a couple of floppy

35:30 old chips – and that covered the bar for an extension on their licence. Also too at the time I think we discovered Les Girls. The Americans loved Les Girls – and that was very interesting to go to those shows. That was a bit ritzy, so you'd get dressed up for those.

Can you tell us about that?

The name of the main Les Girl has escaped me – Carlotta? – an amazing lady. Her shows were amazing; the costumes, the songs. And the people you'd see in the audience,

36:00 you know, it was just plebs. There were celebrities there because it was late night trading. So alive! It wasn't till years later that I saw the seedier side of The Cross. On medical escort I might have to go pick

up a sailor who had been injured or for any other reason.

36:30 See, these were still in the days when there were abortion clinics in the back of The Cross; and there were a couple of WRANS who'd decided to take abortion rather than discharge. Well they got in a terrible way because they were horrific backyard abortions back then.

37:00 **Can you tell us about those?**

I think it was Chapel Street at The Cross that had an abortion clinic, and we had a girl that had gone there rather than tell anyone that she was pregnant. It was quite sad because she wasn't ... she was a country girl and she'd just gone up them. Unfortunately it didn't go well, and she'd collapsed. Someone there had the sense to call the navy and they sent out an ambulance and a medical escort to get her.

37:30 It was a good thing that I went with a male driver who'd 'been around'. He didn't take any of the crap from the people hanging around the door. We just went in and got the girl and came out with her. It was sad. Especially sad when you think back to what we were talking about earlier – about how the guys could get contraception but not the girls. Times were about to change though.

38:00 **Was it well known where the abortion clinics were ?**

I think like anything at The Cross, if you'd ask, you'd be directed there. It's like the druggies [drug addicts] there now I guess. I think Chapel Street was a well-known area though, for the clinics and that. Not that you'd call them 'clinics' really – they were just abortion people.

38:30 **What would they look like from the street?**

Just a house, you know, an ordinary terrace house at the back of The Cross. It wasn't good, and to see the women who suffered under them. Service women and other young women both used them – it's making money out of misery, basically.

39:00 **Do you know what an illegal abortion would have cost?**

Don't know at all. But the girls would have had to have saved up money. And there were girls coming from interstate. Not good. Looking after someone's health is so important and they should be given the best care and conditions.

39:30 **The girl that you had to go and pick up – would she have been discharged?**

If they found out yeah, but she stayed in. I don't know what happened to her – she's another face that just got lost in the crowd.

With Kings Cross being the area that it was, was drug use common?

I think it was, but I didn't see it. I think there was a lot of marijuana around.

40:00 I can remember going to a party one night, and there was this really crazy guy there who would blindfold himself and roll up a cigarette made out of bits and pieces of tobacco and that, and then he would show you how he could take apart his rifle. You know, blindfolded, smoking this funny stuff, and taking apart a rifle. That was very interesting!

40:30 I think Americans had a lot of marijuana around with their R&R, but I didn't come across anything heavier, no.

What did you drink?

I was really ritzy. I think, for my very first drink, I had a Blue Lagoon. Most of my drinks had lemonade in though. I wasn't a great drinker at all in those days – just lemonade with a dash of something in it.

Tape 6

00:30 **What did you see of homosexuality in the services?**

I didn't see any. I'd heard about it. There was one sailor who was discharged, and it was a pity because he was the nicest, nicest bloke. It turned out that he was going to be blackmailed by an ex-lover, and

01:00 because he was in a relatively high position with the administration area he went and told his commanding officer what had been going on, and what he intended to do – which was to take discharge. It was so sad, because he was really nice. He was very professional, and generous with his time, doing volunteer work for private organisations. He said

01:30 rather than bring the navy into disrepute, he would go. And all the time I was in the navy that was the only homosexuality I came across. When I was working in the army as a civvies [civilian] later on, it was everywhere.

Was there any hard, fast rule about homosexuality?

In those days, very much so. While I was working at HMAS Watson the

02:00 doctor received the 'pink paper' – a really bad choice of colour – the pink paper was about how to treat members who came to the doctors and said they were homosexual. See, homosexuality meant a discharge. There were a lot of guys who used it, or planned to use it to get out of the navy. I think there was

02:30 particular procedures that the doctor had to follow; certain questions to ask, and examinations to perform. I remember the doctor I was working with at the time – who liked to call a spade a spade – was not particularly impressed with the tests he had to perform. 'Per rectum' or something. We laughed so much about the pink paper. Why send it out on pink paper?

03:00 **Do you know what this test was?**

Well, there was the bum test, and the fingers test, and you'd have to interview the person plus his partner, and if he was a civvie then he had to come in. Very interesting tests, but our doctor wasn't really keen on looking into their personal lives and what they did.

03:30 **And was that a sign of the times, I mean was homosexuality starting to come out?**

I left the navy in January 1973 and in '72 I was in Watson, and it was just starting to be talked about then. The earlier line was that homosexuality would not be tolerated in the defence services, and it would mean a discharge. Then I think from there, it edged itself into a bit of a more

04:00 tolerant situation. In those early days it was a discharge, which a lot of guys in the navy were going to use to get out of the navy. So there were all these physical checks and what have you.

And was it hard in those days to get out of the navy if you wanted to?

Yes, yes it was. Basically because, I think, the navy said it cost them so

04:30 much money training them up, and they weren't going to waste it.

So how long did you spend at Penguin?

About two years, before I went over to Watson.

Why did you go to Watson?

It was time for me to go. Usually you only spent two years in an area.

05:00 I actually loved Penguin and the hospital there, and asked if I could stay. But that would have meant that someone else would have been stuck on their posting to the hospital – like the domino . So I went to Watson, which was a small depot at Watson's Bay – really nice little depot. Just a basic depot with a lot of activity – a training area for the radar plotters and a lot of men under training like that.

05:30 **I think you told us earlier exactly who was there.**

Yeah, the sick bay was quite small. We had a visiting doctor who came in for certain times. There was a leading hand who was also the X-ray rating, and myself. There was a part-time dentist and a dental rating too. So it was small. We were quite naughty at times,

06:00 though I don't mean in a naughty-naughty way. We also had the reserves come in at Watson – they'd use the facilities one night a week. The day usually we'd have rounds, and inevitably we'd have to race around like mad people cleaning up the mess the reserves made. They'd leave their junk everywhere,

06:30 despite our requests. This one night we'd had enough of it. We filled up the urn with Epsom salts water and locked all the toilets except for one, and took away the toilet paper. We didn't have any trouble after that. Very naughty, and the boss said

07:00 that if we got into any trouble over it then we lower ranks would wear it. But we said, "Listen, we've asked them nicely and they won't do it, so this is the way of getting them to do it." The boss made sure we'd flushed out the urn before he had his coffee the next day, too.

And it worked?

Yes.

07:30 **Was it the same sort of work you did there, at Watson?**

More like a little doctor's surgery, for want of a better term. It wasn't a hospital, like Penguin. We did see the guys coming back from Vietnam for their medicals, and they were more x-rays than anything else. So again, it was mainly coughs, cold sores, holes. If anything did come in, then we'd send them straight over to Penguin in an ambulance, or arrange some other transport.

08:00 **At any of the places you were posted to, did you ever have to do guard duty or anything like that?**

No guard duty while I was in the navy. That came more later – when I was a civvie! You had night duty, or specific duties with the hospital. Or

08:30 you could be on duty at the WRANS' quarters – like Duty WRAN for the night or the weekend, taking phone calls, keeping an eye on the building or the WRANS, and that sort of thing.

Did you ever have to go away on exercises at all?

No, I would go away for day-trips – sometimes to sea as a duty sick berth attendant, or out to the bomb site out at Liverpool where the sailors did their demolition training and procedures. They had to have a medic go

09:00 with them. Occasionally I went out as a medic in the bush, or on the recruiting wagon, or to pick up sick and sorry sailors if I was doing medical escort.

Were there particular jobs that you liked to do, or tried to get to do?

Everybody wanted the medical escort jobs – much better than sitting out

09:30 in the bush waiting for the big bang theory out there. But I found if I went out there and got involved I'd follow the explosives team around so that I could see. I was actually lucky enough to lay a charge – they showed me how, as a treat. But the medical escort jobs were the way. I had one trip up to Mackay to pick up a sailor. He was being brought back from Singapore having broken his jaw in Boogie Street in Singapore.

10:00 Boogie Street had transsexuals and tabletop dancers and such, long before they were fashionable anywhere else. It was a pretty wild street. And this sailor – I think he was a submariner too – told the medical team he fell over and broke his jaw; but I believe he was tabletop dancing and fell off the table.

10:30 So I went up to Mackay to pick him up.

Did you ever notice different subcultures within the navy? Like, submariners, or stokers, gunners, and things like that?

Dear me – everybody was better than everyone else! But you get your favourites. I think the hardest taskmasters became my favourites – submariners for example, and the divers. You treated them with a

11:00 little more respect. they had more of a hard yards jobs. The divers were really funny. Some of the older ones had this different system for trapping females – they were actually being gentlemen. This was really strange. If you've interviewed any other divers you'd know how wild and woolly they are. But the divers at Penguin were being polite, in order to trap the ladies. For example, you'd walk into the scran hall at Penguin,

11:30 and you'd be looking around for a table, and there'd be a table with two divers there. And they'd see you and stand up and say, "Please, would you like to sit at our table." So you'd sit down and have your meal, and then you'd go to leave and they'd stand up and say, "Thank you for your company over lunch." Well, there were a few divers who practiced this sort of style and

12:00 and the ladies started loving it. You'd go to a door and – normally, with sailors, whoever gets to the door goes out first – but with the divers, they'd hold the doors open for the ladies. I can remember this one sailor – the divers were there at the door opening it for a lady, and this sailor walked through. The divers grabbed him and said, "How dare you, a lady is about to walk through." And this sailor said, "It's just a WRAN," and they said, "That is a lady, not a WRAN."

12:30 Now all this was whole new ball game. This was really good! The divers for years in that group won hearts and minds by being super polite. I must admit, when I became a public servant and worked back with the navy, some of the younger guys tried all this again – but it wasn't the same. The old and bold knew how to do it.

13:00 **And it worked for them?**

I believe so. I was still too naive and 'nice' to fall for their silken trap.

So, did you have any boyfriends throughout this time?

I did have boyfriends, some nice guys. I was coming into my own, sort of considered cute and nice. They guys would say, "Gee, you're lovely; you're a really nice girl." I heard nice stories about me – the sailors

13:30 reckoned that whoever got Jacqui Fitzgibbon would be all right, because she was a virgin, and okay. I believe that a submariner I'd nursed – he had been pretty badly injured – well he'd apparently grabbed this sailor and defended me, "Never speak about Jacqui Fitzgibbon that way; she's one of the nicest ladies you'll ever come across." And I thought that was really nice.

14:00 I had some nice guys, but unfortunately I didn't treat them very well – there was always some other cute guy coming along – aaahh, see what happens! God punishes you. The years of the drought came

later.

On a more serious note, were there trade-specific injuries that you had to deal with?

Yeah. Ships like HMAS Anzac had a lot of flashback burns, for instance. I think in those days

14:30 Anzac – some part of the start-up machinery you had to light, and if it wasn't lit the right way you'd get a flash-back and burn. Or machinery injuries, like from a magazine, or something from one of the guns would flare back and hit the guys in the hands; so you had that. There were also drownings

15:00 because at Penguin you had the diving school there. They had some amazing equipment and one of the best diving doctors – I think that was Carl Edmonds – he was down there. So you had drownings. Car accidents were awful, horrific. There were lots of car accidents. As to injuries you'd get in the army hospitals,

15:30 there were very occasional bullet wounds and again, burns. Car accidents were the main thing – there were always car accidents.

Just from blokes being on leave and that?

Yeah, and just doing silly things.

Did you ever have your own car or your own license?

I was poor. I didn't get my license until it was nearly time to leave the navy. And owning a car didn't come for a long time, a long time down the track.

16:00 **So was it always a live-in situation?**

Yes, until my fear year at Watson, when I moved out. I was actually living with a sailor – Phil Mander – we were going to get married and have lots of children. I'm sorry I treated Phil bad. But I paid for it years later with the Drought period. Phil's remained really good friends with the family. We were living ashore at – he had this lovely little flat right in the middle of Kings Cross

16:30 that was amazing. So that was the only time I lived ashore, towards the end of my time at Watson.

So, when you look back on your navy career, what stands out for you?

I think the people that I met. You can forget the injuries and the horrific procedures. But the people you met, you could still meet them now and be friends with them. There were good times and bad times for a lot of them, and

17:00 again I go back to submariners who quite often had a hard time. My first husband was a submarine officer – a lieutenant – when I met him. They worked pretty hard. And they weren't good living conditions for the guys; they were quite horrific. But they looked after each other. So I'd say yeah, it was the people I met.

Did you feel like you were really a part of Australia's Vietnam war effort?

No, not at all. If you could say it now, well, I'd say I was on the fringe –

17:30 yeah, sure, I nursed some guys, and I saw some sad faces at Watson, but I honestly didn't understand enough of it. I thought, honestly thought in those days that Queen and Government and Country – everybody was doing the right thing. America was doing the right thing in Vietnam. I honestly believed it. It was not till later when I saw a movie called Platoon. I think I nearly walked out of it because of the noise and the

18:00 screaming. I said, "This can't be true?" and the guy I was with said, "It is." He'd been up there. He said, "It's just like that." I thought, "Why haven't we been told?" One of the things I did say one time to one of the Chiefs at Watson, was, "Why haven't we been told about these guys? Why haven't we been taught about the emotional side of all this?" They were just standing there looking terrible. And he said, "Because that's not your

18:30 job. Your job is to do the medicals and get them squared away and send them on their way." That was the style.

So how did you feel about what was going on with the public, about Australia's involvement?

I was angry with it because they weren't treating the servicemen with respect. It wasn't good. I used to have the idea that the public wasn't getting the correct information from the newspapers, also. There were some instances where you'd know what you read wasn't quite true.

19:00 And you'd think, "That's not what I've heard from the guys that were there." I think the media didn't give the correct information, and the powers that be – the government – just wasn't informing the people enough with what was going on in Vietnam.

And were you seeing the news every night – the stuff coming out of Vietnam?

19:30 No, not a lot. You'd see different movies – as I said, at Cerberus we saw the medical movies – but I just

think a lot of the information wasn't coming out correctly at all.

And when you got to go out of the ships for a day, was that fun?

It was, yeah, just for a day out to see what was going on. It was all still a

20:00 novelty. Girls going to sea, that was a novelty, that was in the background back then. It was a novelty for the day and it was lovely. I didn't get too sea-sick either. I made sure I ate the correct things in the morning.

And were you treated as a novelty on board?

Yes. Oh yes. I think went we went on board, they set aside a toilet for the girls, but it was basically, "Be polite; cut down on the swearing; treat them with respect."

20:30 **Did you ever imagine yourself being one of a handful of women on a ship with a couple of hundred guys?**

I think so. I could handle it. I handled going out into the bush with the explosives teams. Nobody seemed attractive while I was out bush. So I could have handled it quite well I think. I think it goes a lot with your grounding, and how you've been brought up.

21:00 **And you couldn't take any sea-sickness medication?**

I didn't have any trouble with it. In the early stages it was excitement, a novelty; like a kid.

So, your time's starting to wind up on your four years – what were you thinking at that stage?

I really didn't know what I was going to do. Resettlement wasn't a big

21:30 thing in those days. I was at Watson, and had a regulator – an administrator – there, but I didn't get much information on resettlement. And in fact, years later when I'd talked to other people some of the areas had resettlement interviews to help you move on. But I had nothing. It was basically, "Ah, you're leaving tomorrow. Goodbye." So I thought that was a little bit strange. But at the time, I thought that was normal because I hadn't spoken to anyone else.

22:00 **Had you been offered to stay in longer?**

I don't think I was, but I didn't ask either. A couple of the girls who'd left earlier – within their first two years or so – they weren't encouraged at all. It was basically just "Goodbye." I don't know – maybe it was a case of the quota, and they weren't looking for new blood then – who knows!

22:30 **So, were you thinking of doing the same sort of work in civvy street?**

I did for a little while, but I actually wanted a break. First I got a job as a dental nurse through the dental rating at Watson. He suggested it. So I worked as a dental nurse at Bondi in Sydney for a few months. I was still living at The Cross with my boyfriend at the time.

23:00 But that was getting close to, "Vios con Dios, amigo [Go with God, friend]," with him. Anyway, I thought the dental nursing was too slow, and thought, "There's got to be something other than this?" I saw an ad in the paper for an ironworker's assistant with the Department of Defence at HMAS Platypus. Defence was looking at having civvy assistants working with the ironworkers.

23:30 It was a new program. They were finding that the ironworkers working on things like torpedoes were spending too much time doing the fiddly things, like bringing the torpedoes up from storage; getting the appropriate oil; bleeding the things and all that sort of stuff, so they decided to try women out for it, to see if that worked. So I applied and got the job at Platypus. There was a whole mixed bag of women there, some

24:00 older, some New Australian women. So we worked with the ironworkers on the torpedoes. I think they were Mark 44s. If they needed a spanner, we'd go get the spanner. But we were taught an interesting trade – to use an overhead crane to carry the torpedoes down the factory wall.

24:30 I thought that was amazing; I could drive a crane! I had a crane driver's certificate for a while. Well, I was allocated to an ironworker who had been an ex-RAF [Royal Air Force] in New Zealand. We worked together very well, and because of my height and everything, I was really handy. Like, I could get inside the torpedo and hold a spanner or something in place, while he worked it on the outside. Then he'd drag me,

25:00 grab me just as I came out of the torpedo so I wouldn't fall on the floor. We had to practice that once or twice, 'cause he missed at first. It was interesting anyway, because you got to work on torpedoes, which was amazing. That only lasted for a little while though. They obviously saw something in me that I didn't, because they asked me to come and work in the factory office. And as a result of that I joined the Public Service.

25:30 **Could you back up a bit and tell us about the day you left the navy?**

Just like any other day. Because I'd been earmarking it, and because I lived at shore at the time, and

starting to look around at what was going on – “Will I go back to Wollongong or will I stay in Sydney?” And Phil and I at the time were getting close to getting married;

26:00 we were going to marry and we were going to do this and that – so, it didn’t really seem to matter at the time if I was still in the navy. He had a lot of sea time coming up. So it really wasn’t too bad. I had thought that I had another life waiting for me out there, so it wasn’t bad. And a lot of my other friends had moved to other places too.

And do you think that being in the navy had helped you get that first job?

Yeah, oh yes. If you had a look at me at the start and had a look at me at the end – look, that’s four years, and I was totally, totally transformed.

26:30 Grown up, developed, lost weight, developed a personality. Huge development in four years. Anybody that’s been in any sort of organisation – even the Police Force – you must change because you’re growing and learning, and while you’re learning you’re developing.

27:00 **They always tell you that when you go back and see your civvy mates, everything will be different. Did you find that true?**

I have to admit that I saw those old mates and it was okay for a while, but it seemed like they were ... like they were still singing campfire songs; Kumbayah and that. I thought, “No, this is not for me – Kumbayah and Volkswagen panel vans – this is not for me!” I knew I’d moved on from that.

27:30 But look, they were nice people. All my friends in Wollongong were nice people.

So what did the new job entail?

Bringing the torpedoes up to scratch, that is, making them ready for firing with the submarines. Basically you were a gopher or a dogsbody,

28:00 assisting the ironworkers prepare the torpedoes. That could basically involving anything – get this, get that, hold this, get the torpedo.

And how did those blokes treat you? I’d imagine they were pretty rough’n’tough blokes?

They were civvies and quite good; quite polite. And they selected a good

28:30 bunch of women including older ladies, married ladies. I think I might have been the youngest. They weren’t just kids straight from school; it was a good team. We even had a Fijian princess – big girl, ‘Big Gina’, lovely girl.

How did she end up there?

Don’t know. Maybe it was one of those employment office situations. But she saw the job and got it. She was lovely; so funny!

29:00 **And what about after that, when you went into the office?**

When I went into the office I did mainly administration work with the plans. With each of the components of the torpedo there had to be a plan – you know, the size and a drawing of each bolt.

29:30 **Was that interesting?**

It was interesting because you still had work with the factory, but it was a step up. And it was a big factory. With the ironwork you had all the infrastructure that went along with it. Platypus was still the go, too. It was very active – all singing and dancing there. That’s where I met my first husband too. He walked into the office one day, looking absolutely fabulous in his

30:00 uniform, and I didn’t notice him. Apparently he noticed me though, and he tripped over my desk on his way through, and that’s how I met him.

And did you ever think you’d be getting yourself into the same situation as your Mum had been in?

Oh no ... I was way too wise for that, ha ha. I was sort of more worldly than my Mum, so it never crossed my mind.

30:30 **And was he away a lot?**

I think, for the first year we had sixty three days together, and it wasn’t consecutive. It was pretty strange, because the submarines are away a lot.

How did you cope with those separations?

I think we were lucky because his commanding officer encouraged the crew who had responsibilities at home. In those days, if a submarine was

31:00 at sea, any of the crew who were kept inboard, kept an eye on the families who had been left at home. I

can remember one day, a lieutenant knocked on the day just to say, “I’m here to see if you’re okay.” Chris Hartcher – lovely bloke. We were in a flat at the time so there was no lawns to mow or garbage to take out

31:30 But he just dropped in to see if we were okay. That’s what they did at Platypus at the time. So there was a good esprit de corps. That was those days – I don’t know what it’s like now.

And you were still doing the same job?

Yes, I was still at Platypus, but things were afoot. I’d actually applied for a job in the hospital at Penguin doing administration for medical records.

32:00 I’d been approved for the Public Service by then, so I was starting to look around. There was a big world out there for public servants. So I worked at Penguin for a period of time, in the hospital there. Unfortunately, my marriage failed while I was there, which made it a bit hard, and I had to get away from everything

32:30 military for a while. I got a transfer to the Attorney General’s Department.

It seems like you almost had a foot in the door while you were maintaining that relationship with the navy …

Well it was – sort of like the devil you know. The navy had treated me well and it was a good working relationship. Once you get used to the quirks of working with the military – I suppose you have to be a little crazy too – it’s a very good organisation. If you’re a good worker, then it’s a very good organisation to work for.

33:00 You’d have your usual situation of course – some rotten apple trying to stab you in the back – but then, for some unknown reason, God sends you somebody nice to look after you. So, the Public Service was good; a good regular job and wages. And I had a good working relationship with those I worked with, too.

33:30 It’s just that my marriage broke down and I had to get away from the military for a while.

How did that come about?

The Public Service Manual – I’d look and see if there was a job for me. And the Attorney General’s job was there, and I applied and got accepted straight away. I honestly think that having worked in the services gives you an advantage – there’s sort of something about you

34:00 that appeals to employers. You’ve been given a lot of responsibility in the services so you have a tendency to show that. So I worked with them for a little while.

What sort of work were you doing there?

Court reporting and administration work at the law courts in Sydney.

Did they have to train you up for that?

No, it’s just administration. You basically have your training already, and

34:30 the person who was there before would have left a checklist. The boss said, “Such and such is there; he’ll show you what to do.” I was only there a year or so though, before I went back to Defence.

Where were you living at this time?

I was living in Sydney. While I’d been married my husband had a posting to Canberra on a submarine project there. We’d been there for a couple of years, then came back to Sydney to work for Defence and then later the

35:00 Attorney General’s Department. We’d been living in and around Sydney. We had our own house in Sydney, but that went with the divorce, as so many things do. But yeah, Sydney most of the time.

Then back to Defence?

But there were better things on the horizon for me with Defence. Lot’s of good times coming! I mean in terms of work.

35:30 **Tell all …**

Remember all these really nice guys we treated badly when we were young and attractive, well, God punishes us for a number of years for that! All we get to do is work. I went back to school too. But I was working for the army now, at Victoria Barracks. The army, again, was trying to work with civilian positions. It released the uniformed personnel for other jobs.

36:00 I got a job with the movement control office, which is a branch of the transport office. Basically the job was to act as a removals supervisor, arranging the movement of personnel around Australia or around the world. Within the removals came the movement of the personnel, their family and effects, furniture, generally getting them set up in their areas. So, like I said, Defence was looking at having a civilian in

the position.

36:30 So I waltzed in all bright eyed and bushy tailed, and nobody would talk to me. Sat down at my desk and said, “So, what’ll I do?” and someone said, “Oh, you’ll find out.” But I was lucky. I had a team, an unusual team of soldiers who were a bit wild and woolly. I think they drew Removals because they were wild and woolly and no-one wanted them in sight.

37:00 So one of them said, “Jacqui, if you want to be a removals supervisor, then you come and see what we do first. You sit at that desk – which is the gopher’s desk, and learn what a gopher does. Then you sit at that desk – which is the removal corporal’s desk – and you learn what he does. And then the removals sergeant’s desk; and so on. And then you can call yourself a supervisor.” And I said, “Okay,” and got to work.

37:30 So, I carried the telexes for a week, and the mail and the faxes; then after a couple of weeks he said, “Okay Jacqui, it’s time you were a corporal.” So I learned how to do the removals paperwork; then I did the sergeant’s desk, and eventually I became a supervisor – no reading the manuals. It was the best way to be taught. And that corporal told me later that I was the most interesting civvy he ever worked with. But as a result of working with the army

38:00 I always had in the back of my mind that the navy was ... all, sort of singing and dancing. Whenever any navy people came through the removals area I got all sort of bright eyed and, “Hello, how are you going!” So, the army was good to me and sent me off on a lot of courses. I showed an interest in Occupational Health and Safety, and they sent me off for that training; I showed an interest in Advanced Administration and they sent me off to do a course about that with the navy.

38:30 RAN Junior Staff Officer’s Course it was called; where you went down to HMAS Creswell and learned how to be a staff officer. Army was thinking at the time of going tri-service, so they were sort of spying to see how the navy worked. So I was sent on this course and it was really interesting.

39:00 They had never had anybody down there who stood on a soapbox before – because, and that’s one thing I’ll say for the army; they taught you to speak. I had to go and give lectures to all the units about removals – School of Artillery; Ready Reserve soldiers ... I had to talk to all them about removals. The army used to teach its soldiers from a very early stage, how to give a lecture – how to give a ‘lesson’ they called it.

39:30 You would have to have everything in order – everything would have to run smoothly. You couldn’t just walk in and say, “Der, umm.” You had to have your whole lesson planned. So the army taught me how to give lessons, and when I went to Creswell I thought I was all singing and dancing. They do subjects like English and maths; and they do PowerPoint presentations, because as a young officer you’re expected to know how to present information to senior officers.

40:00 English I thought I was good at, but apart from the verbs and present participles and that sort of thing, I didn’t really run the form. But my soapbox was excellent, thanks to the army. They would point to you and say, “Okay, tomorrow you have to give us a speech on something that will interest us, and it’s not to be military; it has to be something personal.” So you

40:30 would come in the next day and do a PowerPoint presentation, and you’d have to keep the crowd interested; you had to get them to ask questions because they were interested. So my lesson was called, “How I got my first tattoo.” I was given a tattoo as a birthday present when I turned forty.

Tape 7

00:30 **Okay, we were talking about the tattoo ..**

Yes, at the staff college we had to give a walk-up speech as part of the process of assessing whether we’d be good administrative assistants. My walk-up speech was about how I got my first tattoo. Now, I didn’t realise it at the time but they were going to film it, and I was going to be showed the film later on, to assess my strengths and weaknesses as a speaker.

01:00 So, I walked into the classroom and did a PowerPoint presentation on the tattoo of a rose, just one PowerPoint, which was up on a screen. Left it at that. All the other students then did their presentations. it was click, click, click – PowerPoints everywhere. See, I didn’t know how to use the presentation equipment, so I wasn’t going to try and fool them. And in my

01:30 walk-up, I said, “I’d like to talk to the class on how I had my first tattoo.” And I swung my chair around and straddled it and proceeded to tell them what I said to the tattoo artist; what he said to me. It was complete with all his spitting, and all his F [swear] words. We had about ten minutes of this; I can remember that some of them were quite wide-mouthed about it all.

02:00 I got very good marks for the assessment, but in the critique they said that maybe I should have picked a ‘nicer’ subject. They said, “When you were describing the procedure you did all those F words.” They didn’t think that was quite appropriate in the classroom. Interesting. But the staff college was excellent. You had to do all the team building stuff. It was an interesting month.

02:30 And at the time ... the same officer that had sent me away from the Occupational Health and Safety course got me on the RAN Junior Staff Officer's Course. He was very good; very supportive. Excellent with leaving things to my discretion, and if I had trouble with a particular removal he'd support me or give me another option. In the twenty years that I worked for the removals section there were a lot of changes.

03:00 When I first started with the Removals Control Office I was working with the army, then we had name changes, and other authorities looked after us. We came under the Base Administration Section rather than the Transport area of the army. Then eventually we went tri-service and worked with both the navy and the air force.

03:30 In the twenty years there was a lot of changes – a lot of bosses. You'd find that with the army, once they got over their initial shock of having to deal with a civilian supervisor, they were very good to you. I must admit, I had some great bosses, met some nice people, and made a few enemies along the way – which you tend to do when you're in a supervisory role. But all in all it worked pretty well.

04:00 **How did you find you were treated as a civilian working in defence?**

Initially people would look at me in a ridiculous way, like I was white trailer trash or something. But those that worked with me – well, I've heard they thought I was the best boss some of them ever had. I was fair, and wasn't restricted by the political side of things – promotional, I mean. Sometimes I was actually sent

04:30 soldiers to give reports on. They wanted them to work with me to see if the reports they'd been given about these guys were correct or not. And this was soldiers from the Transport stream. Some of the soldiers weren't treated with respect at all, and especially if they'd done something wrong, which went with them for the rest of their time. You're always going to find – especially in organisations as big as the army – people who are going to pick on you.

05:00 It's amazing what can come out of working in an area like that.

With your WRAN background you obviously had a good understanding of how things worked. What backgrounds did other civilians there have?

Some were military, others were civilians using the work as stepping stones to further public service. The military can certainly be a strange place for someone without any experience of it.

05:30 There's a different style and a different set of expectations. And some people just find that style too stringent. But if you're prepared to do your work well, the military will work with you.

So, as a civilian employed by the defence force, did you consider yourself a part of the army?

No. Never did. Never made that assumption, because you'd be crossing

06:00 boundaries then. While I was working with Defence I always made sure that I was, well, a civilian working with the army. I made the mistake in the early days there of calling the guys I worked with 'my soldiers' and I was pulled into line quite smartly. I was told, "No, they're not 'your soldiers'; you work with them." Yeah, I was told that quite smartly.

06:30 **Was she a civilian?**

No, she was a military member who, for some unknown reason, hated me with a vengeance. Maybe in a past life I had crossed her path or something. But that was in those days. There were some times I'd go home and cry in the shower, 'cause you'd think, "Can't these people see that I'm not just a civvie who sits there and bludges [loafs]; that I'm there first thing in the morning and the last one out at night?"

07:00 But some people, you just can't change their way, and the military, they just assume that if you're wearing a civilian outfit, then you've never had a life. And when they do find out that you've had a life in the service yourself, then they say, "Ah, that's interesting." And then they don't know how to take you after that. So you're in a little bit of a no-man's land. But the ones that are mature treated me with respect and I had a very good time working with them.

07:30 **In that time, from when you first enlisted in the WRANS to the end of your work with the army, did you notice a lot more women coming through?**

I did. It's funny because as much as I'd been ex-navy, I could see the army doing a lot of soul searching and trying to work out what they were going to do about their service women. I think they'd hit a really low point, and were starting to bring themselves up again. A lot of the girls

08:00 were getting treated better. They were being given more options. My best friend Leonie – she has a very good work ethic – and when we started working, well, she was a corporal with the Transport department, she was a 'can do' person. If you needed someone to work back then she was the person. And that followed her around with her career.

08:30 And I think she was one of the first women to be selected to work in a male unit – which was the Movement Section, the NCU or something. I can't think of the correct name. But it was a military field

unit that went out bush a lot, and was the first to go into that. They made a wise choice there I think; she was the right person for the job. So she went out there and worked really well.

09:00 At that stage a lot more women were being accepted within the army. I don't know how it went with the navy because I wasn't that close to it any more. Anyway, the army was progressing and saying to women, "Sure, if you think you can do the job, then have a go at it."

Did you ever see any examples of sexual harassment?

Oh yes. And it was mainly from older people who were frightened of

09:30 their own, ah ... 'areas'. Like, you'd have this old and bold sergeant who spent most of his days in the mess – or a young high-flying warrant officer who wanted to go further, but who had a female boss who could see that he was only a show-off – so there were often incidents. But not of sexual harassment so much as

10:00 just personality clashes more than anything. You know, the "She's just a girl; what's she gonna do." attitude, the, "She's a bitch of an officer; what would she know?" But, for the people concerned, they were better than all that and they got above it. But yeah, in the service you get that from people who are pretty weak. They've got nothing else going for them, and they don't have friends other than drinking mates. They'd prop themselves up at a bar at night

10:30 and they'll think of themselves as ever-so-wonderful. But they're not really like that at all.

So then, tell us how Bougainville came about?

Well, the Removals Section had just gone through its final huge change – and this about 1998 – it went tri-service and we got to work with the navy under one banner. I didn't like what was going on, and found the navy

11:00 to be a bit restrictive. And they viewed me as a civvie female who didn't know what was going on. I was very discouraged with that. But I did have a good boss. He'd been a submarine commander – Lieutenant Commander Christie – he made the suggestion that there was something coming up with Foreign Affairs and Defence in Bougainville.

11:30 They apparently needed civilians to go into the bush with the military patrols to give a more 'open' view of what was going on in Bougainville. He said he'd seen a signal on it and that I might be interested. So I had a look at it and applied for the position through Foreign Affairs and Trade, and managed to get a position on Bougainville with another group of civilians and to work with the military patrols in Bougainville. In June 1999 I started that work,

12:00 which meant going to Canberra to do the prelims. That was basically introductions, psych test, and fitness test; and a wonderful thing called an army BIT test. I succeeded in all things except the BIT test. So the powers that be said the three people that didn't do well on the BIT test could only go to Bougainville if they survived the military jungle training course at Bamaga on the Cape York peninsula, Queensland.

12:30 Anyway, I packed up my gear and Leonie – the girlfriend who was the warrant officer in the army – she helped me with my kit; I had her boots, which were well and truly worn in, and bits and pieces of her other kit. We had been issued with kits, but she said, "Don't go into the bush with new gear; you need to have worn it in, and you need to be ready for anything." And she strapped up my backpack with all sort of tape

13:00 so that the straps didn't cut into my shoulders. And we left for Bamaga.

Before we get into Bamaga, can I ask you what attracted you to the job?

Something different. It was something different. I just felt that with the navy taking over the Removals Section, they just weren't what I was about. I didn't feel comfortable with the new boss, and I didn't feel comfortable

13:30 with the way things were going. It was almost like you're too old in the position; too long in the position; you're not ready for the new hierarchy, and all that.

During your twenty years in the Removals Section, had you considered going back to nursing?

I did for a little while. I actually did some weekend work when I was going through my divorce. I went through MEDOCS – which is a

14:00 recruiting centre for temporary staff to do nursing. I worked at Mount Wilga Rehabilitation Centre in Sydney. That was very interesting because I've always loved rehab. I worked there on weekends, and then did some geriatric nursing. This only lasted a year or two, and then, as I started to move up in the public service and more money was coming in, I went back to school at night instead of working weekends.

14:30 **So, was there anything in the nursing area that made you realise it wasn't for you?**

Not really, I just didn't think it was 'me' after all. I liked the idea of rehabilitation nursing, and I liked the idea of talking to people. I'd done some counselling courses, and was interested in doing youth welfare courses – I had started that at night school –

15:00 so at the time I was attempting to move myself into counselling courses and such. So I didn't want to move back into ward work much. I didn't think my back and shoulders would survive the lifting of patients and that.

Jacqui, do you mind if I ask you – when your marriage broke down, was that primarily because he was away so much?

No. Well, I'd say that it wasn't, but I don't know what he'd say. I think it was that we'd moved in other directions.

15:30 I just plain didn't understand what he was going through as a submarine officer at sea a heck of a lot. And he'd come home from sea, having done all these amazing things ... and I'd expect him to take the garbage out. You know, "I want to go out tonight – you've been away all month; it's Friday night; let's go out; I want to show you off." And he was too tired. So I didn't understand his work role, and I don't think that he understood

16:00 that he had a wife at home who hadn't seen him for a while and wanted to do other things with him. And we started fighting and it just went from there. So, I think it was more that we had grown in other directions and didn't know to do things for each other any more.

At the time your saw the ad for the job in Bougainville, what did you know about Bougainville?

Absolutely nothing. I knew that it was near Papua New Guinea, and that

16:30 there had been some sort of crisis there, but as far as the culture and that, I didn't know much about it at all. I knew the Panguna mine was there, and I knew there was light industry, but apart from that I thought it was probably a lot like Papua New Guinea.

Did you understand much of the fighting – who the different factions were ?

Not at all. In fact, when I applied I did some homework. A girlfriend's

17:00 husband had some videos of Bougainville, so I could see what it was all about. I think they were from a documentary TV show. Also, after Canberra I was given some books to read, so there was more info there.

Okay, sorry that I interrupted you. You were up to Bamaga?

17:30 Ah, Bamaga – life-and-death territory! So this military week we had in Bamaga. On the way up, the plane – it was a Hercules or a Caribou [transport aircraft] – had to land at Horn Island. We thought we'd be leaving straight away, but the RAAF plane went off and didn't come back for us that night – something else took its attention.

18:00 Some people are just not geared for emergencies. Foreign Affairs and Trade – some of these people just aren't geared to be on the side of a tarmac in the rain, trying to sleep. There were four Defence civilians selected to go on this; so there was this poor old major trying to give us

18:30 an instant lesson in campcraft – how to set up your hootchie; your tent; how to camp in unusual conditions. I was lucky – again, Leonie had lent me all this equipment, including a bivvy [bivouac] bag – which is a bag all encased – so, all you had to do was put it up properly and you could climb in and you were right.

19:00 You didn't have to worry about tent posts and cords and that sort of thing.

So, who else was in this group going to Bamaga?

There were twenty people who had survived the first stage of the selection. They were mainly Foreign Affairs and Trade. And then the four Defence civilians. All ages, all backgrounds, including two federal agents – coppers – one was a fella called Tracy Wilson and the other, I've just forgotten his name.

19:30 These two guys were brilliant, and both had had military experience. Their field work was amazing; they saved a lot of us. They helped us out all over the place, with information, and suggestions ... "No, don't tie your hootchie like that; it'll blow away in the night." And that sort of thing.

20:00 Those two buys were excellent; they were brilliant?

What was in your kit to go to Bamaga?

Only military gear. we were issued with backpacks; the specific beige

20:30 uniform; T-shirts; knife, fork, and spoon sets; hootchie tents; and bits and pieces of the other gear we'd need. Purely military gear; nothing personal. All that I added was underwear, toiletries, extra T-shirts, and that sort of thing. So all that was in your backpack. There was none of this business about being a dolly bird or anything; it was all business – we were going bush to do military training.

21:00 So, everything you needed you had in your backpack. You'd been given a ration pack more emergencies as well – tinned foods, packets of Smarties [candy]. They have those M&Ms [candy]. You can live on those for a long time! And some amazing chocolate

21:30 - really old and white – old army chocolate, but you could still eat. It had a use-by date of 1900 or something, but you could still eat. So for that night it was an interesting adventure. The next day the Caribou came back and picked us up and took us to Bamaga.

22:00 All the guys were unshaved and we were all unwashed, but the next day we arrived at this strip near Bamaga called Jacki-Jacki; and we were met by the local bus to take us into Bamaga. At Bamaga we were introduced to the training team – one of the people being a sergeant Scott. The other one was was Warrant Officer Blue Ryan.

22:30 He was the one who was taking us through the military procedures – you know, the bushcraft, tenting, packing the kit, the mapping. He took us through all that. Each day, for the whole week, was PT in the morning then training. Towards the end of the week there we had to go through the bush

23:00 and use the compass and what we'd learnt to get up and over the bush, along a track, which brought us to a place that sold hamburgers. So our mission was to get a hamburger and eat it.. Anyway, to us, this hill was huge. We had our kit on our backs, and mine felt like it was growing rocks or babies or something like that.

23:30 It was so heavy. But everybody made it. We all got through. And the final, final test was to be transported to Goods Island – a little island up in the Prince of Wales passage I think it is; up in the far north of Australia. A navy patrol boat took us up there and sent us ashore.

24:00 And y'know, all the way through Bougainville, the boats would put you ashore where you'd come in at your waist. They'd say, "It's shallow," but you'd get out and the water would always come up to your waist. Anyhow, we got dropped off at Goods Island to await further instructions. Warrant Officer Ryan – I think he came up on a rubber duckie [inflatable dinghy] because he

24:30 wasn't wet – he got us to break into small groups with a team leader, who was one of the training crew. We had to get around the island to the place where there was a cliff ladder, and ... see, we had to role-play that we were coming into a mountain village in Bougainville and give a speech – a spiel [talk] to the locals – about the peace process, and how we fitted into the system. So basically it was map reading, direction-finding

25:00 and then climbing the ladder to do the spiel. You had to be fit to do it. If you could get up that ladder you wouldn't be going to Bougainville. I did okay, 'cause one of the coppers had done what they called the 'Soldier's Five', which is a quick instruction on how to use the compass. He did it in such a basic way that I thought, "Ah, that's how you use the compass."

25:30 So, we went around the island and did all the trails and what have you; then this cliff ladder came into view. Remember, we've still got this heavy pack on our backs. Going up the cliff ladder you had to go slow and steady, 'cause if you looked over to the side you could have toppled off. So I was going slow and steady, thinking that there was no way I was going to make

26:00 fool of myself and fall off this, and the team leader was behind me. And I was going so slow that the team leader had time to snap off all these twigs and stick them onto my backpack – like camouflage and that. We got to the area and put our kits down then walk up to this guy who was doing the role-play. In my group, we'd decided that each of us would say a particular thing. I was going to do the beginning, and the two

26:30 Foreign Affairs guys did the foreign affairs spiel. So I walked up to this guy who was doing the role-play – he was a really nice bloke with long hair that he was airing in the sun – and I walked up to him and said in pidgin, "Good morning chief, how are you." And he's in this process of flicking his hair around; and he does the role-play. We gave the spiel to

27:00 him and everything went fine and we passed. But the boat wasn't coming back for us till the next day. So we could either stay up on top of this mountain all night and come down the next day or we could go down to the foreshore and wait for the boat. We all elected to stay up there. And rather than pitch tents and all that we ended up just sitting around under

27:30 the stars. And I've never seen anything more amazing. Shooting stars – never really seen a shooting star, and these were just everywhere. We're sitting in the dark there, just grouped around. And for some or other reason I'd started singing Wild Thing to Warrant Officer Ryan – that was like his theme song; if he arrived, I'd sing it.

28:00 So we were all there in the dark, and Warrant Officer Ryan called out goodnight to everybody; said we'd done well, yadda, yadda, yadda and that sort of thing; and someone started singing Wild Thing. Then a few other people started singing songs. And all we could think of was the first or second line of a song; you'd start off singing, sing a couple of lines and then you'd have to hum the rest.

28:30 So we ended up singing most of the night, watching the stars, gossiping. The next day we went down,

and the navy boat came and got us. They took us on a bit of a sight-see around the Prince of Wales Sound – I think that's what it's called – past all the deserted islands and what have you. Beautiful. We got back to Thursday Island

29:00 and then we were taken from Thursday Island to Townsville. But there was one final test that we had to endure on Thursday Island. And that was the Bunker Test. Sergeant Scott – one of the training sergeants on our patrol – had what was called a 'bunker' at his house. It was his wine bar – his bar. And the final test was

29:30 being invited up to celebrate passing the course and surviving the bunker. Which meant to go there and drink as much port as possible and then get home safely. Pretty wild night, but we all got home. That night we slept under the eaves at the barracks – the Thursday Island army barracks – and it rained that night. So we were all there in the rain, after the Bunker Test; a 'lovely' night ... but nobody complained

30:00 And the next day we got on the plane again and off we went to Bougainville. As the Hercules came in it did a bit of a tourist around the island. It was just amazing; all you could see was the canopy of the trees and vines and that. Anyway, we landed at an airstrip – Kieta I think it was called –

30:30 it had been bombed out during the crisis. It had been tidied up since by the first group of soldiers who went in. The first thing you do when you get off a plane like that is head for the loo; 'cause you think, it's okay using the loo on the plane once, but you think let's wait till we get there. The toilet at Kieta though, was

31:00 a bombed out shack – one room, no roof – and it had been cleaned out ever so nicely by the soldiers. So you're sitting there, looking out at the trees. This is your introduction to Bougainville. The heat and the humidity was amazing – I couldn't believe it. They loaded us onto an army truck and off we went into Lolo, which is the accommodation area in Bougainville.

31:30 It's situated on the old wharf. There was enough of the factory roof there to make an encampment underneath. Some areas were no go because they were bombed out. They actually had a transit accommodation on Loloho wharf – all the newbies [newcomers] were put in there.

32:00 We had to do some headquarters training first; getting introduced to other members of the team and so-forth. There were people from Foreign Affairs and Trade there for that. And I have to say now – and I don't know who's watching this – but Foreign Affairs and Trade people just don't work well with the military. We were taken aside and told by them, "Look, the army are such dunderheads. You want to be so careful of them. They're not worth knowing."

32:30 But they really said it to the wrong people, because they'd taken aside the two Defence Public Servants. And we both got on fine with the military. Anyway, we did all sorts of training at Loloha and got to know what the place was about. And then we all had to leave for our respective team sites.

33:00 I left to go to Tonu, which is in Konga Province on the far side of the island. That was my first ever helicopter ride. That far I'd been in a Hercules, a Caribou, a navy patrol boat, a rubber duckie, civilian plane, old truck, and a bus – all within a couple of weeks. So we were taken over to Tonu, avoiding the parts that were still 'no fly' zones, like the Panguna mine area.

33:30 The pilots at Bougainville were really good. They were bits of space cowboys, but they took us on a bit of a jaunt so that we could see the jungle.

So was that an army helicopter?

They were all pilots – army, navy and air force; a tri-service unit. In fact the best cowboy pilot I ever had was a navy guy. He was lovely, and such

34:00 a cowboy. So they took us down to our team site and the helicopter landed just across the road from it. We had to scramble out and go quickly across the road. You had to be careful in Bougainville. The women weren't allowed to be out alone; you weren't allowed outside the team site area; there were problems with the young ex-soldiers and jungle juice [illicit brew], so

34:30 you'd have to be quite careful. So we got introduced to the team and site and then boom, it was go, go, go. I spent the night in my one and only bedroom – a converted grain produce store that had been bombed and later fixed up. At first couldn't understand why they called it the 'Rat House'

35:00 but at night I did. You'd hear the scratching and scurrying sounds of rats in the roof. The next day I was introduced to my patrol; no time for ginning [talking] around, just straight into it. My patrol was called 'two one' – not twenty one – that's 'two one'. We were earmarked to go up the jungle. So I was introduced to my captain, a New Zealander – Captain Wayne Cross – and two Aussie soldiers -

35:30 Graham Hunter and Greg Rouse – and a Vanuatan sergeant by the name of Silas Jimmy. So it was, "Hello, how are you; get your bag, we're going."

So were you the only woman in that patrol?

Yes, I was the only woman on my patrol, yep. most of the patrols had at least one civilian person with them. There'd be a male public servant usually, but

36:00 they actually wanted more females, so they could get a better idea of what was going on in the crisis and the reconciliation. And they were finding that the military have a tendency to go straight down the line; whereas if there's someone else they can get a wider reporting view. And if you're a woman, well you can give them an ever wider view. Because Bougainville is quite matriarchal; there's lots of women there who could talk, but they needed to be given the chance.

36:30 **Were you aware of that matriarchal society before you left?**

I had read about it, but to me, if it was a matriarchal society, I was expecting the women to be more involved. But it wasn't; they seem to be pushed further back. I found it very strange. It's only my opinion, but I think the powers that be at the headquarters at Arawa were more interested

37:00 in hearing what the men had to say – the male elders and leaders and what have you – without much regard for the big part played by women there. I think that was a big mistake. But that's my own personal opinion. You'd go into the little villages for a meeting, and you might have to sit around for an hour till the people came in.

37:30 The locals didn't rush in to meet you. They'd saunter in, and talk about the weather for a while. And the women might come in, but they'd sit with their backs to everybody. But they'd whisper. The men would say something, and then the women would whisper again.

38:00 I said at one of the patrol meetings I was at, "Have you noticed how the women are giving the men instructions." To which I got, "You're such a sexist Jacqui; such a Germaine Greer." But it was true – the women were whispering instructions to the men, because they were the landowners.

The women were the land owners?

Yes, big land owners. but the men respected the women a lot more than a lot of us realised. In the early stages, we'd go to meetings, and, my boss –

38:30 Wayne – he was really nice. He taught me so much, even if he did rip my face off a couple of times. But that was for putting myself in danger, and even in that I learnt so much from him. He would say, "Jacqui, would you like to go talk to the ladies?" as I got quite friendly with some of them. They'd say, "Why did he send you off to talk to us alone. We want to sit with

39:00 everybody and find out what's going on?" We even sent a message to headquarters about how the women wanted to be involved in the discussions, but the personnel at headquarters didn't think that was a good idea, because they just wanted to talk to the men about men's business. But what they were looking at too, was having our women talk to the local women about the incidents of abuse going on. There were problems with the boys, lots of problems; because they were brought up in a war situation, and with the war ending, what were they supposed to do?

39:30 They didn't have jobs for a start. So the idea was for the women to talk to the women and find out what the gossip was, because after a time the women would gossip, and they'd tell you what was going on. So, they wanted to be included in the meetings and have a bigger say. The patrol that I was with had a bit of a reputation too. They were considered a bit gung-ho-macho.

40:00 Even so, those guys taught me so much about being out bush. Some of the things we saw and did, well, you wouldn't see it anywhere else on the island. We did a lot of bush time – a lot of time out; a lot of walking. And the patrols could take off on foot, or on troop carriers, helicopters, rubber duckies, landing craft – whatever suited the terrain where the different

40:30 villages were. The roads were not roads as such, either. If you could think of a track that had been washed away or bombed away, then that was their road.

Tape 8

00:30 **So what did you think when you first got to Bougainville? It must have blown you away, did it?**

I did think, "Whoa, where am I; what have I done?" The heat and the humidity was a bit of a strange thing. But it was all just go, go, go. It was all so fast – we couldn't sit around wondering what we were doing.

01:00 I have to admit that the nicest, relaxing time – in the moment that I could get a relaxing time, was with the girl that I'd met – Tracy – and we were standing on the wharf at sunset and it was just so beautiful. The water was so clear, and you could see all these coloured fish; and all sorts of things going around. It was just the most amazing sight, magical. You were tempted to think, "Yeah, tropical island; there's a bit of a party going on; yeah, I'm here," but that was ... not to be.

01:30 But the wharf at Loloho was beautiful. The sunset, and looking across to the other side of the island. They had a shack on the other side of the bay called Bonnie Doon where you could go for R&R – those that were lucky enough to have any time off, that is. The water was so beautiful; it was just coming back

to its natural colour, without any of the crap in it.

Had they briefed you on the political situation there?

When we first arrived, the political scene was ... well, it sounded like a

02:00 tape player playing on fast forward; and I said to one of the girls beside me, “What!” and she said, “What?” We had no idea what they were talking about. The political briefing was a little bit too ‘up there’. It wasn’t till half way through the tour that everything had sunk in, and you realised that what they had told you was way different from what was really going. The information we were given was very political,

02:30 and I thought, “Something’s not gelling [coming together] here; Foreign Affairs has told me one thing, but I’m discovering this and this ...” I don’t think we were given the facts, in all honesty. And again I say, my personal opinion only. But I do think that we were played a bit.

So once you’d been there for a while and had sussed [checked] out the political situation, what ... what was it?

To me, the situation was that there had been a crisis going on that had

03:00 been partly caused by the Australian government; and that Papua New Guinea had a lot to answer for with it, and that the people had not been given a lot of the factual information. I just felt that there was a lot of dancing around the real issues. The army were given a role to play, and that was to protect the Foreign Affairs and Trade people who were there getting information. The army had particular information that they needed – because it was a war situation and you had military aspects

03:30 to consider. So they had to get certain information; and they had to look after the people that were there to gather information. But I just developed the opinion that Foreign Affairs and Trade were ... they were just basically bullshitting [deluding] us. Now, that’s an unladylike thing to say, but basically, by the time I was finished there, I was thinking, “This is not what it’s cut out to be.” Fair enough, there had been a crisis; there was a crisis; but the main players were just not telling the truth.

How did that make you feel?

04:00 Angry, so angry! Disappointed too. It hit me one day ... see, as a Senior Monitor in my team, I had a codename of ‘Oracle’. Everybody had codenames, so when you were doing the radio picket you’d call in your radio checks, and use your code. The Bougainville people had means of communication, and they were listening too. And the Solomon Islands was about to flare up too,

04:30 so everybody was listening to the radio chatter. And I can remember being told by my commanding officer at the time that someone from headquarters was coming down to see what was going on. The inference was that he was just an officer coming down for a look see and a bit of R&R. So I thought, “Okay, a senior officer coming down; I’ll get the paperwork in order.”

05:00 I thought he’d want to see what was going on in the district, and what we were doing when we went out on patrol; what the local women wanted to say, and so on. And he walked over to my desk and I said hello and presented this paperwork ... well, he just looked around the room indifferently – you know, looked at the walls; looked beyond me to the Intelligence Officer’s desk. And I looked at him and said, “You’re not interested in any of this, are you?”

05:30 And he just went, “Hmmpf.” He couldn’t have cared less. I’d just started talking about the women’s issues. I’m afraid I did an unladylike thing then. I told him he should go away, and I told him what he should do with himself when he went away, because this whole thing was just a load of golly-be-gosh. I actually used swear words instead, and in no ladylike fashion, you know basically, “Piss off and stop wasting my time.” So I went and told the boss what had happened and he said, “Didn’t you know the guy was from Intelligence and he

06:00 was just here to suss out particular people?” And I said, “Well, why didn’t you tell me that before? I was just sitting there explaining issues like a dork [idiot].” And I’ve since heard from Sam – my husband – that this particular person just had that sort of style. He just wasn’t interested in what was going on unless it benefited him. And this was a person who’d been sent down from headquarters to gather information. I dunno. So it just hit me and I said to the boss,

06:30 “This is just a game, isn’t it?”

So when you start feeling like that, what sort of worth are you putting on the work you’re doing?

I was really quite sad and disappointed. You’re thinking you’re doing a lot for the place; and again, I had this really good patrol – the New Zealand Captain Wayne had taught me so much about the people; and about respecting soldiers from other countries. Not so much in terms of forgiving your enemies, but ... the thing he taught me was that we were out on

07:00 patrol one day, and he stopped to visit the Papua New Guinea Defence Forces bunker. And these guys hadn’t been paid or fed decently for quite a long time. They were really being treated horribly by their

government. So Captain Cross went over to talk to them. Well, I was only a new kid on the block, and I'd already had my face ripped off by him because

07:30 earlier I'd stayed out of sight. So I stayed near the car. I was almost attention, as though saying to Wayne, "See! I'm staying here!" Anyway, he just wanted to let the Papua guys know that he understood their position and if there was anything he could do anything for them – purely from a soldier's point of view – he would. And I mean, the guys had no food. So, if we had any food left over we'd share it with them. Anyway, Wayne came back over to me

08:00 and the two Australian soldiers I was with and said, "Why didn't you come down and talk to them?" And, I didn't want to say anything, because one of the things with Australian soldiers is, you never dob [put] yourself in; like, "Well, he said that, so .." So the idea is, if you're going to get into trouble, then you ALL get into trouble! So I didn't say anything, because I'd earlier said to the two corporals, "Shouldn't we go with him?" And they said, "Nah, let him go down and talk."

08:30 But one of the corporals said, "Sir, Jacqui wanted to go down, but I told her to stay here." And he said, "Fine. Next time I'll try to be clearer." So after that, whenever we went somewhere where there were different soldiers, he'd say whether or not it was okay for us to go with him, or whether we should wait.

09:00 There were some ... for want of a better term ... 'soldiers' of King Tori, a self-proclaimed king in the area. They were just rabble and JJ boys ('Jungle Juice Boys'). So they weren't soldiers, and we wouldn't have treated them the same. These poor guys in the Papua New Guinea Defence Force – well the boss had said, "These are soldiers doing a job they were sent out to do. We've got to show them respect." And we did, and consequently developed a good working relationship with them. If they needed assistance from a medic

09:30 they'd come up to our team site and ask Corporal Ralph if he could help them out; or if we had leftover food we'd give it to them. That wasn't allowed – it was against the rules – but we weren't going to treat them with disrespect.

Most people would assume that the PNG government would still have been in Australia's pocket?

I wasn't privy to any of the high echelons. I thought the whole political

10:00 concept was someone else's area. But I honestly think – and again, this is my personal opinion – that the Panguna mine was lining the pockets of a lot people in Papua New Guinea, and a lot of people in Australia. And when that fell through, a lot of people lost money. And I think, that when the proverbial poo hit the fan, Australia realised that they'd done something wrong

10:30 and they needed to backtrack and try and save face. Papua New Guinea seemed to be trying to help the situation by having certain people come over and talk to the locals about, you know : peace, love, and mung beans; working together, and bringing Bougainville back into the fold of Papua New Guinea.

11:00 But I think it was really all about money and what they could make out of the Panguna mine.

So what did you think of the Bougainvilleans?

Oh lovely, just lovely. You had to excuse the young men, because when you've grown up with a war and no education or future, some of them are going to go a certain way. The boss introduced me to some people in the little village near our site. It was basically a refugee village plus a bit of a

11:30 stronghold for some of the soldiers. There were incidents; a lot of break and enter. There was no police, no post office, no jails, nothing. Even the shops had limited stock. And the people were looking at the Peace Monitoring Group as supporting reconciliation and police services. And the boss introduced me to this young lad who was basically the ... basically the rapist in the village.

12:00 He was also a vicious soldier. And he looked every bit of fourteen or fifteen. I've got a photo of me with him. In it, he's about to shoot an arrow. He was basically showing off with his bow and arrow, and I said to the boss, "I'll stay here," and the boss got one of the guys to stay with me.

12:30 So I was there with him, and I said, "Ah, you're shooting an arrow; can you show me how to do it?" He shot it off, and I said, "Can I have a go?"; and he sniggered and said something to his mates. Anyway, the guard said to me, "I think we should go now." So I said, "Okay, I'll just shoot the arrow," and I aimed and shot it and did about as well as he'd done. Then I handed the bow back and said, "Great, thanks." And he was laughed at by his mates, because he'd make some smart remark to his mates about me

13:00 and I hadn't lived up to it. So it was a bit of shock. Well, later on we had to come back to this particular village because the elected policemen in the area was having problems, and especially to do with this lad. It had got to the stage where – see, there weren't supposed to be any firearms, but this copper was alleged to have shot a gun into the air. He wasn't supposed to have a weapon, because there

13:30 was supposed to have been a weapons hand-in. And basically the whole sort of trial ended up with him being the bad guy, and nobody bothered with the young kid and the rape. And I said, "This guy's a rapist but we're looking at the weapon firing?" And they said, "You've got to look at the main thing first – which is no weapons – then we'll work back from there." The boss was really good. He explained it to

me and all, but

14:00 a couple of months later we found out that he'd been murdered in the village. They'd just got tired of his actions and took the law into their own hands. But to look at him – he was only a kid. So, most of the troubles with kids in Bougainville is that one day they're soldiers expected to go into the mountains and do a man's job, and then the next day they're kids again. It must have been very hard for them.

14:30 **How did it go enforcing military rule whilst still regarding the tribal laws and such?**

Well, in our particular area a lot of it was talking. That was reconciliation; where you had two sides wanting to talk, you'd basically bring them together and get them to talk to each other. Initially, my role was to get political information. I'd said to the boss that I didn't have the foggiest idea about the political side of things

15:00 so I'll go with the women and kids and the education, and the camp itself. And talking to the women, you'd find out so much. Because the women were already doing reconciliation. They had made themselves up into little groups and were already going into areas that the men were just talking about going to. So we were getting information that way, though some of the women were a bit frightened about talking to

15:30 men in uniform. They were used to men in uniform being the enemy, and when you hear some of the horrific stories that happened in the villages – to the women and children – then you can understand why they were frightened. But again, one thing I'll say about our guys – like, one of them, his nickname was 'Neanda', short for Neanderthal. This corporal was a big

16:00 bloke, you know, a big infantry bruiser, a spit-in-the-wind bloke. He was the 2IC looking after us. We'd be going some place – and, going to the toilet you'd have to have a guard. We'd stop somewhere and I'd say, "I have to go to the toilet," and he'd say – always with a durry [cigarette] in his mouth – "Didn't ya go before we left home?" This could be days after we left of course! Anyway, he was really good with the ladies. They were a bit

16:30 intimidated by him because of his size and his uniform. So he'd step back and let me do the talking. And he was considerate with the villagers, especially with the pregnant women and the little kids with injuries. So he was a big bruiser, but really nice.

And was all communication in pidgin?

17:00 Well, they could talk pidgin, sure. But even the locals in my little town asked me to speak English because my pidgin was so bad. they'd say, "Jacqui, could you please speak English so we can understand you better?" In fact, the only pidgin I knew was a rude term. I didn't know I was saying it at the time. There was this skinny cat that hung around the our compound in the village. I thought it was a nice cat – a bit skinny and mottled. So I started feeding it milk.

17:30 It had a nickname – Kamana-something-or-other – and I was standing at the door one day with the milk, saying, "Here puss, puss, puss; here puss puss puss." Well, apparently in pidgin 'puss-puss' is really rude. It's got something to do with sex. So the locals just loved that – they were hysterical. And Corporal Ralph said, "You know what you've just said to that cat?" He told me, and I said, I said, "You're joking!" The locals hadn't seen a white woman with a cat before. Corporal Ralph said, "You

18:00 know what Jacqui; in front of everyone you've just asked that cat for sex." So yeah, my pidgin was pretty bad. Apparently, when you've finished your tour and are about to get shipped back to Australia, they give you a certificate to say you've served time in Bougainville. But you also get a fun certificate with all of your stuff-ups written on it. And there it is, my certificate with all its stuffs. And the puss-puss one is there.

18:30 **So can you tell us a bit about the reports you were sending back?**

My reports were mainly about women, education, children, and hygiene in the area. Corporal Ralph did lots of interviews about hygiene practices, and looking at the toilets and water and what have you. And I would talk to the women and children. I would have either a local guard, or the Vanuatu soldier would come with me. The women were still a bit

19:00 nervous about men in uniform, but our team had a good rapport with them. Silas, who was Vanuatan, he knew the language really well. We'd sit with the women and children, and sometimes we'd just talk about simple things, like clothes. They're amazing, the people up there. They're like sponges. So bright. A lot of them were educated in Australia. One of our local guards had degrees a mile long, and had been in the Australian army

19:30 and had served with the Israelis or something. And now Ben was just back in the jungle helping his people. But we'd sit with the women and children and talk, or just tell stories or sing songs. They'd want to know about the children back in Australia. And they wanted to know where I got my ear rings; I mean studs; you know, ears; and whether or not they could go for a helicopter ride. And they'd ask you for things; they'd say, "Can I have your watch?"

20:00 And you'd say, "No, no; it's my girlfriend's and I must give it back." They basically had nothing, and

they'd ask for things, but without being rude about it. It was like, "Well, you can get another one back in Australia, so why don't you just leave that one with me." That sort of style; not rude, it's just that they were sponges : they wanted information and things, and wanted to

20:30 bring themselves up to what they had before. They saw the Peace Monitors as a way of getting back up there really fast. But they had to take it slower than that, and it was their country, and we had to make sure that each step of the way was theirs. Anyway, my reporting was about women and children; women's issue mainly, and how the women were faring after the crisis.

21:00 **And in what manner were those reports written?**

I think the military term is a 'sit rep' [situation report], basically, a situation report signalled back to headquarters each evening. It covered what had happened during the day, how we found the people, how we found the situation. We had our own reporting book, then that would go to headquarters when the captain went up for his reviews. Anything, even my little stuffs-up got mentioned.

21:30 **Did you find that your reports were different to the military style?**

My reports were more open. It got to the stage – again, with the help of the guys – of saying exactly what I saw, and putting it down. The boss said, "There's no point in bullshitting [dissembling]; we want to know exactly what is going on." They might not like what you're saying, but you're here and you give them the information." And I said, "I'm out here and whatever I see I'll tell you; I'll support you." Towards the end my comments were becoming a bit critical – to say the least – of the situation.

22:00 Some of my reports were very blunt and to the point; "Stop dealing with the would-be-if-it-could-be situations, and start dealing with the lower echelons." Things like that – you know, really good heat-seeker stuff.

But essentially, that's what you were sent there to do, so …

I think the thing that came across was that ... well, towards the end they were saying, "We can always count on your reports being straight down the line; you don't hold any bars."

22:30 I think the boss actually wrote on my personal report that the best thing about Jacqui is that she doesn't suffer fools lightly. I thought that was the best thing to write; really good. You know, it took a long time and a lot of hardship to get to that level. It was very hard.

23:00 You know, sometimes Australian army guys can be pretty cruel if you're not careful. They can be hard taskmasters. So, it was a hard learning lesson. I'm a bit disappointed that I didn't win the Tim Tam [chocolate biscuit] for the flying, too.

Tell us about that.

It was a competition between the public servants about who would have the most flying time into particular areas. I thought that I would come

23:30 close. If I had known about the competition. Tracy Wilson – the federal copper – he said, "We weren't going to tell you about it, because we knew you had." I mean, there weren't a lot of fancy supplies in Bougainville – no Woolworths or hairdressers. You can't get little treats anywhere. The treat was that the Herc [Hercules] pilots had brought in a couple of packets of Tim Tams.

24:00 And these were dished out, one or two of them, to the team sites. It was a bit of a joke. They were looking at who had the most flying time to win a Tim Tam. Tracy got it. He reckoned he had the most flying time. But I still think I had. And I was one of the oldest people in the team – in all of Bougainville actually – at 49, I was traipsing through the jungle with a two-hundred-pound pack.

24:30 **Were there any female soldiers?**

Yes, yes there were. They could have been in any of the team sites as intelligence gatherers, medics. A lot of the female soldiers were up at Loloho. Just as I was leaving we had a female warrant officer – RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] is the Australian term – she came in, and lo and behold it was my friend from Sydney – Carla Dell.

25:00 Now, there's a hard taskmaster.

Did you ever feel you were in harm's way up there?

A number of times, yes. I think the worst time was – whilst we were at Tonu – we were told that we were having a 'closed camp'; meaning, the gates were to be shut at a certain time. The peace process wasn't going well at the time and the peace monitors had been advised that they might be pulled out

25:30 on a week or less notice. So we weren't allowed to leave the team site at all. The scary thing was that my accommodation was right against the wall, but the toilet was way up the back of the compound. And if you wanted to go to the toilet it was a good idea to ask someone to go with. I went up to the loo this one night, and coming back it was okay because the guards were there in their little huts saying, "Hurry back Jacqui; there's people out there in the bush."

26:00 One of the Vanuatu soldiers went up to the toilet just after me, and he had to dodge some arrows on the way – they were firing arrows into the compound! Anyway, we were basically told that we would have to pull out in a week. I did all the essential stuff of course – wrapped up my duty free stuff. Baskets and that. They had to go home first!

26:30 Because basically, everything you took, you had to be prepared to lose. You had your kit by the door, ready to leave, in case they said go. You'd grab your day pack which had all your basic stuff in it, and you went. Everything else would be left behind. Anyway, I made sure that I got my baskets out the next day. And the photos; they went too, because I wouldn't want to lose those.

27:00 As it turned out the week passed by without incident. The other time that was really bad was when we were up at Sirikatau on patrol. We were locked in for the night there, and there was a banging on the door. The guard came in and told us this guy had been hacked up in a fight. It was the 'jungle juice' – really bad; home made brew. It caused a lot of fights. A lot of people were drinking it because there wasn't anything else to do. And this guy had been hacked so badly that they didn't think he would live. They carried him around to the back, and Ralph came out;

27:30 and the boss said, "Okay, Ralph, you're the boss; you tell be what you want. Do you want him carted off?" It was tense, because the locals were starting to gather, starting to come and have a look. And we'd heard rifle fire that night as well, up in the bush. There was supposed to be no weapons, but there were. Anyway, this guy had been hacked really badly, and the photos I've got – well, he's a mess. I think he actually died and the medic – Ralph – revived him.

28:00 So the boss said, "Ralph, you're the medic, it's your call. Do you want to bring him in and operate on him in the building?" Because you weren't supposed to bring the locals into the building. But Ralph worked on him then and there on the step. I don't know if we put a drip in. Ralph worked on him. The machete hackings were huge – like, running the whole length of his head, across his face; and from his shoulder to his middle. Someone had just sliced him all over. Then one of the locals got

28:30 a truck and took him up to what's laughingly called the hospital at Sevali. But he survived. And we saw him a couple of days later at a sing-sing. Ralph walked over to him and said, "What are you doing here?" He was all bandaged up in the homemade bandages. But we had been invited to the first sing-sing at Bougainville. We got special permission to go. It was in this, like, mountain crater.

29:00 It was at night, and we were walking, walking, walking down into this mountain crater. It was amazing. And the guide that came with us, he had the torch, and he just walked off, leaving us in the dark. He had heard his friends, so off he went. Ralph took a step and then fell down the side of the mountain – luckily, onto a ledge. We got another torch and the boss yelled out to him, "Sit tight; don't move." Anyway, the boss and the other corporal reached over and grabbed him.

29:30 The boss later ripped the face off the guard. I mean, anything dodgy going on around the team site then this guard was into it. We had two amazing guards – Big Joe, he was an ex-bodybuilder; and Ben Paula. He was just a beautiful man. They were fabulous. But Dom, he was ...shaky deal, shaky deal, he was there – struth! Anyway, we went down to this sing-sing, and it was amazing. James Tanis – Joseph Kabui's assistant – he was there . He was being recognised by the other chiefs.

30:00 I was around and around and around; and there were parties going on all night. Our team was invited over to the chief's house to rest. Really nice. We were invited into the chief's house and I ... I was allowed to sleep with the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s. So all the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s were there – cluck, cluck, cluck – and I was allowed to rest with them. the sing-sing went on all night and it was amazing.

30:30 it was the first one they'd had since the crisis began – so that's ten or twelve years. And the next day, there was this really big, fat pig being shown around. It was huge. James Tanis – well he'd just gone through the celebration of being carried on the other chiefs' shoulders – he said, "Well, you're staying for breakfast I hope; there it is there." But we had to go back.

31:00 **Had you eaten some of the local food?**

In fact, it got to the stage where the guys had said, "Please Jacqui; don't admire anything you see in the village." 'Cause we'd walked into this tiny village in the mountains – such a lovely little picturesque village, almost like a hobbit village – and I said to the guide and the chief and the elder who'd come down to meet us, "Oh, look at that duck; it's so cute." Lo and

31:30 behold, what turned up for tea that night : the duck! They brought this big pot of veggies up, and it had the duck's feet sticking out of the top. And I said, "What'll we do." And the boss said, "You'll eat it." Then the next time we walked into a village I think I admired the cat, and the guys said, "Don't go near the cat Jacqui. Do not go near the cat!" They thought we'd end up with it for supper. But a lot of the local food was

32:00 vegetables – a lot of vegetables – and down near the sea it was fish. Pig was very big. In fact, King Tori sent over to Sirikatau a couple of fatted pigs in thanks for us being there. A couple of the guards slaughtered these pigs and they had this big party. I was pretty vegetarian in Bougainville though, that's for sure.

32:30 **It must have been a constant thing to stay on your toes as far as maintaining your health was**

concerned ...

Very much so. We had water purifying tablets, and ate a lot of ration food. There was a time too, when I would have died if I saw another packet of M&Ms. There's another story about that. But the village people

33:00 were very nice. They'd always be offering you food. I tried to stay vegetarian though, even though I'm not a vegetarian normally.

What were the dangers with meat?

Well, you didn't know where it was from. They had a lot of pigs, and the word was that the meat wasn't clean. The pigs that we got from King Tori, well, they were in excellent health. Because they were the King's pigs, they had been specially treated. And when they had their big party for the celebration of

33:30 the King, they saved these two for the Peace Monitors. And they were in perfect condition. Oh, the smell ... cooking pig in the flesh. You're standing there saying, "Oh, this is really nice isn't it; the way they've prepared it and ..." And you'd look over at the boss, and you'd make a face that said, "Please, please I don't want any of this, I'm vegetarian today."

34:00 Thank God for ration packs.

And what's your M&Ms story?

We were up in the jungle. We'd been traipsing through the jungle. Now I'm five foot three, and the boss was about five four, and there was a lot of long grass and everything. What you used to do was load up all your pockets with supplies; like you'd have the toilet paper in this pocket and food; all of the essentials in your pockets.

34:30 So we're walking through the jungle feasting on M&Ms as we went. Anyway, when we got back to the site I had a package – my girlfriend Leonie had sent me a package. I had asked for some Napisan [nappy bleach], because my uniforms looked so atrocious. And she she'd sent me a treat as well: a packet of M&Ms! So there I am, out in the bush living on M&Ms, and there's these M&Ms ...

35:00 But lo and behold, Leonie had sent our friend Carla, who'd just arrived as the new team site Sergeant Major, a beautiful box of chocolates. And I'm the flat mate who gets the M&Ms, and Carla gets the chocolates. I couldn't go near an M&M for a long time after Bougainville.

Were you told how long the deployment on Bougainville would be?

35:30 Four months they said. At the end the team site Sergeant Major said that if we could extend it, that'd be good. They were having trouble finding replacements I think. Anyway, it was getting close to my redundancy time and I thought they'd be wanting me back in Sydney, so I didn't stay on. But, it was a good amount of time. I think we were becoming a bit complacent.

36:00 You need the rotation to avoid that. I think the soldiers there had to stay for six months. I think the Fijians had to stay longer than that. For some of the civvies though, well, I'd heard they just weren't coping with the conditions and with having to go out bush and that. I think I was probably one of the civvies who did a lot of bush time.

Did you find yourself ending up enjoying that sort of stuff?

Loved it; absolutely loved it. There was a bit of a settling-in period and ...

36:30 it was funny ... the corporal when I first arrived – Graham Hunter – had never worked with civvies before. And he had that attitude, "Yeah, snivelling civvies, what would they know." Anyway, when we went out bush, we were up at a village miles away from everywhere – walked through the tall grasses – and we had to go across this river. The guard took my

37:00 backpack for me to cross. Well, I had to carry something, so I carried the corporal's little survival bag. And he had in it his cigarettes, and he said, "I don't care what else happens, but if you drop my cigarettes, yer dead." So I was most worried about the cigarettes, and as I crossed the river got higher and higher. And I was lifting the cigarettes higher and higher. When we got to the other side

37:30 we realised that I'd being carrying the batteries for the radio as well. But he was going on about his cigarettes. And would you believe that I had to ask him to take me to the toilet that night! He hated me I think. Another time, we were in this little village. We were playing volleyball with the people and I wasn't very good at it. Finally, he said, "Jacqui, I think you'd be better on the sideline cheering us on."

38:00 Anyway, that night I said, "I have to go to the toilet." And the boss said, "Didn't you go before we left home." Anyway, Corporal Hunter said he'd take me this time. He got his durry [cigarette], and off we sauntered up this dark hill. And I waited outside for a while, and then said, "You have to go in and check it." And he said, "What, I have to walk you up here and then check the

38:30 toilet as well? Gone on, you can do that." So I went in, and when I came out I couldn't see him, couldn't see anyone. So I'm standing there in the dark. Little did I know that he – being a good infantry corporal – had moved off to the side to stand in the bushes in case anyone came along. But I'm thinking for that

moment, “It’s dark, no escort; I’m standing here alone …” So I’m off – whoosh, running through bushes to get back, and I hear this voice, “Oy, what about waiting for the guard!”

39:00 So I stopped dead in my tracks and it was yarp, yarp, yarp, “You frightened me! Don’t you ever do that again!” It was very funny.

By the end, were you counting down the time you had left?

No, no I wasn’t at all. Right up till the end I was still have amazing experiences. The bush was amazing. I must say that when I got home and told some girlfriends that I had never slept with so many men in all my life, even if it was all fully clothed; because every time you’d go out bush you’d always be in the middle – the guys would be on either side –

39:30 some of the places we went to, well, the JJ boys would test you; testing the waters, like. They’d come right up to the campsite or huts or what have you, and so any girls in the group had to sleep in the middle for protection. But the experiences were amazing. Going on a landing craft for instance, an LCMH. Going up to Torokina, I was actually lent to

40:00 another patrol for a while. I don’t know why; maybe for the comic relief! Anyway, we were going up to Torokina on an LCMH and all along the way were little villages where you’d go ashore and talk to the people. Or you might go ashore and then be helicoptered inland. Anyway, the LCMH lowered the back down one time, and the soldiers

40:30 ran ashore. They’d wait for the waves to recede then someone would say, “Run,” and they’d run ashore and hardly get wet at all. Well, the Fijian Captain waded with me, and the LCM crew said, “Run,” and off I went straight into a pothole. It practically drowned me. The Fijian Captain grabbed me by the scruff of the collar and sort of threw me ahead of him, because the waves were backwashing under the LCMH. So I was coughing and spluttering

41:00 and the LCMH crew were calling out, “Come back and do it again ’cause we didn’t have our cameras ready!” But the only thing that floated out of my pockets in all that was the toilet paper. How embarrassing.

Tape 9

00:30 **What sort of medical treatment were you doing with the locals?**

We would go out into the villages: the villages near Tonu. It was called a patrol. You’d take information out to different people. And what was asked by Corporal Ralph or any of the other medical people was for them to stop and have a look at the medical facilities to see what they were like, so that they could report back to headquarters. And we

01:00 stopped at the hospital; but it’s not a hospital as such – it’s a building with beds and a little bit of equipment, sort of re-used bandages and what have you. And this one particular ward – it was the birthing ward. And this little woman – she was a tiny little thing – had walked down from the mountains to have her babies delivered; she was having twins. One of the babies had been delivered that morning, and there was still another one of them to be delivered

01:30 that night. She was lying on a slab table and Corporal Ralph asked if he could view the lady; if he could see her. Wherever we went where there were women, I went with him as well. So we did it a check for the lady and the baby, and everything was fine. The heart beat was good and that sort of thing. He asked what sort of equipment they had there – they basically didn’t have anything – and how the baby was delivered and such. And then he had a look at the first born baby to see how it was going

02:00 The PMG weren’t allowed to give too much to the locals. They were to be encouraged to develop things for themselves, we were told. But it was really disappointing that during the crisis this whole hospital had been destroyed, one that was fully equipped and one of the best in the southern hemisphere. They even had four new ambulances that were fully equipped. And yet ten to twelve years down the track you’re looking at a birthing room that was just a table, with wooden slats.

02:30 Corporal Ralph said to them, “Are you using sterilised equipment?” and they said yes, that they are boiling things in a pot. As far as injuries there wasn’t much the local medical people could do. And they were just asking for whatever help they can get.

Were you well received, or were the people scared of you ?

Oh no; so well received, yes. The popular misconception was that the

03:00 **Bougainvillians were … like Neanderthals; really basic people. But that wasn’t the case. Unfortunately a lot of people thought that because they only lived in little huts and such; and that therefore they didn’t have any sense. But when you treated the people with respect, and took the time to get to know them, then any help you gave, that was well received. If you to the time just to talk to them,**

03:30 **then they thought that was lovely as well – that you could be bothered to talk to them. And at the headquarters at Loloho, and I believe there were some amazing procedures done. And especially with the women and the birthing. Some of the doctors did amazing things.**

What about yourselves? Were you taking medication for things like malaria?

Yes. We were taking medicine every day – doxicycalin every day – and we had an eradication program when we got back.

04:00 **The doxi was given the nickname of lollies. So there was a bowl of lollies on each table, and the medic would say each day, "Has everybody had a lolly?" And every day, you took it. But some people had quite serious reactions to the lollies. And some people had quite serious reactions to the new anti malaria treatment that they were trialling. The only thing that I noticed about the treatment was that it made me a bit photo-sensitive – I noticed, if I went out in the sun without sunburn cream on,**

04:30 **then I would get all or red. But apart from that, I didn't have any trouble with it at all. What sort of trouble were other people having with that?**

Headaches and nausea were the main things. The worst cases brought some throwing up.

You had briefly mentioned that some of women had confided to you about the atrocities that had gone on?

05:00 **We'd gone up the north, up to a place called Torokina. I was on loan to another patrol at the time we were sitting around talking to the locals. My guard was actually a private from 3 RAR in Sydney. He was lovely. He was doing the interpreting for me. And the women, we were talking to the women about basic things like education. We'd ask them to how they were going with their children's education – is there a school here?- and whether there were any shops nearby. We'd ask them how the young**

05:30 **women were going; whether they were staying in the village or going to the towns. You'd start conversations with the things like that, because, like in Australia, you don't just start off with saying, "How is the rape situation?" But we'd heard reports that there had been abuse and that that was one of the worst areas with rape and what have few and it wasn't until we got friends with one of the local ladies – I think she'd been a nurse in the local hospital – that we learned about it.**

06:00 **She'd heard of a lot of abuse during the crisis. But there was no after care, no grief counselling, No women's refuges or anything. Talking was basically, to the local nurse; there was no point to talking to the district person, because he or she might be from Papua New Guinea, and the district managers weren't liked some areas. Some of them were excellent, but others weren't.**

06:30 **Who were the abusers?**

I think in some cases they were the other side and then when things got really bad they came from the inside. I couldn't say for sure whether this was the true case or not.

07:00 **Can you explain what the 'reconciliation huts' were?**

Sort of huts where people could go and talk. They were open air. You might go to a meeting for instance, and every one would just sit in a circle on the ground. And in Buka for the reconciliation, it was almost like a building that hadn't been completed. It was just a big room in a big building.

07:30 **And what actually would go on in there?**

We would sit and talk. The patrol captain would talk to the elders. If it was a big meeting – for example, about a weapons hand back, then a Foreign Affairs and Trade official would come down from headquarters, along with other headquarters personnel. So you'd sit there and talk, and listen to what the locals had to say; what the different warring factions had to say about the situation and where it was going.

08:00 At one of the big talks at Sevali; it was a big BRA – Bougainville Resistance Army – talk, about how far the peace process had gone. And every one from the community had a chance to stand up and talk. They recorded it. And they had the officials from headquarters down, and the federal copper – Tracy Wilson – he was there

08:30 plus there was a couple of officials from Foreign Affairs and Trade doing the analysis. That's where I first met James Tanis. Joseph Kabui wasn't there – there was a bit of a drama with Joseph Kabui; someone had threatened his life. So he didn't go, but James went in his place. But lots of local groups did go. It was fabulous to see. And I said to the boss at the time, "Can I sit with women?"

09:00 A few weeks before they had asked if they could come to the meeting to have their say. So they did, and they came in their church choir outfits, which were blue and white long dresses. And the main speaker got up to talk, and I asked if I could sit with them. See, we'd encouraged them to talk, so I thought it would be supportive if I sat with them. Anyway, he said, "Yeah, as long as I can see you at all times."

09:30 And every now and then he'd pan around to see who was in the group, because there were quite a lot of people there – including the Papua New Guinea Defence Force guys; were there as well – the guys from the bunker. And he'd be panning around, and our eyes would meet every now and I would signal to him that everything was okay.

10:00 Anyway, the ladies were lovely, and when they stood up to give their speech, they were really nervous. There was only one lady speaking at a time, and she was really nervous because she was speaking to not only the men from her area, but also the foreign officials. She gave quite a good speech, then our guard got up and gave a speech – our guard at the time was Big Joe – he had been a body builder before the crises, quite titled. And he spoke about policing and bringing back law and order.

10:30 It wasn't just, "Blah, blah, blah, we need a copper or two." He talked about really amazing things. He was talking about how the people could respect themselves, and how they should respect the villages, and how the community should work with the elders – he gave a pretty amazing speech. So the meeting took all day. Sometimes you'd go to these meetings and you'd sit around and it would just be a rabble. Or rather, it would seem like rabble, but these people always had an agenda, formal – they're quite a formal people actually. Each meeting

11:00 would start with a prayer, then the speaker would formally thank the peace monitoring group; then they'd thank the different villagers who'd come in, and then they'd get on with the agenda. And all the time there might be people wandering in and out – like, an old codger [man] would wander in, and then someone else would wander out – and then they'd go on with the agenda. But even so it was formal, and everyone knew when to come in and speak, and so forth.

11:30 **Can you elaborate on the work that the women did behind the scenes?**

I went to the district manager's office and I found out that a woman there had started a little room up for information – like, a women's community information office.

12:00 I had some Women's Weeklys [magazines] or something from Australia, which I took up there. And while I was there, she was telling me that they'd organized a women's' sewing group to go into one of the villages that they'd had trouble with. What they were doing was – because the girls had been caught up in war and hadn't learned to cook or sew – what they had now was a lady who had been in the Solomons during the crisis where she had learned to sew and to cook. So she was now teaching the ladies in the village to sew.

12:30 And as a result, someone from another village said that people in this or that village would be very interested, even though it was the other sides' village. So what happened was that some of the ladies went over to the other village and said, "Would you like to come to some sewing classes?" and they did, and some friendships began to grow from that. And once the word got out amongst the women – because they're great gossips – it started; little pockets of women would go places and teach and help out. Pretty amazing. I heard that some of the women from the

13:00 Panguna mine area – which was actually a 'no go' area – went up to speak to the women there. And it was amazing – one of the women in the Barna Freedom Group – ... it was something like that; can't quite remember the name – well, she had said to me, "We are all just mothers, we do this for our families and our children; we don't want them going what we've gone through."

13:30 So, lots of the women were working towards peace. I thought it was all really amazing, and that it was a really powerful statement from a, just a supposed 'bush woman'. Another thing this lady said to me was that the men were quite happy to go on a helicopter ride, or to hang around the team's site, and they liked to talk, but not to do anything about what they talked about. That was interesting too.

14:00 And she said to me, "Why aren't the women allowed on the helicopter rides?" And I said, "Well, I just don't know." I actually sent that one back, one of my reports – you know, personal comments. Because you always have to be careful with reports, to make sure that they are factual. And when you sent a report, you couldn't just say, "This lady said..."; you said what, who said it, where, or whether it was your own personal feeling, or whether it was the patrols' thoughts about what was going on.

14:30 On that report, I basically said, "Civilian monitor's comments: isn't it about time we stopped vetting these people, and started looking at the real workers and the peace process. Because it was the women who were going in, and doing things, and not simply talking about it."

Do you know if any of the women ended up getting a helicopter ride?

I don't know. When I came back to Australia I wrote to them; remember, there are no post offices and you'd have to rely on the team site people to on-forward mail for you.

15:00 **And I did write to Monica at Sirikatau, to ask her I hoped that the meetings were going well, and I hoped she was pursuing the women's' push for reconciliation. Sounding positive all the time – that's about all you could say. I don't know if they got the letters or anything.**

You were talking before about how the civilians went in the bush; do you know how well they were coping working with the military?

15:30 Not really good. The Defence civilians were okay, because they had worked with them before. But a lot of the Foreign Affairs and Trade people who hadn't worked with the military before, found it all a bit strange. There was the impression that the military were purely there to support Foreign Affairs and Trade and had to do their bidding.

16:00 That's not really good – not to a soldier being told by some person that they're here to do their bidding. Some of the Foreign Affairs and Trade people were using Bougainville as a stepping stone to other overseas positions. I mean, if you had Bougainville on your resume you could go ahead to other areas.

16:30 But I'll say too, that there were some Foreign Affairs and Trade people who were absolutely magical. They had done time overseas in third world countries, and they were really lovely to work with. The new kids on the block – they were a pain in the neck, and I don't think they had much respect for the military at all.

Working back closely with your patrol group, were there ever tensions or spats [disputes]?

Oh yes. The corporal threatened to kill me at one stage. It was funny. We

17:00 were out on patrol and the corporal and the sergeant were off somewhere; and I'm sitting there by myself, and I thought, "This is a bit strange – where's everybody gone?" So I went over to one of the ladies and was chatting to her. Now, the ladies were a bit savage that they had water tanks in the area, or at least AusAID [Australian Agency for International Development] had left water tanks in the area, but no fittings. So she was saying to me, "So can you get someone to give us

17:30 the fittings so we can get this going?" Anyway, she showed me the water tanks, and I'm still looking around for the rest of my patrol, and I finally saw Corporal Hunter and said, "What's going on; where is everybody?" And he said, "You don't need to be told; when you need to know, you'll be told." So I said, "What are you talking about?" and he just walked off. Anyway, we came back to our main team site that night and everyone was giving their reports and then he started to fold it up. And I said, "Oy, what about me?"

18:00 And he said, "Look, we're not interested in women's issues at the moment. We don't what to hear about it. We've got more important situations to deal with." And I said, "Right, you and me, outside now." And we went out, and I went off. We were at each others' throats for a while. It turned out that he had been told by one of the officers to gather specific information, and he was getting it. But at the time he'd forgotten to tell me. So he apologised for that, but I was on a roll by that time.

18:30 My mouth was just going, "Yarp, yarp, yarp." And I couldn't stop. I told him he was everything under the sun, and a Neanderthal in particular – that's where he got the nickname from. I told him that I wasn't a snivelling civvie and that I'd done military time, long before he was in the army. Anyway, we quietened down after that

19:00 because the boss came out and pulled us apart. So, it turned out that someone else was sort of setting us up. Which people have a tendency to do when you're all getting on well. But at the end of the tour he came up to me and said, "You're the most amazing civvie I've ever worked with." And I said, "Yeah, how many have you worked with?" And he said, "None." So we got on well in the end, and he sent me a lovely Christmas card;

19:30 but were at each others' throats for a long time.

The captain you mentioned – the one who ripped your face off [abused you]. What was that for?

When we first arrived we were told about the security situation. I arrived really fast and jumped in the wagon and was out of the team site within a day or so. Well, we were up at Buka – which is the refugee camp and a nasty area – and got out of the car to introduce himself to the elder.

20:00 Anyway, there was a whole load of women and children and young people around, and I sort of waved; and they all laughed and giggled. So I walked over there and said hello, you know, "Hello, hello, hi there; how ya going!" And this group of people, well, it turned out that they included murderers. The women and children were lovely, and

20:30 some of the others were lovely; but I'd just walked straight into this huge nest of people without any consideration; you know, playing the crowd. The boss casually walked over – though really fast – and said, "Get into the car now." So I said, "Bye, see you later," to the group, and said to him, "Ah, they're a lovely crowd aren't they." Well, you know how a voice starts off quiet and then gets louder and louder; and I was thinking, "Ah no, I've done the wrong thing."

21:00 He said that I had put the whole patrol into jeopardy. If anything had happened then someone else would have had to come and get me, and then the rest of the group would have been unprotected. Someone could have been injured because it was a bad team site. I could have been injured or killed or dragged off – he basically did the whole security lesson in five minutes, as best he could, with only saying a few swear words. But I learnt from that! And from then on,

21:30 I was a good girl. And at the end of it he said, "Well, what have you got to say for yourself?" And I apologised to him for it, and could only say, "I understand the security situation and I'm sorry I've

jeopardised the patrol, but I didn't know, I just didn't know." And he apologised for yelling at me, and I said, "That okay, its good – I've learnt; it's a hard lesson but I've learnt."

22:00 And at the end of the tour he gave me a magical, an excellent report. But he taught me a lot about the bush. And one thing that all the guys were really pleased about, was that when there was something that needed to be done, I always got in there and helped; or I'd do something else that would help them. For instance, we had to put up this eleven by eleven tent at the team site. Well, I'd never put up one of them before, and had to say, "What'll I do?"

22:30 So they said that you did this and that. They weren't expecting me to offer help. So we put the tent up, and the guys showed me other ways of securing it. And I said, "That's really good." Then we went out on the trail, and the guys have this GPS – the global positioning satellite – and I said, "Can you show me how to work that in case anything goes wrong?" When we were out on patrol there were different things I'd help with.

23:00 If they were doing something technical that I couldn't do, then I'd say, "Would you like me to do this or that," and help out any way I could. I was always there with them, even if I couldn't be as heavily involved in whatever they were working on. Later on I was loaned to another patrol who were going up to Torokina on the LCMH, [Landing Craft] Well, we had to put up an eleven by eleven tent there, and they had a civilian Foreign Affairs and Trade bloke there with them. And he had been very critical of the defence civilians; he was plain rude, and hardly a team player at all; quite nasty in fact.

23:30 He didn't have a clue about the bush stuff. He'd just gone straight to Bougainville; didn't know how to put the tent up. When I came back to my original site, I told them that I could put the tent up, and they said, "Yeah, we've already heard what you can do out bush." They were pleased, even if they did remind me to thank them for teaching me. The boss said later that the boys were so pleased when they heard through the grapevine that I'd done all this.

24:00 The boys took the accolades of course – "Yes, it was us; we taught her." And at the end of the tour they said it was really good for them to know that they'd taught me a thing or two. It was good; a little credit.

With the Panguna mine area being a no go area, did you ever have any interaction with anyone from there?

Yes. We attended a young girl who'd walked down from the Panguna mine area with her parents.

24:30 She turned out to be a niece of Francis Ona. [Bougainville political leader] She had malaria, but we couldn't tell at the time. She was suffering cramps and what have you. Corporal Ralph worked on her because they'd asked for a medic. It was a pretty dicey situation because of who she was and where she came from. Anyway, the boss said to Corporal Ralph that he'd take on board his medical opinion, and that he should take me with him

25:00 into the little hut – the guys, they were always very mindful of the situation with women. They always made sure that if there was interaction with women that I was there. Anyway, we went in and Ralphy checked her over and that, and said, "I honestly can't get a picture here of what's wrong. I think it might be a rape, but I don't dare say that or ask those sorts of questions." So he got me to stay with her and talk to her.

25:30 Her mother and father could speak reasonable English, so I stayed there and chatted with them. I asked her if she had a boyfriend, and whether he treated her well; and we talked about menstrual cycles and things like that, and how she was going. Eventually I asked her if anyone had hurt her recently, and she said no. And then getting to the next question was really hard. You just can't come out and say, "Have you had bad sex lately?" Really hard to say that with her parents there and all.

26:00 So, I went out to Ralph and said, "This is what I'm going to ask next ..." And he said, "Okay," and came back in with me. So we asked her and she said no, so Ralph checked her out again. Anyway, it turned out that she had really bad malaria plus a few gastric problems as well. But one of the things that one of the village elders said to the guys was, "How come you're with Jacqui all the time – who does she belong to? Whose girlfriend is she? She seems to be with everybody."

26:30 And the guys said, "No; that's how we treat the women in Australia. We treat them with respect and we work with each other." And for Neanderthal – Corporal Graham – to say that along with big Ralph, it was just amazing. And the villagers said it was really nice to see the way the Australian men treated the women. Anyway, this young girl apparently went back and gave a very good report

27:00 about how she'd been treated by the medical people with the PNG. That was really good, because it had been a touchy situation dealing with people from the no go area. But malaria, there was a lot of malaria and a lot of people with the same symptoms. The water they were drinking was bad.

Did you ever see any World war II sites when you were there?

27:30 **Yeah. Apparently there was – just around the corner from Tonu – there was an old Australian tank. On Anzac Day they all went down there and had a service at the tank. And in the jungle there was some amazing bits and pieces. Up in the mountains there was a plane that had been shot down by the Japanese.**

28:00 **I think the pilots had got out uninjured, but something had happened; the locals couldn't protect them and they were captured by the Japanese and later killed. But the plane was almost intact. During the crisis the plane had been stripped of anything that might be useful for the war. And there was hidden equipment all around the place.**

28:30 **Every now and then the natives would show the guys bits and pieces of equipment they'd found – could've been a gun, or some piece of a firing mechanism, or a piece of a Bofors [anti-aircraft gun].**

When you were out in the field, what was the process involved in being a radio picket?

29:00 Ah. My maths was bad, and I always seemed to get a frequency in the twelve to four position. For ages I couldn't work out how I got it. See, you'd have to do a radio picket out bush to show your position. Basically it was for a radio check. Whenever there was a patrol on a particular timeframe you'd have to do a radio picket. The problem was that about midnight you'd have

29:30 to change your radio frequency. And I was quite a numfy on the radio picket. I kept getting the call signs, and I'd write down the whole radio message. When I did the radio I'd look at what I had to say and then read it off. But everybody else said it really fast – they were experts at it. Then it would come to my turn on the picket and I'd be saying sort of, "This ...is ... patrol ... two one ... correct ... over."

30:00 And then you might have to change your radio frequency, and I'd been thinking, "Please no, not the frequency, I can't do changes in the dark with a torch." There was quite a nasty change one night, and I couldn't do it, just couldn't manage it. And the TSM [team supervisor] was on the radio back at the team site, and he was walking me through it over the radio. And you've got to remember that you're using all your call signs like 'Oracle' and that – saying things like, "Two One Over" – backwards and forwards and all that sort of thing.

30:30 And I'm getting more and more confused and thinking, "I'm going to wet myself here; I don't know what I'm doing." Anyway, finally the TSM comes over the radio and explains how to do the frequency change; and I did it, and said in amazement, "Oh wow, I'm there!" Which went all through the network, to headquarters, and the militia listening in, and even to the Solomons, I suppose. And of course, that one ended up in the line book and on my certificate.

31:00 **So what was the actual radio equipment that you were using?**

It was an army radio and it was quite heavy; you know, about to two foot by one foot. It had those heavy radio batteries that you had to carry. If you camped out, you had to do radio contact and what have you. But I hated radio pickets, I just couldn't get it right; in the last week, I did get it right – I was,

31:30 "patrol two-one blah blah Roger, over." In the last week, it was all there, it just fell into place. One of the guys took a photo of me on radio picket at Sirikatau; because it had finally worked too, and I'd dispatched to my New Zealand army captain to say that I was on radio picket and it was finally working.

32:00 **So when the four months were up, were you sad to leave?**

I was sad because a lot of things had kicked into place, especially because I had made friends with the women. We were told from the start that we'd make a lot of friends, and that we'd feel like we'd accomplished things and as the end drew near we shouldn't feel despondent; that's just the way things were

32:30 I suppose that I did realise, that I'd been lied to a bit in the beginning and as things went on, it was almost like everything clicked into place, and I was going ahead, and talking to the women. So in a way, it didn't bother me that to what I was reporting might not have been what headquarters wanted; for me, I was just telling the truth and reporting what I was seeing

33:00 Getting to know what the army people wanted, getting to know the way they worked and what have you – it all came together in the last few weeks, and you thought, "Well, I'm ready to go now." It's like any new job, you're starting to know the locals, and they're are starting to know you; you're knowing the procedures and where things go so it seemed like a pity that things had to end so soon. I think if we'd done six months, that would've been excellent, because everything was just starting to click into place.

33:30 **So what was the shipping out process?**

We got the helicopter back to Loloho with our goods and chattels. We were given a bit of a debriefing; and given the opportunity to talk to psych colonel – were we going home, did we have any one to talk to; things like that; and also, Warrant Officer Blue Ryan, he came up to see us and he was standing on the tarmac when our helicopter came in; I saw him, and I said to the other civvies, "That's

34:00 Warrant Officer Ryan," and it was almost like she took an extra breath because she knew what I was going to do. I took my backpack off and threw it on the ground, and waved the shirt I was carrying around my head and sang Wild Thing to him. And by the end I'd dropped down on the tarmac and grabbed him around the knees as I sang. And he had a whole new group of team monitors – and all he could do was look at the stars and pray to God to come in get him. But he was a good sport about it. So, we got Loloho. We only had to stay there a day or so; hand in any kit that we had to and do the

debriefings so I ended up are

34:30 winding down at Bonnie Doon, on this beautiful little beach, and swimming in the clear waters. Anyway, word came over the mess radio that the civvies should be at such and such office at such and such time. So the next day, we packed up and went up to the meeting point – and bad news, our Hercules was stuck in Townsville. This went on for two days. On the third day – we were having breakfast, all packed up and ready to go again – message came over the PA [public address system], saying, "All the you Australians

35:00 who think they're going back to Australia today will not be." Aaagh; we ended up staying four or five days in all. It was a bit hard, because there's only so much swimming and wandering round you can do. You weren't affiliated with team's site any more; you were just in transit. So one of the other girls and I became friendly with some of the people from ground maintenance – security personnel basically – and they took us for ride in

35:30 the back the truck to Arawa. The truck was a paddy wagon, so there we were locked in the back of a paddy wagon [police vehicle]. We got to Arawa – to the little shopping centre there, and there were all these locals laughing and carrying on – about the civvies in the paddy wagon. Its so that was fun. We also made friends with the captain who was looking after the stores

36:30 and he said, "Well you girls must be in need of girl time," and we said, "Yes," and he said he'd got just the thing for us. And he took us into his office area. And made us coffee and he said, "I'll even put on a day girly video for you." He had coffee and air-conditioning and videos! So, he put on the girly video and went off to make us coffee and as he did it he made sounds like a cappuccino machine; and he opened up a packet of biscuits for us and we said, "So this is what girl time is; haven't had it for

37:00 four months," that was just really nice, air-conditioning and all. And the next day we flew out.

Was there any sort of goodbye with the locals.

Yeah. They had a sing-sing that night too – not sing-sing, more of a sing-along our team site beforehand; and they came in and sang songs for us.

37:30 We were sitting around a little fire that we'd made up and had hails and farewells and what have you. What the commanding officer would do was, he'd got a little mat made up with 'Conga MP' on it, and he'd present each person leaving with one them. And the ladies sang, and there was some presents given out. My patrol team gave me some shells; a shell necklace. Little things like that.

38:00 **Did the locals give you anything?**

Yes, I've got some lovely fans that the locals gave me; beautiful little handmade fans with 'Jacqui, Australia' painted on. Wool is very hard to get, so they used their own.

Your patrol group, did you all come back together?

No, just the civilians. the patrol were there for six months. When we got

38:30 up to the headquarters it was basically just hails and farewells. And Major General Jeffrey it was – we all stood up in front of the whole of Loloho and got praised for our services, and we received Australian Service Medals and also a silver key from the people of Bougainville. So that was lovely. It was really nice. Unfortunately at

39:00 the time the medal was only a replica, because they were still be made, but it was nice to presented with it up there and have photos taken and what have you.

It must have been quite rewarding ...

Well, it was more rewarding because when we were standing there, everyone else said, "Jacqui, you say something." So I stood up – again, thank you army for giving me the ability to walkup starts; so I said thank you to the people who had made the presentations, and I said thank you

39:30 to the people here – the people that make up Loloho – to the pay people who'd helped out, and the chefs who ... see, sometimes you'd fly in only to pick up a flight back to your teamsite from the jungle and the chefs were always happy to help us. I said the military have taught us so much; about survival in the bush; the 171 pilots have given us amazing free rides around Bougainville

40:00 and ... I basically just praised everybody and said thank you, but made it quite clear in the accolades that we as civilians had learnt so much from the military. Because there had started to be some little snaky remarks about the military. And one of the soldiers came up later and said, "I don't know you, but I've heard about you, and that was really nice what you said."

Tape 10

00:30 **So, getting back to Townsville. Did you dream of eating something nice when you got home?**

We came back into Townsville, and everyone said that we were early enough to go out and have a steak. Anyway, we went out to Hog's Breath in Townsville. I put on the clothes that I had worn up there, and this little summer frock just swum on me. I had gone from being a little bit porky up there, and I was right down. But I had

01:00 nothing else to wear, so I put on this dress and we went into Townsville for a steak. Then, lo and behold, someone said there was a pub around the corner with music and dancing. So we all went around there for a final fling. They were playing great music, and we had a dance and a drink. And then, almost at once, everyone said they were tired. It was like it had hit us – the excitement, everything. So we went back to the place we were

01:30 staying – the RAAF barracks at Townsville – and everyone just ... we were dead tired. It was like everyone died. I think by midnight most of us were back. Some stayed a little longer, but for most of us, it was back. Anyway, the next day was home to Sydney.

Did you hit a culture shock when returning to your own first world country?

Well, it's funny. It's a great leveller going to a country like that. And I know you've probably spoken to a lot of people who've been away to places like Bougainville. You come back and realise that you can get by

02:00 without makeup; that you don't really need that Tupperware [plastic dishes]; is that dress to hang in your cupboard really necessary – it is a great leveller. I think it was the best, best, best thing I could have done, not only for the experience, but for a person about to go into a redundancy program with Defence, I realised that there were so

02:30 many things out there. I kept in contact with a couple of the ladies in the different areas for as long as I could. But, until a post office is established there it's hard to maintain contact. There was a little bookshop around the corner from where I was living at Rozelle and there were a whole load of old Bibles there. They're a very religious people in Bougainville – very religious. And there was a Woman's Weekly issue which had the years' greatest pictures in it, including one of this baby being operated on in the woman,

03:00 and it had its little hand wrapped around the surgeon's finger. So I got about half a dozen of those magazines and half a dozen Bibles and sent them to the different women's groups in Bougainville. And they wrote back, and that's when I got the gift from the ladies – those fans. Most of the people didn't have a Bible of their own, so what I'd sent was much appreciated. They didn't want televisions and things, just simple things like Bibles.

03:30 So again, something as simple as that is a great leveller because it's so appreciated. Y'know, and there was I wondering whether I'm going to fit into my clothes to go to work the next day. A great leveller.

And you mentioned that when you'd go into the villages, they'd ask you for things. Did you find that just before you left you were off-loading stuff?

I did. I left a lot of things up there. Especially for the ladies at our main team site at Tonu. T-shirts, blouses, and shirts. You knew you were going to be leaving a lot of things.

04:00 And I'd brought up a lot of kid's books. Because in our predeployment training we were told that if we had children's books that we could show the children up there, that would be good. So I left the children's books. And some of the Australian people were lovely. Some groups had sent up books for the different areas. At our team site we had a whole load of books that had been sent up.

04:30 And some of the military people – their families had sent up bits and pieces. The wife of one of the soldiers had sent a whole load of wool up, and their kids had sent up some of their toys for the poorer children. It was lovely. It wasn't only the service groups but the families of the peace monitors. They had written to their families about Bougainville and the families had got involved as well.

So, is there anyway of getting stuff up to those people now?

I don't know. Like I say, until they get a post office ... I don't know.

05:00 **So how is that whole Bougainville experience when you look back on it?**

It was a brilliant experience and a learning curved. It showed me what I could do. I went up there at forty nine. I was sluggish in Sydney, and I was going through pre-retirement queries – am I doing the right thing and where am I going? I was stagnant in the job and knew that I had to go; knew that I had to do something different.

05:30 It was a great leveller. You realise that nothing else is important because people – the people you've seen – have lived through a war with nothing. It's just amazing what people can achieve when they have to. Like they say, "Hardship is the mother of invention," and I can appreciate that statement more, now. Amazing, and to see what those people achieved with nothing.

06:00 It was up to each community to rally around and work. And when they ask for things, it's not for themselves. They're asking for the community. And they were excited about learning. I took little

picture books of Sydney and Australia up with me. They were like sponges with learning. So, if you could leave the people learning equipment and an education system then how happy would they be with that.

06:30 There's no point in giving them Tupperware and things like that – they want, they need an education system, better conditions for their children, and no more war.

Have you thought about the effect that your group had up there?

Some things. One of the pre-deployment statements was, that we shouldn't expect to feel we've made an improvement right away, but you will have. Every patrol, every person leaves a building brick – a brick building Bougainville back to

07:00 what it used to be.

And have you heard how things are today?

Only from the news and friends that were still up there, at least, until a year ago. And they said what just starting to happen was amazing. With the elections and what have you, it was just starting to come ahead.

07:30 I think some small light industry areas were getting established. And at Tonu, where our team site was, some guys from a New Zealand water company were teaching the people how to make water carting equipment. They had been there twice. And there were some religious groups there, teaching the people to work with what they had, and with farming. So there were different groups going in

08:00 that were teaching the people.

Have you thought about going back?

Oh yeah. In fact it's funny. With Sam – my second husband, I should say – well, Sam's ex-army and he was in Timor. Some friends of his have asked us to go back to Timor with them. We've heard that we could go in within two years or so. So they asked if we wanted to come too, and I said yes. Maybe Bougainville will be up and running by then. So we could have a look at Bougainville as well.

08:30 **What happened when you came back to Sydney?**

Well, I got back to Sydney and big things were happening. The redundancy program was there and I was questioning that. And I was thinking, "where am I going to go; what am I going to do?" I was a single female, and my flatmate Leonie was about to move. She said, "Time's up; you've introduced me to a wonderful guy and I'm off to live with

09:00 him in Perth." At first I thought I'd head back to Wollongong to be closer to Mum and Dad, but then I thought, "No, not after Bougainville." I was given another option to stay with Defence, to move into the corporate area. These were the ideas and what was going on. Leonie had twelve months to go. So I took the education side of the redundancy program, and started going to TAFE [College of Technical and Further Education] to do community welfare.

09:30 I thought that if I was going to do community welfare – like with Care Australia or another care group – I should get some appropriate certificates. So I started doing community welfare. And in that time a little niggling thing was behind me, saying, "Don't leave things unsaid or undone. Don't go off. You've had a wonderful experience with Bougainville. It was a real eye opener. You've had a lot of realisations."

10:00 So, over a bottle of red wine one night, I said to my friend Leonie, "You know your old boyfriend, Sam, would it be dangerous if I phoned him up and asked him if he'd like to go out?" And she said, when she'd finished spluttering, "Sure – I'm with your ex-boyfriend, you can go with my ex-boyfriend." So I phoned Sam up and said, "Salvatore Andaloro, I have admired you from afar since you walked over my feet in 1987 when I was just a snivelling civvie, and you were a handsome sergeant. I like you; would you like to go out on a date."

10:30 And he said, "Well, thank you for the offer. I hate to say this but I'm just back from Timor and I'm going out with lady. Can I phone you later?" So we kept in contact because he'd been a friend of Leonie's and we'd all known each other over the years. We started corresponding, and from there things were just going really well. I had done a couple of counselling courses

11:00 and was working with different levels of the community. And Sam phoned me out of the blue one day and said, "Is that offer still open?" And I said, "Which one was that?" And he said, "Would you like to go out? I'm flying down from Brisbane and we could go out and see what eventuates." And I said yes. And that was what ... three years ago? And here we are now, at each others' throats – ex-army, ex-navy, ex-public servants – how could it go.

11:30 **When you reflect back on your life to date, what stands out as the real highlights for you?**

I think I'd have to say ... going off in the navy and what was associated with it, like the support from Mum and Dad. Having brilliant parents like Mum and Dad, that's a highlight. It's a quagmire really, because going off to the navy led me off into other adventures.

12:00 If I hadn't left Dapto and gone into the navy I wouldn't have developed, and I wouldn't have had such an interesting life. Fair enough, there have been some sad times – divorce and what have you – but leaving home and going into the navy started me off on an interesting trail. I've learned a lot and I have a lot of people to thank along the way. First off Mum and Dad : thank you Mum and Dad! The navy, for the way it trained me up. It

12:30 taught me respect and responsibility. Working for the army and its amazing people – I'm thankful for that. And going to Bougainville – again, a great learning experience. And I think it's been a quagmire of everything, starting from supportive parents, navy, great career, Bougainville, and finally retirement where I'm going volunteer work and have the support of a great husband. So what more would you ask for?

13:00 **So what you say to any young people – young women – that are looking at a career in the navy?**

Well I'd say any of the services have a lot to offer. I have a niece, Rene – my brother's daughter – who's just joined the navy; submarines actually. She has selected submarines. That would have been unheard of when I was in the navy. For any young person, look, you just can't surpass what you can learn in the services.

13:30 The opportunities, and the good times. The guys that have gone overseas to the Gulf for instance, or even Iraq – fair enough; there's some troubled times and some sad times for them, leaving their families. But it's a learning curve and there are great opportunities. It's a great life – learning so much, and learning to appreciate what you've got.

14:00 **So what are your thoughts on Anzac Day?**

Interesting. I joined the ex-WRANS Association here in Brisbane, and as a result was 'volunteered' by Judy Hunter – the President – to help the Naval Association as a welfare officer. So I did the welfare course and now I do bits and pieces of volunteer work with the association. And for this coming Anzac Day, I've been asked to lay the wreath

14:30 at Greenslopes Veterans' Hospital. It's the first time I've done anything like this at all. Sam said he'll come with me because it's a first for me and he'd like to support me. So I'll be over there representing the naval association with the wreath laying. But I believe that the veterans

15:00 are so pleased that I am bothering with it – because in their eyes I'm still young, so a young girl like you is bothering, even visiting us and talking to us – which is really nice, seeing as I'm in my fifties and all – but the thing is that through the military career I've had, you get to read stories about what has gone on. Now that I'm getting older

15:30 I'm reading other stories and seeing more sides of it. So I'm seeing that it wasn't just what the Australians did overseas – it was the poor buggers on the other side as well. I don't know the whole Japanese story for instance, but I'm sure their families suffered as well. But my girlfriend Carol – the girl I was in the navy with – her second husband was a German naval officer.

16:00 And she lived in Germany as a result of that. Unfortunately he was killed in a military accident. But she actually goes to an Anzac service over there. To go to Kiel in Germany and to go to a monument for all the military people that have fallen – all the navy people, because Kiel is a navy centre – and to see a white wall with a black outline of a ship, and underneath it a number. That's the number of men from that ship who were killed

16:30 on that ship. And Carol said that until you've lived overseas in another community, you don't know how they've suffered as well. War is not good for anybody. It is a horrific thing for any community. A dead man is dead, but it's the after-effects for the family. The thing is that Anzac Day is really, really sad, when you remember everybody – not just the Australians – but everybody.

17:00 In this day and age when we're all so cosmopolitan – if you have a look at the mementos around our place – Sam Andaloro, his father was in the Mediterranean navy; and then you've got my Dad in the Australian Navy. We're all here together.

17:30 **Do you think about that – that you grew up in a military family, and now you've got your own military family?**

And what variety! Sicilian and Celtic. It is amazing. In a hundred years time, my relatives could be married to Iraqis. Imagine that. The inter-marriages, the inter-meetings with everybody. They'll look back and say, "Who'd have thought; remember when they were fighting each other."

18:00 Sometimes Sam and I laugh – we say, "Y'know your Dad and my Dad; their ships might have passed. Or your relatives might have been bombing my relatives in Sicily." And it's such a short time ago. Look at Carol, living in Germany. When I went to visit her in her little village at Gluksburg, the little lady next door invited me in. You know, I was Carol's best friend and the little lady next door invited me in.

18:30 She couldn't speak English, so Carol interpreted. She took me round her little house and we were looking at everything; and on her bedroom wall was a photo of her first husband who was killed on the Russian front. And I said to Carol, "Can you say to her that this is really interesting and that I think it's sad that she lost her husband." And she said that he'd been a good man but that he just didn't come

back from the war. So she married another fellow who had been a soldier. He had just recently died.

19:00 And I said to Carol afterwards, “Isn’t this amazing. You’ve married a German naval officer who has now died; and you’re living next door to a German lady who has photos of her first husband who died on the Russian front ...” And Sam and I come home and ... his father had been in the Italian navy. Then also, we’re living next door to a Russian fellow whose father flew Russian planes in the First World War, and whose

19:30 grandfather was the Tsar’s chaplain who met Rasputin ... what a mixed bag; how mixed is that! I think there’s a song about it. It’s from my era in the sixties, and it goes, “What is war good for? Absolutely nothing.” That says it all. We’ve got friends who are married to Vietnamese ladies – more mixed families. It’s just sad to think of what we’ve all gone through to get an Anzac Day.

20:00 But I get very teary on Anzac Days. Once the bugle starts, I’m gone.

If you were to look at this interview as a time capsule, and could speak to people in the future, what would you say to them?

I would say, step back from any conflict. Take the time to get to know the other person. Again, look back through the archives and find that song : war; what is it good for? Absolutely nothing!

20:30 Stop the circle, step back, take the time to talk. If I could help in a peace process where I couldn’t even speak the language of pidgin English, then surely you can communicate in some form. Talk to each other. War is no good for anybody, especially the children who suffer.

Having been in the navy and from what you’ve seen on Bougainville, do you still see some necessity for armed forces?

It’s an evil necessity.

21:00 That’s probably not the right word to say. You do need a security system, to be able to say, “No.” There’s always going to be a schoolyard bully. You need somebody there to say, “No, you’re doing the wrong thing.” I think in schools now, they have a ‘quiet room’ where the bully and the victim can go – sometimes that works, sometimes it doesn’t. But there must be somebody there

21:30 in those sorts of situations – someone who can look after the weaker person. At the moment, we’re all on different levels around the world. You’ve got third world countries and you’ve got countries that are wealthy. There’s no equal footing. So you’re going to find bullies. If we can look at our Defence Force as the ‘Bully Protection Force’. And we have to be able to talk.

22:00 I don’t mean the namby-pamby talking. It needs to be firm and it needs to state that we don’t put up with bullying. Again, but where do you draw the line? Because the bully is obviously going to come with baggage – and that baggage is going to be their women and children and families. So yes, I think we do need a Defence Force to stop the bullies. We can’t be seen to be weak or namby-pamby, but how do we work that in ... I don’t have the answer.

22:30 My nieces and nephews who are growing up now – maybe they will have the answer. But I don’t. Communication is a great thing, no matter what language it’s in.

I just wanted to make sure that we’ve covered how the matriarchal society worked in Bougainville – especially with the land owners.

I’m not really sure. One of the things that was explained to me was that if

23:00 a woman married outside the village, then the man had to come and live in her village. I’m not sure how land is passed down, whether it goes to the daughters or what. I think the women play a big part in the property inheritance but I’m not exactly sure of the details.

Were there any other things about the matriarchal society that really struck you?

I did notice that in this one meeting we went to in a local area, there was a

23:30 statement, “We’re on Bougainville Time : easy, easy, no can worry.” Laid back, chill out. So you’d be sitting waiting for the people to come, and perhaps the elderly would walk in first. We might think that it’s all a bit of a rabble, but it’s really strict. Everything has a correct place and style and order.

24:00 The elderly chief might arrive first, and then the other elders, and then the women. And this elderly chief was talking to our group, and this little lady came up and sat beside him. She had her back to us, but she’d lean over and whisper to him. Then he would ask a question, and she would whisper back. Then everything would be quiet for a moment.

24:30 Then there’d be chatterings around the group whilst things were explained to the others. It wasn’t till halfway through my tour that I realised that there was a correct and proper format for everything – formal, in its own way.

25:00 **We were talking about the preconceived ideas people had about Bougainville – about backwardness and such. I was curious to know how menstruation and contraception were**

dealt with there?

there's no contraception. The women I think, they went bush when they

25:30 started their bleeding time. One of the interesting things was that we were driving along a trail and one of the guards said that there was a lot going on in the jungle; that a lot of the people were starting to relearn to particular natural medicines that are there. And he would point to a bush and say, "If you want to get pregnant you eat that bush – boil it up and drink the water, then eat the pulp." And for this or that particular injury, you'd use this or that plant; and so on.

26:00 So there's a lot of natural medicines there that the younger ones need to be taught about. During the crisis for example, what they learnt about the natural jungle, and how to use its plants for treatment – that came from the older people. Now, as the older people are passing on, the younger ones are trying to get that information. I think that one of the ladies told me that when they're menstruating, they just go into the jungle for a time and then come back later on.

26:30 **How did you and the other female members there deal with menstruation?**

Most the girls had tablets from their doctors. Some of the girls at headquarters had trouble though, because of the heat and the change of conditions. I was sort of lucky because I had a medical condition beforehand. I had fibroids on the uterus. So I had the whole uterus taken away. So I was pretty lucky in the bush by comparison. You had to be very careful with personal hygiene.

27:00 That was a big thing. Johnson's Baby Wipes – the inventor needs a medal. They are the best thing in the jungle. But lots of the girls suffered with the heat. But, not knowing how they'd go with getting pads and tampons, some of the girls had tablets prescribed for while they were away.

27:30 **Did the Bougainvilleans ever speak to you about World War Two?**

I did meet a gentleman at Sirikatau who had been in Papua New Guinea during World War Two. He was said to be over one hundred years old, and had worked with the Australians during the war. I don't know if he was called a 'fuzzy-wuzzy' [Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels – Papuans who helped Australian soldiers during WW2] or what. The guards basically said that he was an old man who'd lived

28:00 in the bush by himself. When he came back from the war he didn't want to live with his family. And the sad thing was that he'd asked the Australians if he was entitled to a pension for his war service. They'd talked about it but nothing had happened ...

Did he say why he didn't want to live with his family any more?

No. I don't know whether he'd gone through some sort of post-traumatic stress syndrome

28:30 or what. But, no, he just didn't want to live with his family any more And Monica – from Sirikatau – she said that after the crisis her son didn't want to come back to live with the family in the new settlement area. A lot of people were living in refugee areas, but he wanted to stay up in the bombed out village. He thought it was

29:00 safer up there in the jungle. He just didn't want to live with anyone any more. It sounds like post-traumatic stress disorder. It must affect them greatly, but there is no counselling or anything for them.

Were you ever able to ascertain how Australians were viewed by the Bougainvilleans during World War Two?

From what I could gather, they really liked us. The Bougainvilleans have

29:30 always said the Australians are lovely. They were a bit disappointed when the crisis broke out, but from the time of the early days they've always seemed to think of us as lovely people. I don't know much about World War Two, because I think there were more Japanese around then – not many Australians.

30:00 But yeah; the few that I did talk to said that Australians were lovely people. As I said before, the Australians – wherever they go – they're bits of larrikins, and they're quite happy to share things. They'll give you a wink and a nod, and they share, and they're quite laid back. I think that's been true in all of the conflicts.

30:30 **What are your hopes for the women of Bougainville?**

I hope that their voice gets louder, and that they get the education system they need, and that medical services are restored to what they were. And, as I said before, they're sponges for information. They're very bright people, and very proud. In some ways they consider themselves 'above' the other island people, because they're blue-black.

31:00 There's a belief that they're a 'pure race' and the want to keep themselves that way. So in a way, they're even a bit snooty, because they want to keep their culture and what have you.

And what are your reflections on the role and future for women in the defence forces?

From the point of view of an outsider looking in, I think the women are

31:30 going a long way to achieving some important things. I think I said earlier that my niece, at 20, she's just applied to go into submarines in the navy. It's just amazing that she can try out for it. If she's good enough, she'll get in. I think that women in the services, now, they've come a long way.

32:00 They're going ahead in leaps and bounds, because they've proved themselves. There are naturally tasks in any environment that suit one or other gender. And the women, well, I think that whatever they apply themselves to ... it's there for them if they want to have a go.

With the volunteer work you're doing now out at Greenslopes Hospital, what is it that inspires you the most out there?

The general attitude of the members. It's interesting. You get your favourites.

32:30 I'll take Sam along with me sometimes to carry the newspaper, and he's even getting a bit of a following. Some of the vets will say, "Ah, did you bring your husband along?" They have some amazing stories to tell, but they're still lovely – great humour, a bit of larrikinism still in them. And of course their stories are amazing. Sometimes they'll sit and tell you different stories.

33:00 And occasionally, the other forces will join in. You might be visiting an ex-navy person, and there'll be an ex-army or RAAF person in the corner, and they'll say, "Yeah, yeah, but if it wasn't for the army you'd ..." So there is this happy rapport. And then you'll say to them, "So you're army. What did you do and where did you go." They're just happy that someone has taken the time to listen. Of course, some of them are weirdos, maybe divorced or what have you.

33:30 Some of them are still going through the conflict of whatever they've gone through. Post traumatic stress is a big problem. One day they'll want to talk to you. One day I went out there and it was like 'POW [Prisoner of War] Day' or something. I went out there with some magazines, and was all light and chatty and what have you, and a fella said to me, "Great to have you around now; I wish you'd been here years ago, I might have married you." And I said, "What 'years ago' was that?" And he

34:00 said, "Well, I was in Japan and I was held captive; and I was a POW; and when I was coming back to Australia our boat was bombed," and I'm thinking, "Oh no; how do you be super happy and positive?" So you listen to them talk and everything. And then in the corner, this RAAF type piped up about his brother that had been beheaded in Changi. Meanwhile I was thinking, "Well, this is an interesting way to start the day; looks like it's going to be quite a day ..."

34:30 It just seemed to be that they just wanted to talk that day. And because they feel comfortable with you too. Some of the veterans have the most interesting stories. One of the fellas for instance was a Royal Navy Marine. He'd been in the Queen's Guards during the war. He's a lovely, tall gentlemen. And most of the time they're all so positive

35:00 even though they might have injuries, or whatever situation has brought them into hospital. It could be a problem for them. One fella said to me, "I can't be getting old; I'm not ready for it yet." But they're still so positive and lovely.

To finish off, did you have a final message for the archive?

I think this archive is an excellent idea. I've been hearing some great stories, especially from some of the other vets at Greenslopes. They're really proud that their simple stories ... they all say, "I didn't think that I had a story to tell, but it's interesting how once you start talking, other things pop up." I can only hope the archive will be seen by schoolkids

35:30 and by other areas. It's such a lovely idea. Some of the stories that you must be hearing ... I just hope that it goes further, and many people get the chance to see the veteran's stories. Because I think that as the years go on, and these veterans are gone, then the stories are going with them. But it's what's with the stories that's lost, if it's not saved. So I think this archive is an excellent idea.