

Australians at War Film Archive

Ivan Brumfield (Lou) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1833>

Tape 1

00:30 **Okay so let's start with the nutshell?**

Right my name is Ivan Rupert Harold George James William Wilson Brumfield, I'm an only child and that's why they're all there. I was born on the 23rd September 1927 at Camperdown in Sydney. Spent my early years in Sydney initially over at

01:00 Rose Bay where my grandfather was the Ranger for the parks, Waverley Parks, that's about the first thing I can remember are his great big boots and very tall man with striped trousers and a cutaway coat and a blackthorn stick and a bowler hat, I can't remember what sort of shirt he had on. But we stayed there for a short time before we moved over to

01:30 Rozelle in Balmain in Alfred Street, 25 Alfred Street, which was near the family business, my father's family owned a cooperage which served Kent and Resches brewery, but he didn't like it. And as soon as possible he got out of that business and became over some training he became an actor, and primarily a

02:00 singer and that set the sort of stage if you like for our early life and we travelled a great deal, until I had to go to secondary schools, with various tent shows. During the Depression with people like Sawleys who are famous in the show business who ran a variety show in Newtown. And in the middle of the Depression entry

02:30 was by money which was about six pence a head, threepence for children or in kind. So we used to get eggs and poultry and various other types of produce. The money went to the Sawley family and the produce was cut up between the various acts at the end of the programme. My mother used to work with Mrs Sawley in the ticket office, my father was on stage.

03:00 And we then spent some time in Rose Bay where our, my mother's family was located and I went to school, well I should say I first went to school in Rozelle, Balmain Primary School and I think I distinguished myself there by becoming the Ink Monitor and I wore a blue band around the

03:30 left arm and I think that's about the only thing I can remember about Balmain. And then we moved to Rose Bay, Rose Bay Primary School was a great institution and I still remember it with much fondness. I was allowed to leave the school and go travelling with my parents who at that stage were with either Worth Circus or a

04:00 travelling tent show called Barton's Follies. I did correspondence school and sold peanuts, Minties and chocolates as soon I was capable do doing so in the tents, for Sawleys which travelled nearest or Barton's Follies which was a home station. And it was very interesting time to watch the logistics of just

04:30 how these people worked and how the advance parties went on and passed out briefs to get everybody to come and they'd make certain the local publican and the policeman were all looked after before the actual acts arrived separately because preceding them the tent had to go forward and be put up. That was something of a job and most of the locals came in and gave a hand at that stage and so it was sort of a communal effort to get

05:00 the tent up and then we might be only a day there. And depending on how many people in the town and how big the town and how much the, how much time we were going to spend there depended the size of the tent we put up, either be one pole, 2 poles 4 poles and it could go up about 4,000 people in Brisbane. And we worked our way through from Newcastle usually starting

05:30 in Newcastle up to Brisbane in time for the Ecka and those days we used to have a great tent city of about 4 tent shows, Worth Circus, Coles, Mackay's, Barton's Follies all near the station, near the station in the valley which was not built up at all, Worth's was there, as it is today, the building there and across from the rails

06:00 the station were all the sidings where we'd put all the carriages for our gear and Worth's animals would come up and be offloaded, everybody would set up in this great big arena. And I remember coming

home for lunch one day in Brunswick Street, we went to the same place every time and people waited for us to come we were part of the scenery and we were upstairs

- 06:30 in a balcony in a room in Brunswick Street, just across from the valley, and I raced home and ate my lunch which was an event in itself apparently, made my mother immediately suspicious and she said, "Oh what do you think you're going to do?" I said, "Captain Flager's going to take me in with the cats at Worth's this afternoon so I've got to get back to the big top". I didn't of course I sat down with my correspondence course and it was the nearest
- 07:00 I ever came to being a lion tamer. Then we proceeded north through Queensland and that was the route those shows took in those days. Coastal towns mainly because we were dependant largely on rail, the roads weren't good enough to take trucks over in those days. So we used to go up to Proserpine into Wesiding[?], up to Mackay up to Maryborough, 1 night 2 nights depending as I said
- 07:30 on the size of the town. And then we'd finish up at Gordonvale which is just south of Cairns because in those days the rail didn't go into Cairns, everybody finished up there and everybody came in from all over Mulgrave to, and other places to attend the shows. And then the aim was to get back for the Governor's Show Ball in Brisbane
- 08:00 and you'd be travelling up with Ubangi the midget queen of Africa and Jang the tail boy and various other freaks and various other people, the cyclists who ran the wall of death, motorbike fellows going round and round on the wall of death which became the globe of death later on after the New York World Fair in 1936 I think. And they'd
- 08:30 all load onto this one train to go back and I remember standing on the station just getting in and the police arrested a fellow we called Telamalih Bill who was a confidence man and all the people the freaks the lot of us were hanging out the windows screaming with laughter with Bill who was standing there with 2 great big policemen one on each side. And he screamed out "Alright go to the Governor's Ball, go to the Governor's
- 09:00 Ball I'll send you each a cake of soap to give yourselves a bloody good wash", cause we were known as the great unwashed. And so that was a good period in my life, it did me proud for many many years after because wherever I went in the Easter Show or the Ecka the sideshow people always knew me. I worked for, in school holidays on dodgem and things like that
- 09:30 and kept up a fairly good communication with those people until I joined the army. The break came when I had to go to High School and my parents then stopped travelling, my father went back to J C Williamsons where he'd worked before and the Depression was starting to ease. It had been very hard during the Depression years it was really
- 10:00 bread and dripping time then in some ways. And we were a bit better off than most people, I can remember us taking cases, old fibre cases of cans and some produce out to Maroubra where people were living in paper and tin shacks who years before had been prosperous people and living in Vacluse and various other places, they were reduced to this.
- 10:30 And through various societies people did this, took stuff to them. It wasn't looked on as charity it was a matter of surviving and some wonderful people came out from those terrible times. The worst that happened to me was that I think my mother had to cut cardboard each morning to put in my sandals because they were the only shoes I had to go to school so put a piece of cardboard in, that generally saw the
- 11:00 morning out at least and then you took them off and went bare foot like everybody else. That takes me back to Rose Bay School and that was my first touch of military I joined an organisation, I don't mention this because I'm very army, but I joined the air training corps, mainly because the teacher was a great teacher Mr Gill, great staff there, George Hutchinson the headmaster and
- 11:30 Mr Stevens and Mr Gosper who wielded a cane with a broken arm with miraculous efficiency. And we were separated by a line from the girl's school, girl's primary school in those days of course the main attraction was pulling pig tails or something like that, it never got much beyond that. And the school produced some very good fellows and
- 12:00 I managed to get entry into Sydney Boy's High School which was a exclusive, you had to compete to get in. I made that with several of my other classmates from Rose Bay and that's where I spent my secondary years. And we moved to Moore Park Road which is just near Victoria Barracks. And I joined the cadets in
- 12:30 1941 and then I came under fire in 1942 for the first time, I was returning from a school dance and the tram stopped at Bondi Junction at about 11.30 and you had to walk from there to wherever you were going. And I was walking down Birriga Road which leads down to Rose Bay when the Japanese submarine shelled Sydney Harbour
- 13:00 and all I can remember is the shell, one shell going over and hitting a block of flats and not exploding, property values in the area disappeared overnight. And then I immediately headed for the nearest air raid shelter, cause we'd built air raid shelters in all the major streets, as well as in the backyard, we had an air raid shelter in the backyard in those days. And headed for the air raid shelter only to find it had

been locked

- 13:30 to keep vagrants and various other people out, so I was there shaking the door. So that was the very first time I experienced enemy fire. And then I was with the cadets until I left and went to RMC [Royal Military College], I became a cadet lieutenant, in those days it was quite an interesting time because cadets were very popular and most schools had a cadet corps,
- 14:00 it carried a bit of clout, you were either a prefect or you were a cadet lieutenant, sort of social system. We went to various camps at Greta and Hexham and we had as instructors some AIF fellows who had been repatriated from the Middle East. And Corporal Edwards and Corporal Jones, Corporal
- 14:30 Edwards was a absolute straight up digger, the hat was for and aft, everything was polished, everything looked gorgeous. His mate was a lance corporal who wore the hat bent in the middle, incorrect crease, long pants hanging over the boots, nevertheless he was a very good instructor, beautiful shot and once again quite an enjoyable time.
- 15:00 And in fact when I went to RMC in 1945 I had 6 people in my platoon followed me in 2 years, my 3 Section commander, Prior, Larson and Wells, Larson was killed in Korea and Piers, Toffer and I've forgotten the other one, off the top of my head, all followed in so we had 7 out of the one
- 15:30 platoon who came into RMC. And the impetus to go those days was probably greater than it might have been later on, but the war was on and it was a matter of which way you went into the war I suppose. It was a natural progression to try for RMC and I was selected and so I became a soldier. And there we are, from there on RMC
- 16:00 3 years in those days, I found it an enjoyable experience, others didn't, personalities clashed and various things. But in later years when they talked about things like bastardisation we could look back on a very very good period, we had a New Zealander who ran the indoctrination, let me call it that, and he was extremely careful
- 16:30 not to transgress and it was really a good time. Finlay was his name and we learnt to do minges[?] and various other things and eat square meals with no problem at all. The result was that the class was bound together, very very quickly and we came from so many diverse areas, there were people who, fellows whose fathers had been in the service, lawyers, fruiterers
- 17:00 carpenters, singers in my case, all melted together. And the aim of what we called 4th class training in those days was to make certain that that happened as quickly as possible, and it did it really did. And we still, what's left of us are very find band of warriors who stick together and the same happens with other classes that came through in that time. We were lucky
- 17:30 in some ways with our instruction staff because they were mainly people who had been cadets, had been in active service during the war and came back, usually wounded, incapacitated in some way to take up teaching jobs at Duntroon. So the military staff was terrific, the civil staff the teachers had largely come back from retirement
- 18:00 and ranged from Professor Gilchrist who must have been about 95 then who battled very hard to sort of keep us going on mathematics. But there were others who made a mark on us that stays indefinitely with us to this day, Professor Sutherland who in a few words could reduce you to a pulp, far quicker than any of the military officers.
- 18:30 And on the other hand creative people like Professor Byrne from the English staff who created quite a different atmosphere to what had gone before, it was no longer learn every line of Shakespeare but new plays and new thoughts and quite thought provoking. And some of it was exciting, I mean we had our chemistry was mainly based around explosives
- 19:00 and the lab used to rock every now and then if somebody hit a hammer onto some compound that the Professor had put in front of him, it would all disappear. But the main personalities that came out during the period, some of the military staff who remain friends to this day and the RSM who was a man called Watson and he'd been trained in Catterick
- 19:30 in England and he was extremely perfectly dressed and turned out. And he was a great actor, nevertheless he put the fear of God into us, and he came back from England and learnt how to use his paste stick on the parade ground, I remember it now kept on falling out of his hand and he cursed and carried on
- 20:00 but he finished up using it as though it was part of him. But he was a great favourite with us all and to his dying day he was a great friend. To all our class we had a special relationship with him. I think that's probably about all of RMC, there is a lot more and....

We can go back and get the detail?

Yeh and it's a very interesting period

- 20:30 from the point of view of formation and going on. When I graduated I graduated into infantry and I was sent to Greta and to Infantry Training Brigade. And I remember one of my classmates was what we

called the Railway Transport Officer, he was John Crofts, he's dead now.

- 21:00 He was responsible for making certain that the tram was properly put together and everybody had seats and he was just out of RMC and walking up and down the platform and here in a first class compartment is this elderly gentleman with glasses reading a paper in civilian clothes. So he immediately accosted him and told him to get the hell out of there and the fellow rattled his paper and sat back and said nothing. And
- 21:30 Crofts decided he'd better do this again so he went tried again and got the same result and he thought I'd better beg off here there's something wrong, certainly was it was his CO going back to the, Colonel John JJ A Kelly, lovely man. And of course Crofts walked into the mess and found the same gentleman in uniform there, extremely distinguished and got a rocket, mild one. And at Greta I was fortunate enough to have what we called the
- 22:00 Transit Platoon, they were people who had come back on leave at Beecroft, occupation forces [British Commonwealth Occupational Forces] and wanted to go back again, they just came back for leave and were going back to Japan. It was a popular posting, I was going to go to Japan that posting was already in the mill but the platoon I had consisted mainly of warrant officers and senior soldiers, sergeants
- 22:30 and staff sergeants and here was I just out of RMC again with all these magnificent soldiers running around. I had the best polished boots and the best polished brass and the most beautifully pressed uniforms in the entire camp because my word said, "Who got on the next draft of Japan?" That was good that lasted about a month and then I was on the Westralia for Japan
- 23:00 and the occupation force where I joined 67 Australian Infantry Battalion, which translated into Japanese is the Rockajanana Battalion Nuni 67. There's some very very great regimental soldiers and officers who to this day, what's left of them are still great friends and you'll probably be interviewing some of those in
- 23:30 due course I would think. 67 Battalion later became 3RAR. But our main duties were guard duties in Tokyo or in Kure and Hiroo, that's where we were based in Honshu. Tokyo was the plum post to go because you had the whole city was your oyster
- 24:00 and the heel of the conqueror was well and truly on the neck in those days so we had a sort of royal progress. It was a bit boring in some cases because you were doing the same things over and over again and I found myself spending more time in Tokyo than I was in base at Hero. And I shared the duties of aide de camp to General Robinson, the commander in
- 24:30 chief in Tokyo, he had his own group in Kure and they stayed there to place bridge with Mrs Robinson and I took over when he came up to Tokyo. The Imperial palace was the main attraction because we had 10 posts, 10 guard posts and we manned those 24 hours a day and on the plaza in front
- 25:00 of the palace was a little hut in which the guard commander, say myself at the time, and an American sergeant stayed during that period. And we controlled the security, such as it was for the palace. What happened the New Zealanders when they went on were remarkably, were remarkable because they
- 25:30 insisted on knocking off the imperial geese, shooting the Imperial geese in the moat around the palace. I was sitting there one day and one of the officials from the palace came down dressed in cut away coat, striped pants, shoes gaping, well worn, so was the coat so was the tie, frayed collar
- 26:00 and the top hat which they wore and in very good English he asked that as the Crown Prince Akihito was coming back from summer camp would we have the sentry on the gate present arms. And as I said we were well and truly in occupation cause, go and ask the sentry. And I'd forgotten it was Gunner McMurray who had spent 4 years as a guests of his Imperial Majesty and this fellow walked up, asked Gunner threw his hands in the air, raced
- 26:30 inside and about 300 policeman, Japanese policeman came out and lined the route. So I put on my hat and gloves and cane and walked up and I said, "Did that fellow come out and say anything to you?" he said, "He did Sir." I said, "What did he say?" he said, "Crown Prince Akihito coming back from summer school and would I present arms when he came through." I said, "What did you say?" "I said Sir if he doesn't halt when I say halt I'll shoot the bastard". So I moved him and put Corporal
- 27:00 Moon on and we didn't present arms but at least there was no incident, we got Gunner out the way. And the big event militarily from our point of view was Empire Day when we marched down the Imperial Plaza, the entire brigade and my senior subaltern, Ray Le Mercier
- 27:30 rang up and said, "We've got 21 Lieutenants coming up for this Empire Day parade and I want a party at the Maranochi Hotel," which was owned, run by the British Occupation Forces, beautiful hotel, "and I want you to get the girls and they'd better be very good?" and I said, "Yeh right oh, you're
- 28:00 alright?" He said, "I've got my girl," and I said, "Yes and I'll have Maryanne, right I'll get her to line up the girls". So I got onto my girlfriend and said, "This is the score Empire Day, Empire night the Maranochi Hotel". We had quite a reputation for being terrific place to go so there was no hesitation she said, "Oh yes how many do you want". And she read through the names a couple of days later and I thought God

- 28:30 these fellows won't know what's struck them there's some of the most beautiful American girls in Tokyo, couple of Danes, oh absolutely magnificent. And I was on duty on the Saturday night, Empire Day was on the Sunday, so went I came off I rang Maryanne and said, "Now everything right for tonight?" she said, "Where were you?" and I said, "Where was I?" I said, "I was on guard duty" she said, "We were all at the Maranochi last night,
- 29:00 and there was nobody there for us". And just then arriving are all our soldiers plus the 21 diggers, or 21 officers who were expecting to have all these beautiful girls and I said, "You've got the wrong night Empire Day is 24th, it's today." She said, "Well there was nobody there," and I said, "Well look we'll have to jack it up for tonight," and she said, "No the girls said they'll never do this again."
- 29:30 And I said, "Oh cripes you'll be right for tonight," she said, "No I've got another engagement," and hung up. And so I reported to my senior subaltern, Ray Le Mercier I said, "This is the score it's completely gone wrong," he said, "We got a bus?" I said, "Yeh we got a bus." He said, "Send the fellows into the hotel and tell them to wait". We got on the bus and we went around to all the American hotels, Shoofen,
- 30:00 Turmo and Acanda Ki, where people were billeted and in typical American fashion down in the basement were these jazz places and dark as anything, Le Mercier and I were going around saying "You want to come to a party," and get in the bus and counted them up and had enough and took them off to the Maranochi opened the doors and out they came. Well you've never seen such a mob of dreadful looking sheilas in all your life and here the
- 30:30 mob all waiting ready to slather and they thought my god what's hit us. One of the girls said, "I'm having him," and she pointed at Jack Whiteman, they were married 6 months later, but it was a great party everybody thought we'd better do the best we can here so it was a great party. We had a couple of things more operational, we had Korean riots in those days were
- 31:00 quite common, there was a large Korean population particularly in the southern island and lower Honshu around Shomonoseki] and we were told to go down and control a large demonstration. So we put a platoon, about 40 people on the commander in chief's yacht and sent that down and we put another platoon with Lenny Isles as
- 31:30 the platoon commander and sent that down by rail with orders to sort this out. There were about a quarter of a million Koreans down there all rioting madly and they went down and sorted it out, it was miraculous, they just melted away. If the occupation wanted something down or the occupation forces wanted something done they did that. There were other brief moments, we had a wonderful man called Alec Weaver who
- 32:00 was an interpreter, he was a Pole and spoke 7 languages including Japanese and he'd been working with intelligence for some time and so they gave him a rest and made him run Meogima Island, which you may of heard of, it's the one with that beautiful red torry out in the Inland Sea. We took over a hotel there the Ohsowah and we were great friends,
- 32:30 Alec and I. When I arrived to have a couple of days over there I was greeted by Alec in a palanquin carried by a number of servants going on, all an act of course but one for me at the back and we were taken up in style to the hotel. We had lots of visits from various people who were, for various reasons wanted to come to Japan sometimes there were bad vibes with
- 33:00 people, we had one particular fellow called Parker who used to keep on coming back, he'd been a POW [prisoner of war] and he'd really become more Japanese than he was Australian and we used to keep on sending him home and he'd come back again, send him home and somehow or another he got back again. And there were a few instances like that but generally it was not a bad time. I spent some time
- 33:30 on what was called a provo [provost, military police] court with Americans dealing with black market offences. And I can remember one case where this old lady had been accused, she was old too, of knocking off these vast rolls of silk and flogging them on the black market to the Americans. And we heard all the evidence
- 34:00 then retired and the usual drill is the junior member speaks first so I said, "Oh I don't think there's much in it I think probably give her a slap on the wrist, 3 months something like that". And the other 3 went in order from 5, 7 to 10 years, so we cut it in the middle and gave her 7 years for god sake, she didn't serve it I'm sure. But that was interesting too.

Maybe

- 34:30 **just Lou before we get too much into your service we might go back and start filling in some of the detail cause you've got a really big story to tell us today. You were saying your earliest memory is of your grandfather?**
- That's really the first thing I can remember, we were living in the lodge as I said at Rose Bay and his wife had died giving birth to the last child and there were 5 sisters and 2
- 35:00 boys. My mother was the 3rd daughter and because my father was away most of the time, New Zealand playing with a theatre group over there and down in Victoria, like newly married and new family we finished up with the in-law.

35:30 And that's what I can remember he was a, I don't remember much about him there were a couple of photos around of him but I don't remember much of him except he was a very imperious figure and yet I still have a fond memory of him. But I can just see these great big boots that he used to wear, absolutely perfectly shined, I can remember him going up like that and that's all I can remember. It's a sort of fleeting thing that's probably been enhanced over the years by

36:00 being told by my mother various times. But I crawled around that area, around the lodge for some time.

Whereabouts at Rose Bay was the lodge?

Lyon Park is on New South Head Road just at the top of Lyon Park before you come into Double Bay there is a white building which used to be a police station

36:30 till just recently, and before that it was the lodge for the ranger. And it was quite a large cottage, not a cottage it was quite a big building and that's where we were, looking down straight over into the harbour, where you could swim and go prawning, all those sorts of things you can't do now. And later of course it overlooked the sea plane base where the Imperial

37:00 Airways Sunderland flying boats used to take off for the UK and went their way through Singapore, Darwin Singapore and over. We weren't there, I can't remember being there very long, let me say that again I can't remember how long I was there because the next sort of memory I have is living in Balmain.

It's a pretty impressive front yard though isn't it?

Oh yeh great and

37:30 lots of room to play, couple of horses and things like that. My mother was a horsewoman and a great swimmer so it was a good upbringing really except didn't see much of my Dad for some time until we moved across.

Would you have learnt to swim there?

Oh yeh I would think so, I think I was thrown in at a very early age and I enjoyed swimming all my life.

What

38:00 **was the water like in, there's been a lot of things going on with Sydney Harbour water over the years?**

Then the bay had some weed, Rose Bay that is had some weed but was half sand half shingle beach a very good fishing area, you went out from Rose Bay towards Shark Island and my mother used to swim around Shark Island and come back again. I

38:30 don't think I was worried about it in those days, I'd be worried about it now, but it was very clean and at night you'd take a kerosene tin with a lantern and a piece of muslin, large piece of muslin and go prawning. And my uncle Richard, Dick was the chief prawner, he must have been about 8 or 9 at that stage. And he probably gave me some guidance, I can't remember it though.

39:00 But the family couldn't stay there for ever, my grandfather died and they had to move on. They went into 465 Old South Head Road and we followed them and we were in and out of there for some time, but that's where I finally finished up going to Rose Bay Primary School. And Rose Bay was great in those days,

39:30 it was very easy to get around and you could walk over the sand hills to Bondi from our place. Take about half an hour to get to the beach, walk across the sand hills come out to Gould Street go along Riverview Road and bang you were there. And the, as I said earlier the school was

40:00 very good. The family had started to split up then, the eldest daughter had married, the eldest daughter had actually got out early, Bessie had got out early and married a fellow called Bob Miller who was a milkman. And we always reckon Bob was little drops of water, little grains of sand make the milkman

40:30 wealthy and the grocer grand, that sort of thing. And he ran greyhounds and the greyhounds used to eat better than the family, they had good meat, good things, whatever could be gained. But she was first out then the 2nd one was Edna, aunt Edna who married the Health Inspector for the Waverly Council, Ralph Wilson, our family name, my mother's name was

41:00 Wilson and she married a Ralph Wilson. Great contest there between the Town Clerk and the Health Inspector as to who should get the girl, she was secretary to the Town Clerk. And my mother was next and then the others sort of trailed off as they got older they'd go down the beach and swains would turn up and expand chests and

41:30 show themselves off, the girls too actually and they gradually paired off until we got rid of the lot. But in the meantime we'd moved from Rose Bay, we'd been over to Rozelle and back and we'd gone into North Bondi in Hasting Street.

Might just stop you there and we'll change tapes.

Tape 2

00:30 **Rose Bay in those days, I mean today it's a very expensive neighbourhood, what was it like back then, was it exclusive?**

It was moving in that direction, the Australian Golf Club was there then and it verged on Vaucluse on one hand, which has always been exclusive and Berringa Road going up towards Bondi Junction on the other, around the foreshores. So it was

01:00 changing from what had been a, I suppose a village into a suburb into a high class suburb. It was probably unfortunate in a way that it had too major arteries, New South Head Road and Old South Head Road coming through which lead up to Vaucluse Military Road and out to Watson's Bay and Parsley Bay and

01:30 those areas.

What about Bondi at that time?

Oh Bondi was great and I was a Bondi junior you called them in those days you didn't have nippers and most of my school friends were Bondi juniors attached to the Bondi Surf Club, North Bondi Surf Club there were two. That was a very big part of your life really,

02:00 you learnt to surf and swim and the beach was part of every weekend. Apart from going to the pictures there wasn't a great deal to in the age were talking about, 12, 13, up to about those ages. And you became pretty brown, and suffered for it later, nevertheless it was a very enjoyable time. And

02:30 the sporting people of the time also incorporated themselves into the Surf Lifesaving Association so you had a lot of policeman, a lot of sportsman who were actually lifesavers as well and they all belonged to a club. And they were scarcely paid for playing football or anything like that but

03:00 it meant that there was a fair amount of discipline available in the area that you don't get today at all, you never knew who you were back chatting, it might be an inspector of police or just a constable but you were going to find out very quickly if you got out of line. And so you had a much better and secure place to be growing up than I think kids have these days.

03:30 And Bondi was not like it is today at all, or the beach area, it's not like it is at all, it didn't belong to New Zealand in those days, it does now, we'll come to the Anzac period later on.

Was Wonderland, was the amusement park there at Tamarama?

No, no Tamarama was

04:00 looked on with great favour by young gentleman because it was understood that the Tivoli Ballet used to bathe there and possibly nude. I never managed to make it but it attracted a great deal of attention and a lot of people used to go around to Tamarama to see the bathing beauties. I'd seen the Tivoli girls in action many years before,

04:30 or some years before my mother and Sadie Gail, Moe's [Vaudeville artists] wife used to sit in the wings at the Haymarket Theatre when I was a toddler and my mother knitted and Sadie Gail crocheted and I was sort of on one of those leads that they used to have in those days sort of harness with a thing on it, sitting down playing with something while Roy Rene and my father were on stage.

05:00 Then the ballet and the show girls were really very hard done by in those days because they worked like Trojans and then they were expected to go out after every evening show and show themselves off and all that sort of thing and then turn up for rehearsal at 8 o'clock in the morning. And everybody was there at 8 o'clock in the morning otherwise bang you were gone.

05:30 **Do you know where your mother and father met?**

No I don't, I don't I can deduce it but I can't tell you in fact because it was never mentioned. I can't remember every asking.

I'm just curious if she had a showground, a show background?

Not at all, not at all she was a milliner. She went to

06:00 Double Bay Primary School and the girls there were taught to write a particular way and it's almost impossible to tell my mother's handwriting from half a dozen other friends at the school, they're all identical, the teacher must have been absolutely fantastic. But she went from there to an apprenticeship with a milliner and she made hats until almost the last

06:30 day of her life. And I can remember assisting with the roule, which is you get a long piece of thin

material and turn it over and stitch it down one side making a tube, but with a seam on the outside. The aim is to get the seam on the inside so you then start to push something like 6 feet of

07:00 cloth through this thing with a knitting needle and working it up and working it up until you got it. I became a very good rouble maker in my day and that used to be put on hats as a decoration, still is I suppose, is it? Trim right yeh. And I think she was doing that when she met my father and I can tell from the photos that

07:30 they met in 1926, a year before I arrived, I haven't go any from my mother to my father but I've got photos of him to my mother with love and all that sort of thing, affectionate thingo's. And he was a very good looking character in those days, very good looking and she was no, she was pretty good, in fact.....

What was she like?

Oh she was a great girl, she

08:00 was swimmer, horse, rode horses bare back, great fun, she worked until she was 75 and she worked in the Koala Bear shop in Park Street in Sydney for some 20 odd years, more than that. And she became known all over the world in fact, there were people that used to write

08:30 her, film stars used to come down and get souvenirs and she used to pack them and send them off and then she'd get repeat orders from these people and send them away again, she loved that job, it was sort of passing parade for her. And it was also near the Criterion Hotel which was across the road which was all the actors gathered. I remember being

09:00 taken to meet, I can't remember his name he was the prince of the gypsies and he was most impressive fellow, he was in full morning gear with gold top cane and great swath of gold across here, rings on the fingers, great moustache, very dark moustache and I used to

09:30 be given a sarsaparilla and lemonade to drink while the talk went on. But you could meet almost anybody in the acting business at the Criterion Hotel and it was where a lot of deals were done, agents like Laurie Lorraine and Alf Powell, 2 that come to mind used to make deals with the actors to go on tour and take up

10:00 particular parts and that sort of thing. Cause it was, not a closed shop but there wasn't much talent around and what had to be, it had to be fostered and shared out, but every now and then somebody caught the short straw. On one occasion we were sent to Broken Hill, my father had never driven and he bought an Oakland car

10:30 for 5 pounds, a 1928 Oakland open top car for 5 pounds with a twisted chassis. And up the road was the nut and bolt factory owned by the mayor of Balmain, Mr Angelina, great friends, they straightened the thing out, that left us with still a licence to get. That was solved down at the White Bay Hotel where my father and the local police sergeant arranged for a test in the local paddy wagon

11:00 and after which he was issued with a licence and off we went with his partner Bill Barry. He met Bill Barry around about 1928, he was an accordion player and they called themselves Cooper and Zanderego. The name Cooper came from the cooperage and became his stage name Hal Cooper and Bill Barry became Zanaderego

11:30 and they dressed as Italians and did 'oh Marie oh Marie' and various other Italian type songs 'Solavera' and others like 'I'm nuts on a girl from Brazil' and various, I'll sing you that one later. So anyhow he was told you're for Broken Hill, so you go out and cross the Great Western Highway, well there's no highway

12:00 in those days it was the Great Western Highway but it wasn't too good. And somehow or rather, with a great deal of faith I think and a terrible amount of bad language up over Katoomba down into Lithgow and we were out near Balranald in New South Wales into black soil country and it was raining like hell, the hood was up

12:30 and just everybody was so wet and we slipped off the road into the mud, no fences or anything just went straight in. We couldn't get out the thing stalled and my father got out and had to crank up the thing, he was cranking it up and Bill Barry was working the ignition, sounds arcane doesn't it but it actually was,

13:00 working the ignition levers and finally my old man did the lolly and pulled out the starting handle and threw it into the field and then realised we were stuck. Along came the Johnstons, I'll never forget the name, he'd seen us from the farmhouse which was some distance away, brought down 4 horses and rode down and pulled the car back onto the road. It was pretty late by then so we,

13:30 mother got on the horse with me and the boys straggled up and they were put in the barn, mother and I were given the guest room and we were nice and clean and the others were left in the hay. And the Johnstons looked after us until we got on the road the next day. Then we had to find the damn starting handle, which we did and off we went to Broken Hill. But I've never forgotten those people they were absolutely magnificent, this is the height of the Depression

14:00 and we were fed like kings in the country it was terrific.

What sort of shows mainly was your dad in in the times in Sydney?

Well he started off as an opera singer, and there wasn't much call for opera, he worked with the Melba Opera Company, he was a junior in Melba's Company. And he did several for Fullers

- 14:30 and JC Williams in sort of the big entrepreneur at the time, he did several shows where there were opera sections like a piece out of Pagliacci or Tosca. And this didn't pay so he moved into variety and sang in a variety show with half a dozen ballet girls each side kicking up and that sort of thing,
- 15:00 or balance, until he got a partner. Even with a partner in a travelling show you still had to do some of the sketches, some of the ballet numbers that sort of thing, everybody doubled in brass. And we used to call the ballet a pony ballet because they were all family and they were all about 5 foot 2 you didn't dare have anybody who was above that 5 foot 2 or they'd
- 15:30 stick up like a tree in the middle of it, so everybody was about this high and they were known as the pony ballet. And all the shows had the same. And he then kept doing that for some years and he got quite a good reputation, he did command performances for the Duke of Gloucester and that sort of thing and had a very good name in variety. When the war came he went to the Department
- 16:00 of Aircraft Production and he stayed there for about 15 years, but he still worked and he and Bill used to go out and do Masonic Lodges and church charities and all that sort of thing, anything he'd get work. And he continued to do that right until the time he finally retired from the department. When he retired from there he went back to work for JC Williams and
- 16:30 was there until he was about 70 and then had to stop. He had a long and fruitful long, well not so long I suppose but he had a fruitful life and he had a large number of friends, he enjoyed his booze and my mother and I used to ensure that we always kept a small amount of cash away so that we had
- 17:00 something to work on over the next week before the pay came in again, cause he'd spend the lot. If somebody wanted a quid he'd give them quid, if somebody wanted a drink he'd buy them a drink, I'm much the same. But I remember him with great affection, great affection and as a good craftsman, he used his voice very well.

Were they pretty exciting times for a young guy like yourself?

Oh terrific

- 17:30 terrific, I even had a big part at one stage, Sawleys had a sister act, mother and sister act actually there were 5 girls, little girl making 6 in all who, mother and 5 daughters who used to do an act as Mae West all dressed up in black tight clinging clothes, wigs the lot. And I used to have to slip across
- 18:00 from Barton's Follies for this act, take my tray of peanuts, Minties and chocolates, ice cream was too heavy for me to carry, and go down the centre aisle while this act was on, they used to sing 'I've got a lot of what I've got and what I've got's all mine' an old Mae West song. And the littlest one used to shine her mirror around and she used to shine it on me and my part of the act was to retire in complete confusion up the aisle and get out,
- 18:30 and go back to work. It was great fun and the show people are very very cliquey, not cliquey that's the wrong word they bind together very very well and they look after one another very well too. You can't be in trouble for long without somebody finding out, somebody doing something about it, whatever that might be whether it's little or big. But it
- 19:00 was like a very close union and even the freak shows were quite fun to watch. And I used to work on a roll down which was a thing where you had 12 tables with billiard balls and the customer tried to get a score in pockets at the end of the billiard table.
- 19:30 And you knew that some of them were cambered to the left and some were cambered to the right and the good looking girls you always made certain had a straight table and then the prize was always something like a box of Cahill's chocolates, Cahill's was a very very famous restaurant chain in Sydney those days and it's chocolates were eagerly sought after. However these had been evidently unsought after for a couple of years and when the
- 20:00 recipient opened them they were usually covered in white old, we'd moved on by then. And uncle Snowy who was distinguished by putting the, he washed the cat and put it through the wringer, he was a dart man and had a very simple little piece of work, he just had a great big board covered in half inch chicken mesh and numbers
- 20:30 in each of the squares of the chicken wire, and behind all the major prizes were a thumb tack and every player won a prize. Didn't matter whether you were young, old every player won a prize, you rarely got anything very good but you won a prize. And I've seen darts bounce off the board and be oh bad luck try again don't worry about paying just try again. And Snowy
- 21:00 used to collect the used money and he'd give them a cadanga, which was a little celluloid daisy and they were known in show business, you'd say, "Oh give him a cadanga," meant give him nothing, give him a candanga. I've used that term myself, haven't I? Uncle Snowy. Sharman's the boxing people,

- 21:30 the big event there was in Townsville where I saw the longest count in boxing history, Jimmy Sharman put one of his boys in and the local lad came in and disclosed himself but he was a very good middle weight and he decked Sharman's boy and Sharman's there saying "1, get up you bastard, get up, 2, 3" and this went on until 10 and he had to pay 5 quid to the
- 22:00 customer, didn't like that at all, really hurt. And some of the girly shows those sort of things. I used to like Ubanghi who I mentioned before was the pigmy princess, she put all her money in diamonds, we used to sit in the railway carriage and she used to glitter, literally, only a little person of course she was a pigmy.

What was her actual

- 22:30 **act?**

She just had a number of, she did very little in fact but she had jugglers and acrobats who filled in and she just paraded around, simple as that.

And where had she come from, how does someone like that end up in a show?

Well the legend was she came from a pigmy tribe in Africa but there is serious doubt about that and I don't know where she really came from but

- 23:00 I'll accept she came from Africa. She was a lovely person really very good and very very generous but she was a tough cookie in business. The big names in show business on the showgrounds in those days are Maurie Darling and Sharman, Maurie Darling owned most of the sideshows and most of the game shows. I don't know whether you've ever seen the dolls with the, you knock them
- 23:30 down with a wooden ball and they've got fleece all around the outside, there's more fleece than there is doll so the ball goes through, but if you do actually hit one then you'll get a box of Cahill's chocolates. And then the girls in the trains used to make cupie dolls, dressed cupie dolls and put them on
- 24:00 a cane stick, not a walking stick but just a cane stick with a curve in it and they used to spend hours making these things, I don't know whether they have them on the showground these days but you'd find the girls standing there with a sheaf of these things and they went like hot cakes because they were beautifully done, and that's what they used to spend their time in the trains, going from place to place doing, just getting the dolls ready. And everyone had a go even I had a go at sprinkling
- 24:30 glitter on dolls, most ineffectively, I wasn't re-employed. It was a good time in that respect, the people are very good and even when I went into the army I was very popular at RMC at Easter time when we had Easter leave because when we hit Sydney Show we used to go from place to place free, okay Splint line up, my nickname was
- 25:00 Splint, cause I was so thin. I'd gone past that by this stage but they still knew me as Splint and because I was in the army that was great, get the boys in, they'd see all these things free. And my mother used to work on PDF, Producers Dried Fruit stand in the
- 25:30 Exhibition Hall so sample bags were also very easy to come by, it was good time.

In the days when you were with, when the family was with the travelling shows you mentioned earlier the freak show, apart from the pigmy princess who else was in that?

Well my father went to Surabaya to pick up Jeng the tail boy who was an unfortunate fellow who had a coccyx

- 26:00 it had developed and hadn't been removed so he became Jeng the tail boy, he was a lovely fellow but never learnt to speak English, Indonesian, that was one. There was Tessy O'Donovan the fattest lady who used to get a train compartment to herself, she was immense I don't know what she weighed but she was immense. And
- 26:30 I can't remember many more of the freaks because I was mainly involved in the games and in the rides, like dodgems and the chero plane, the octopus made its appearance in my day, that was a frightening piece of kit, I think of the tower of terror over here and it pales into insignificance. And then the other shows were,
- 27:00 even little mini reviews like a few girls, mini strippers, nobody ever went past the point really, boxing shows, strength shows, strongest man in the world and this sort of thing. They were all, entrepreneur there was Maurie Darling and he used to gather all these acts from all over the place and put them together.

I'm just curious about the freak show because there's nothing really like that nowadays, how did that actually work would they just sort of, you'd get

- 27:30 **like the audience and they'd just sort of parade them?**

Oh well there's a whole art in getting an audience for a sideshow, whether the sideshows were part of a circus, which often happened, Worth's used to run a series of sideshows at the same time as they ran the main circus. Or whether the, I've lost myself.

You were talking about getting the audience?

Yes getting the audience, you had the spruikers

28:00 out the front and they were magnificent, they would boot up and get a crowd in front, extolling the virtues of their show and showing bits of it, up would come this muscly character and this is what you're going to see inside but more than this and off he'd go. Girls would come out and just a flash of what's going to happen and gradually the boys would come in, usually fellows and in they'd go.

28:30 And the show might, they might like it or they may not but the spruikers were very much part of the scene and on a busy day they used to compete, on a non busy day they used to pass the crowd from one to the other and you'd start at one end of the road, or the track with one show and games on the other side and the aim was to get the people going like this

29:00 until they ran out of sideshows but they'd seen everything on the way up and the spruikers took over on their way through. They were damn good. I don't think that they do that sort of thing any more, they have far more sophistication but I don't know that there anymore effective.

The talent that was in the freak shows did they mind being there, they were all there by choice?

29:30 No, oh god no cause they didn't, no not at all, they were coining money, in those days it was very hard to get money. No you mean putting themselves on exhibition was a, no this had been going on for centuries, it's part of a tradition and it's died out now, in some areas it's not,

30:00 in some areas in the United States they still have freak shows. But largely they've lost their appeal and probably a good thing too. But no nobody was every forced into doing this or in my own short compass I can't remember any of them ever being worried or put off by having

30:30 to show themselves, you know the bearded lady or whatever it might be.

With it being the time of the Depression it sounds like it was almost a better place to be?

You had a job, sometimes it was only meals you know for the lower echelon workers say in a circus or a travelling tent show the tent warp we used to call them who used to

31:00 mastermind the tent area and put it up they were very poorly paid and their aim was to stop being a tent warp as soon as possible and do something else, assist the animal trainers or learn an instrument, get in the band something like that. So there was a strata of people, more evident in the circus than it was in the variety shows, in the circus the

31:30 prime acts were usually from overseas, some weren't like Collinarno, Australian slack wire act, Collino up in Queensland we call him Collinarno everywhere else they call him Collino. And so we, you'd find that all the animal acts were imported and lion acts usually came from Germany and

32:00 from Munich area and Bavaria and Swavier[?] and they came as a complete entity and you know the circus rings are the same all over the world it's 42 feet wide or 13 metres I think that is and so a lion cage from Europe fits in an Australian circus ring. Horses are trained in the same circumference so everybody knows

32:30 exactly what they've got no matter where they're preforming. High wire artists and trapeze artists you had to be very careful because, well the entrepreneur had to be very careful because to do the full act you probably needed at least a 2 kind pole tent so that you can get a good spread, you can't do very much with a single pole, so you'd usually

33:00 find that if we were going to use the trapeze acts or high wire acts then we had to go for 2 to 4 poles. So sometimes they were left out because in a place like Maryborough you wouldn't get a crowd big enough to put up a tent like that. So there was a fair amount of juggling. In Townsville we had Phillip Worth's 21st birthday party and

33:30 the fellow who looked after the elephants looked like an elephant, he had this pig ears and a pendulous nose and at a late hour in the evening he rolled a 9 gallon keg around to the elephant trough area and gave the head elephant, the head elephant's always a female elephant, and tipped the booze in and she apparently went slrrrr

34:00 and loved it and she was out past Charter's Towers before they got her, she went in a straight line west, didn't stop for anything, fortunately there wasn't much in the way in those days, but she just went straight out and they picked her up about 3 days later. But it's, the stratification in the workforce was only minimal in that everybody had to put a shoulder to the wheel

34:30 when you were getting the show together.

I can imagine that one of today's Occupational Health Safety Officers might have a heart attack if they saw what was going on back then, was it?

Not so much because you're talking about the animals perhaps?

Well just with any of it, erecting the tents trapeze?

Oh no well I can't remember a single fatal accident

- 35:00 in the time I was with them at all. It rarely happened, I mean it does even then nets were in use and animal acts, I think the most unfortunate one was Silver's Circus and that was comparatively recent, that was in 95 when that poor child put it's
- 35:30 hand into the lion's cage, god knows how it got there, anyway it mauled the kid's arms. But it's so rare it's just untrue because it's a livelihood, or their livelihood and you look after these things and you've only got to see a trapeze artists checking out his gear to know that there's not a great deal left to chance, they go over every single piece, time and
- 36:00 time again, it's a fetish, and then somebody else checks again, it's rather like parachuting. On the ground my father did one season as Ring Master when, I forget his name now, Worth's Ring Master went to Barnham and Bailey's for a year to get a re-training I suppose, update and Dad took over for a year. And that was,
- 36:30 I had a bit of time with him then, that was great cause it was a different sort of existence to the variety shows because you were dealing with both animals and people. And the way the animals were treated I thought was pretty good yeh, it might be dreadful now but it looked pretty good to me then. And circus used to put a menagerie around
- 37:00 so that when people came they could go into the menagerie and see the animals that they were going to see performing later. We didn't get in Australia the sort of touring animal acts like Alfred Court the great French lion tamer who was the first man to bring lions, tigers and polar bear into the
- 37:30 same ring. We'd rarely have that, you might have bears but you don't mix them with cats, that sort of thing.

Did you have a particular fascination with any of the animals?

Me, I suppose if the truth be know I suppose it was lions, there's a famous story about Ashton's Circus my father was, I had a photo somewhere years ago of him. Old man Ashton was

- 38:00 a very heavy drinker and he used to retire after the show and sink a bottle and go into a deep sleep. And we had a lion cub, it was a gorgeous thing, I remember patting it and I've got a picture of my father holding it up and it was allowed to more or less run free. Old man Ashton had gout and he used to put his feet out from underneath the blanket, this thing got up the steps into the caravan
- 38:30 and fixed itself on his big toe. The story goes he came down the steps with the lion cub attached to the foot screaming for help, then it was relegated to a small cage from there on. But lions I liked and so as I say nearly got there once.

How did that come about?

Well I'd go down and

- 39:00 work, clean up after a show and rehearsals used to take place and all those sorts of things and I used to know these people and Flager was very approachable and I used to water the cats and things like that. He said, "Alright come down and we'll have a go, you can stand behind me". Years later when I was at Staff College I gave a lecture
- 39:30 on lion taming in which I used a chair and a feather duster to illustrate the moves, it went down very well.

When you were a child or younger travelling around with the shows were you at any point considering that that's what you would do?

Never, no, I can't remember ever thinking that. I think because

- 40:00 a very personal thing but it told on my mother a great deal because there were lots of separations and when we travelled I don't know that she enjoyed it all that much but she was glad to be with her husband and have me with them. But I always felt as though,
- 40:30 or my feeling is that she would have preferred a much more stabler existence than the peripatetic one that we had. And she never got it, so I was never impelled to take up show business, mind you a bit of it rubbed off and when I went to RMC
- 41:00 they had a thing called Review I think, but it was deadly, absolutely deadly and my classmates and I decided we would re-generate this and so we turned on a variety show instead. And I was fortunate enough to go, I've still got the book inside,
- 41:30 go up and get a number of sketches for the show and a number of songs for the show, and I also went to Betty Pounder's School of Dancing in Jersey Road, there was some about 45 year olds learning the two

step, so I could come back and teach the cadet ballet, do the damn time step. And we then put on a review which was far better than

Tape 3

00:30 So school via correspondence what was that like?

Well it was very interesting, my mother of course was the monitor and made certain that I did it. But the department was obviously very good they provided a terms work in the form of a series of buff covered note books, I can remember the colour quite vividly, can't remember the contents too well. But these were to be done

01:00 periodically on a timetable and submitted back to the school, and it was my school that they went back to at Rose Bay. And they were marked there and they went towards my progression or otherwise. So we had with us a terms worth of work and then we had a pre-arranged post box for the next term and they turned up and we just went straight on.

01:30 We even had holidays, I think I had to do a couple of extra subjects during the holiday to keep up. You did them in strange places as I mentioned earlier Brunswick Street in Brisbane on a verandah and in a train travelling up, Queensland train of course, travelling up north, plenty of time to do things. And sitting on a bleacher [bench] in a tent

02:00 doing the work but always checked out by Mum. I must say that I was in retrospect of course I was really very taken with the way the department handled it, I was surprised that they did cause it was an intermittent sort of thing and we'd simply say oh Dad's got a job and were off and the school reacted and within days we had all the stuff we needed,

02:30 and away we went.

And you never feel like you've missed out on any?

Not really because back at, I used to go back to the same school and like all boys' schools we had a gang of sorts to run the outfit, in fact we had quite a distinguished group of people, one became Postmaster General, not Postmaster General but the

03:00 CEO of Australia Post, another became Professor of English at New England university and he gave me my nickname Lou he said, "Oh Ivan that's a dreadful name you can't have that, Brumfield is like Broomfield," and there was a famous author at the time Louie Broomfield who wrote a book called the 'Rains Came' "So we'll call you Lou"

03:30 and from there on it was and I've kept it ever since. So there are a number of people, one of the most distinguished was a fellow called Peter Klein who was a refugee, or his family were refugees from Germany and he turned up at school in a lederhosen [short leather pants] and boot and a velvet jacket trimmed with green velvet and

04:00 you can imagine an Australian primary school a mob of oh god, he got a rough time for a while and then we decided, cause he was so damn bright, that he'd better be looked after. So the ruling clique said, "Hands off Peter Klein" and he distinguished himself later by taking on the Australian Tax officer for something, they used to call him

04:30 the Fiscal Fiend became a judge in some obscure African natiol and then finally came back and was taken to court by the ATO, lost out and went back to Vienna to die. And interesting story, the thing that really impressed me I suppose, or stays impressed with me was that we decided he'd had enough chiacking and

05:00 the cabal simply got together and said, "Lie off Peter" and we did. The teachers were very good in that school as I mentioned before, George Hutchinson was the headmaster and he was there for years and I in fact went back after Korea and visited him there. And he and Mr Steven and Mr

05:30 Gosper, see the respect is there even to this day, were a very powerful team and the sports master Mr Gill was our champion, he later joined the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] and we lost him but he ran the air training corps and coached cricket, we didn't play rugby in those days for some reason but cricket. And it was

06:00 a good time for kids my age. I think our favourite teacher was the woodwork teacher he was a veteran of the First World War and he was not a particularly good teacher but he was a nice man and he used to keep his cane on top of one of the lockers with the end protruding and he'd pull it out

06:30 and brandish it whenever things got rough and somebody would pull a plane the wrong way and ruin 2 bob's [shillings] worth of wood or something like that. And Spiro one of our clique got the cane carefully shredded it down until it looked like a feather duster, put it back with the end out and the next time there was an eruption oh it was grab the cane and the cane fell

07:00 away, he screamed laughing, the rest of us were all rolling, it was a good time.

He laughed as well did he?

Yes he did, he really did and at the end of each term we'd take some incredibly inept piece of carpentry home to inflict on the family, a box with a lid that wouldn't close or a bread board which probably needed another edge taken off somewhere but it got done,

07:30 in some form.

Did you ever pry, did people ask him about his service in the First World War?

No, no. There was a lot more respect I think in those days for returned serviceman than there is today. For example I would be on my feet so fast in a tram if a TPI [totally and permanently incapacitated veteran] got in, or even an adult really, particularly if a TPI

08:00 got in the tram you were on your feet straight away, it was just automatic and I don't think it happens these days.

Was there any education at school at that time of Australia's involvement in the World War I?

Oh yes, yes and of course we were in the middle of a war while I was there, from 39 until I went to Sydney High in 41, or 36 on. The main picture

08:30 in the school common room was the landing at Anzac, there were still pictures of Monash and Rudenthal, White and Chauvel hanging in the halls. These were added to as the war went on with various other dignitaries but they were the centrepiece and we used to sing God Save the Queen, Advance Australia Fair

09:00 the International, the Marseillaise [French National Anthem], I can still remember most of the words to the Marseillaise, not like the Brisbane Lions Marseillaise the real one, what other one, 4 that's right we used to sing 4 and of course we had to add on the Stars and Stripes and this used to happen every morning with the flag raising ceremony. So there was much more

09:30 attention to it and it was part of the norm, it wasn't thought to be unusual or anything like that.

Which flag was raised?

The Australian flag was raised, Australian flag, yeh blue inside. On special days the others would be raised if we had them but it wasn't always possible, it was difficult to get a Russian flag.

And the painting that you mentioned another lady told us about that, how large was

10:00 **that?**

This was about, I suppose about 3 foot by, oh a bit more I suppose, about 3 foot 6, about a metre long and about 60cm deep and it was an issue to schools, that was the picture itself which showed the boats landing on Anzac Cove and the

10:30 frame held some detail, not much of the dates and what was occurring, landing on Anzac. And this was in every school that I can remember, it was at Sydney High as well and later, even as late as 51 when I was working with 2 Cadet Brigade, most of the schools I went

11:00 to had the same picture showing, even that late.

And would the school celebrate Anzac Day?

Oh yeh, my word yes, before Anzac Day because Anzac Day was the holiday but there was always an Anzac ceremony and a small talk by the headmaster usually, although Mr Gosper did it one year on the importance of Anzac.

And did you have any relatives that fought

11:30 **in that war?**

Yes my father, it's a good story actually he was under age, he was just 16 or just before he turned 16, he'd been with the National Service Training of that day, Universal Training and he was with the Australian Garrison Artillery, there's a picture here somewhere, and he was smuggled in with the unit when they all

12:00 converted. And he went to the Middle East, went to Gallipoli, it was obviously too much and he came back and then I think he started on his artistic career. Obviously it made a vast impression on him, he never spoke about it and I only learned about it many years later when people from his own battery, he was a gunner

12:30 told me that he'd been sent out because he was too young. And he used to take me to Anzac Day, he never marched never wore his ribbons, it was just obviously an event which made such a deep

impression on him. I can understand why having seen young people

13:00 in the same condition. And so it was never raised and rather sadly, but in later years he was coming to terms with it and he was a member of the Paddington RSL and some of his, they were getting fairly thin on the ground at this stage, some of his people were still there and

13:30 he just let it go away, very sad.

As a child were you perceptive enough to realise that it obviously had had an enormous impact on him?

No, no and I've often wondered about it since, but mainly I think because he was using his career as a catharsis, getting on the stage in front of people and re-establishing a

14:00 personality I think was something that he needed to do. That's very much hindsight, to me he was always a bluff and outgoing person with a very quick temper and a very quick release from the temper. But I think he was, he needed something like

14:30 the path he followed to see him through. Having been back to Gallipoli and walked the ground that always leaves me with absolute amazement.

When did you do that?

Dulce and I did that a few years ago, we went back, her father was at Gallipoli to and we went back and walked the ground mainly following the 1st

15:00 Battalion in this case because I'm a patriot of the Association of 1st Battalions and we went and followed the 1st Battalions brigades and went through the various phases of the battle. And I can remember standing at Queens Post with tears in my eyes, I just stood there, I can feel them coming now it was so stupid

15:30 absolutely ridiculous and these people had just been thrown away, it was horrible.

I haven't been there yet but people have told me that the place has a real air, a real feeling about it that it's hard to describe?

Oh it does there's an aura, there's an aura that you feel, you come out of Canakkale get on the bus and come across and all of a sudden it's something quite different. And the astonishing thing,

16:00 one of the astonishing things, there were many, but one of the astonishing things is the way that the youngsters behaved, you could hear a pin drop on the beach with a crowd of 10,000 people there. Mostly young and all completely struck silent, just looking at what they'd done, god a remarkable thing.

16:30 Anyhow that's, that was a great moment for us to go back and actually go over it but it was a devastating thing to do.

Can you recall hearing that World War II had been declared?

Yes I can in fact there was a rally in Martin Place that day and my father took me down into Martin Place

17:00 and people gathered from all over Sydney in Martin Place, I don't know who the Premier was but it wasn't the Prime Minister, the Premier gave a speech in Martin Place that day. And whatever troops we had available were mustered together and fated for the day. But I can remember, I can't remember the papers,

17:30 just telling me she's back, I can't remember the papers but and that's all I can remember about it. In the early years the war, we all followed every detail of it, we had maps, every house had a newspaper map on the wall with pins and flags and who was going where and what was happening, all totally inaccurate but nevertheless we were sort of keeping up with it. And

18:00 miles away and then as the troops left, I can remember standing on the Gap seeing the Queen Mary and Mauritania and one other going out through the Heads with naval escort outside already to pick them up. A very impressive sight, that was a bit later on of course, getting onto about March I think 40.

18:30 The reaction of the public was much the same I think as it must have been in World War I because were recovering from the Depression it was a god send in terms of employment, people simply flocked to the colours and you hear stories about people marching for months, or not months weeks to get to a recruiting station as they did in the First World War. And

19:00 a large body of unemployed people already waiting to get in and a great adventure. You don't know what the great adventure is likely to be but I think that's the way people were looking at it.

Can you remember your mum and dad talking about it?

Not a great deal, I can remember my mother talking more about my uncle who immediately joined up and he'd had TB....

19:30 **Was that her brother?**

Her brother yeh and he was refused and so he started a campaign to get enlisted again and finally he got in but he could never get away. He spent about 6 months up at Katoomba in a sanitarium earlier on but he spent the war at, or in the Army Service Corps it was in those days driving

20:00 trucks and coming home on leave and telling me all about it. He enjoyed his war quite well I think. A couple of the married aunts' husbands, that didn't make a great impression because we were already involved through cadets and through

20:30 the lifesaving club actually to, the way that that diminished in those years was quite astonishing because boys just simply went and joined. Then they were refilled with older people, they came back in, it was quite interesting to watch that. A lot of people who couldn't get away and were too old to get away joined the Volunteer Defence Corps and put barbed wire all over Bondi Beach and various other

21:00 strategic places.

And when you were in the air training corps what exactly did you do in there?

Not much, we had a uniform which was about the best clothes I had during that period and I don't know how Mum paid for them but you had a little cap, fore and aft cap and blue shirt and a pair of blue pants and a pair of blue socks and we drilled. Actually the lectures were basic dynamic

21:30 lectures of dihedral [angle made by aircraft wings with each other] and all that sort of thing, technical terms became, they flowed and that was interesting, keep you going, but we didn't have camps or anything like that.

What sort of typical boy fascination did you have for planes that had just sort of hit, becoming big and popular at that time?

Well we were at Rose Bay which

22:00 had the flying boat base for Empire Airways, so we'd sort of grown up with large aeroplanes, or launches going out and clearing the way and we knew a plane was coming in and it would come in and gracefully come down on Rose Bay. And then as the war progressed we found there were Sunderlands there, PBV's and an old Walrus

22:30 that used to be serviced off either HMAS Sydney or HMAS Perth and a rather antiquated biplane would be slung up on the ramp and we knew that the ship was in Harbour because the aeroplane was getting serviced. And then sure you looked at things like Spitfire and Hurricanes and at the Easter

23:00 Show we were shown the Boomerang, the Wirraways first and then, which was a copy of T6 Trainer, American Trainer and then the Boomerang Fighter, before it actually became active, it wasn't too bad a fighter actually I suppose. But that would be the main impetuses, the papers used to,

23:30 and boy's magazines used to have aircraft outlines and schematics and the fabric torn off, showing how it was built and that sort of thing, everybody followed that I'm sure.

And what is that made you decided to get out of the air training corps and into the army cadets?

Well it no longer existed when I moved on, when I went to Sydney High School

24:00 they had no other military type occupation and cadets, as I think I said earlier were firmly embedded in most schools, most large schools. Not just private schools to public schools as we called them but places like Parramatta and Parramatta High and Canterbury High and Fort Street, most

24:30 major public schools had cadet corps. I suppose we were about the only organisation in the early days who could put 50,000 troops onto Sydney Showground at the drop of a hat, and that was pretty small, not as high as the rifles. But it was well organised and each school had an officer of cadets who ran the corps who was usually

25:00 a First World War veteran, in some cases they weren't but in most cases they were. Our's for example was the physical training teacher Captain Ackerson who I remember quite well. He ran the corps and as we increased in numbers in the war he was promoted to major, Major Ackerson,

25:30 and most schools followed that same principle of enlarging during the war.

And what sort of things did you do in the cadets?

Apart from getting kit having mother adjust it so it fitted, we did weapon training and a lot of small ball shooting. And then about once every 6 months we'd go out to Long Bay

26:00 and we'd be on the big range, on the rifle range there. We'd got to camp for 2 weeks and normally we'd go to either Greta or Hexham, I think there's a picture out there of an NCOs Course I went to at

Hexham which has the largest mosquitoes in Australia, Hexham Greys. And the school would go into camp at say

- 26:30 Greta and there's probably be 20 or 30 schools go into camp at the one time. And we did field craft, minor tactics, bit of physical training and a really enjoyable time. Never seen anything wrong with cadets, didn't teach me to kill.

And the small bore shooting that you mentioned

- 27:00 **what rifles were you using?**

Well that was a normal army issue rifle at that stage, a SM Lee, a short magazine Linfield which had been fitted with a ball which took a 22 round and you could use it on a small range which had been constructed with a steel sheet and protective sheets on the side and target, didn't pop up you went and put them up. And

- 27:30 the competition there was quite fierce between schools, within schools to and once again somewhere I've got a pair of cross rifles which I must have accidentally got for some actually making a hit at some stage. The other weapon we used was a relic of the Boar War which was a Martini Henry rifle which was much lighter and much more adaptable for small kids.

- 28:00 But was not usually used to firing, on the range we'd use the Lynnfield's with normal ammunition. Lived in tents just like real soldiers and ate like real soldiers, god the food was crook in those days too. The cooks were provided by the army

- 28:30 Pre war they hadn't been they'd been old army cooks who we resurrected from repat or something like that and bought in to do the cooking, we do that later to after the war. But during the war the army provided the cooks and of course they were the cooks who hadn't gone anywhere so they murdered a fair bit of food. But it was a growing boy population so it didn't really matter.

And obviously you

- 29:00 **did pretty well because you worked your way through promotions didn't you?**

Yes corporal, sergeant and then lieutenant. As I said, I think as I said earlier you were actually commissioned in those days, it's not like it is now Lord Garry signed my commission. When I went to RMC I found myself being put on the reserve of officers surrendering my commission

- 29:30 so I could be a staff cadet at RMC. The school also supported the activity that was the main thing, if you had a school bureaucracy which didn't get involved I think it would have been very much different but it wasn't they were aware that this was something that they wanted to do. And we were pretty, like most GPS Schools we were

- 30:00 heavily sport orientated as well, as well as academically. So there are a number of avenues of moving forward in the field.

And what did your mum and dad think about your involvement in the cadets?

Oh they were quite happy they were quite happy in fact when I did get my commission we used to wear a, there's a photo up there, a jacket with a

- 30:30 collar around here and my mother and father, my father in fact tailored the thing to an open neck so that I could wear a short tie and look like an officer. They were quite happy for me to be in the cadets, most people were I can't remember anybody not being happy about it.

And what else do you remember of Sydney during the war?

- 31:00 Well it was, there was a much greater caesium between north and south, over the Harbour and south of the Harbour.....oh rationing, we'll get to rationing. So the Eastern Suburbs were quite different

- 31:30 from Northern Suburbs. And the two didn't meet except on the sporting field really. As the war went on we had rationing come in, you were issued with ration books and for food and for clothing. And so if somebody wanted to get married the entire families quota of clothing

- 32:00 coupons probably went on the bride, unless somebody could find a silk parachute somewhere with a tear in it something like that. The trams, the transportation system was pretty good for that time in Sydney and you could move around with a fair amount of ease. Scaling used to be a, not a profession but a skill that most school boys

- 32:30 tried at one time or another, getting on the tram and not paying and getting off before the Conductor got to you which meant that you had take your case and suddenly find the books all over the ground and that sort of thing. I can't remember shortages in some areas, vegetables and things

- 33:00 like that seemed to be fairly readily available, meat of course was not. Most of the meat went to the army in both lamb, pork and beef, it was directed so you were very lucky to have a good butchers, butchers were cultivated, grocers were cultivated to make certain that you got the best out of your

ration book.

- 33:30 Clothing was very difficult to get, you wore it a lot longer than you normally would now, a lot longer. And for those in transition like myself from short to long pants was something of an epic really because you had to really make certain you bought at the right time otherwise you grew out of them so fast, it just wasn't true.
- 34:00 There was another thing there about clothing. I can remember in our family it was so desperate that with 5 aunts there were only 2 slips and the fight to get those slips was something very extraordinary for a young fellow to see. Radios were the only means of communication and people used to sit round these
- 34:30 vastly enlarged sets, Asters and Phillips with one dial and 2 knobs, 1 for volume and 1 for turning the thing round to see which stations were on the air and you'd listen to the news and the ABC news was what you'd listen to. You had other programs that you automatically went for 'Take it from here' with
- 35:00 Dick Bentley and Joy Nicholas, 'The Witches Tail' on Friday night where everybody turned out the lights and listened to these horror stories, that was the entertainment outside the pictures. Films were still one of the top ways of entertainment and so was variety, most shows stayed open
- 35:30 for most of the war, Tiverton in particular. Down at the end of George Street were the Tiverton and the Haymarket, the Empire up the road near Railway Square and Theatre Royal in Castlereagh Street were the main venues in those days and they were packed out, absolutely packed out. And our uniforms got first choice,
- 36:00 blocks were held for servicemen and that sort of thing. Dances were held in some of the nearer camps like Holsworthy, Ingleburn, even as far as Newcastle and busses would come to Grace Bros, Marx Foy's, Hordan Brothers, pick up the girls and take them up to the camp for the dance, carefully squired, put them on the bus again and bring them home,
- 36:30 all part of the service.

Did you get to the pictures much?

Yes my favourite area was the Winter Garden at Rose Bay which I think might be a pub now and we, as we got a little older we used to send Norma Fraser who was the smallest bloke into buy the tickets so we'd all get in at half price. Ming the Mercer, Flash Gordon, Tom Micks,

- 37:00 Hop a Long Cassidy, westerns seemed to take a fair bit of the time. I can't remember any real dramas at that stage, oh wait a minute there was one my mother took me to that, in town at the Lyceum where it was so packed 'One Night of Love', it was so packed with women that we had to stand up the top at the back, there weren't any seats and everybody
- 37:30 cried during the whole thing except me, I didn't know what the hell was going on. Irene Dunn in 'One Night of Love', that's about the only drama I can remember. However there were places that devoted themselves entirely to news in those days, Fox Movie Tone News and Gomont News and these theatres just
- 38:00 had about an hour of news reels, maybe a couple of cartoons thrown in and you'd go and sit through that and you'd be brought up to date with the latest in camera, which was probably about 6 months behind the times, but they were absolutely stacked too. Lots of special events for visiting ships and
- 38:30 for troops, rather like the States had but on a less organised basis. In town there'd be the Red Cross Centres and things like that which looked after soldiers on leave if they couldn't look after themselves. A lot of the local soldiers would take their mates home, very much like the Sullivans.

Can you remember there being a lot of Americans in Sydney?

Yes, yes

- 39:00 remember there being a lot of Americans in Sydney, first Sailors and then after the Philippines we had a large influx into the outer areas of Sydney. There's a famous story about Brisbane to which had an American division for a time at Eel Farm
- 39:30 and one of their soldiers got on a tram and went into Brisbane and he said to the Conductor "So guy let me off at the CBD" and the fellow said, "You've just passed it". I suppose things haven't changed very much. They made a big impact and Kings Cross was where they tended to gather for various reasons they
- 40:00 had lots of money, uniforms were a hundred percent on ours, they always looked neat and tidy, most of the time and they could out buy our blokes. It caused a great deal of trouble and was one of the worst features of having an army of occupation sitting around doing nothing in large numbers,
- 40:30 provided with goods that we couldn't get ourselves for the girls, things like nylons and that sort of thing, perfume, for the fellows clothing and good quality and that sort of stuff. So it was a bit innovating

really, not really appreciated.

Tape 4

00:30 **So black outs as well?**

We had black outs, cars were equipped with special covers to the headlamps which allowed some illumination, petrol was very difficult to get so we finished up with gas producers hanging on the back of cars omitting smoke in all directions, I think would be most incorrect these days to have a gas producer. And houses

01:00 generally didn't have the things we have today such as refrigeration was not common, neither were washing machines, it was a matter of gas coppers at best, wood coopers at worst and the ice man came and put the block in the ice box every couple of days, 3 or 4 days. Black outs we got very very involved with

01:30 curtaining and not only that we had tapes on, criss cross tapes on all windows protecting us from flying glass. And in the backyard many people constructed an Anderson Air Raid Shelter, which was a kit provided by the government which could take about half a dozen people. And I helped construct our with

02:00 my uncle Dick, just before he went in to the army and we dug out this, in a very small backyard this immense hole and put galvanised iron all over it and put sandbags over the top of that and this is in Sydney and I think in a number of other places too. Transport was restricted in that night movement was curtailed to a very large extend, 2 reasons

02:30 1 illumination the other power. Power restrictions, water restrictions, I'm not quite certain why we had water restrictions to be honest but we had a thing called a 4 inch bath and a lot of households had a black ring, not from use of the bath but painted around the bath at 4 inches which was as much hot water as you would use in a bath.

03:00 Food was fairly simple and entertainment was mostly in the home with the things we mentioned before to take over.

So as a 14 year old young man what was your take on the war?

I must say I was one

03:30 of these people who were putting the pins in the map and thinking what our boys had done at Bardia and Tobruk and you followed that with real interest. I mean that was what was happening, and which Spitfire pilot was the new ace and then somebody would go and put a bit of a dampener on it but then somebody else would come up straight away. It

04:00 didn't impinge too much on other activities like fishing or surfing, even with the barb wire on the beach you could still surf. And we often went fishing, we were fishing the night the Japanese submarines came into Sydney Harbour on the 31st, 30th May I think 42. We were up at Watson's Bay, my friend Robbo and I

04:30 in a little skiff just near Alf Focklers baths and all hell broke lose and we rode for the shore, I think we were about, oh 10 feet up on the shore before we stopped rowing. But you could see a lot of activity on the far side of the Harbour where the little submarines had got through and knocked off the Chicago and the Cutterbol, or injured

05:00 the Chicago didn't sink it. And then they recovered those and pieces of one of them were on sale, you get a bolt from the midget submarine for 2 pounds or whatever it was as part of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic Fund. And rallies were held to get funds to provide parcels for troops which we did, as the same as in the First World

05:30 War comfort parcels became quite a thing to send off. And you had the usual cake in a tin box, some smokes and a pair of socks, a scarf, a balaclava, all going to the Middle East. The odd pair of laces, extra laces and if it was going

06:00 to a particular person rather than into the Red Cross bag to be distributed, posted off to a particular soldier in the Middle East you might put something special in for them such as chocolate or something that will undoubtedly be spoilt by the time it got there, sometimes a bottle of some sort, loaf of bread.

So if you didn't know

06:30 **anybody personally that was in the Middle East say you could still get a soldiers name?**

Oh yep.

How would you do that?

Through Red Cross and the Australians Comfort Fund would provide a name and you could pen pal him. I don't think there was much reaction to that but a lot of parcels went that way. But most parcels were put together and handed in to the general pool,

07:00 families always sent to their own.

Can you recall hearing about Darwin?

Yes it's a bit clouded now because there was very little heard about Darwin in later years I've learnt a great deal about Darwin so my memory's probably a bit clouded. But we knew that Darwin and Townsville had been bombed, we didn't realise

07:30 the amount of bombing that had gone into Darwin, it was quite considerable and they'd done a great deal of damage. That was withheld and what was more visible was there was a movement of troops towards the north that hadn't been there before. And then as things developed into Papua New Guinea

08:00 news was still very difficult to come from. Then of course when Macarthur came news was even more difficult to get because it all went through his headquarters. And so we were all Macarthur people because that's what we were fed and our own people suffered accordingly in terms of exposure.

08:30 And it wasn't until we got people like Damien Parah and other photographers that brought it home to us that we knew that our people were doing very well and under very difficult circumstances.

A lot of people have spoken of the King and Country sort of mentality at the start of the war, did you yourself notice any sort of change in maybe

09:00 **just yourself and your mates at school and that between the following or the regard for Britain changing more towards the Americans when they entered the war?**

Yes I think there certainly was that, in a strange way it didn't alter the basic fact which was King and Country. That remained and I don't think there was much

09:30 alteration to that but in a practical sense we knew that Britain wasn't going to be able to help us very much, particularly after Singapore and certainly when the Repulse and the Prince of Wales went down and then the 8th Division got clobbered, we knew, or the 2 brigades in the 8th Division, it was pretty painfully obvious that we couldn't rely on the

10:00 UK. That still didn't interfere with the King and Country concept, we still toasted the King and the Loyal toasts and we stood up in the pictures right until 1945 when the National Anthem was played you were on your feet straight away. So those things were still there and hadn't diminished a great deal in my segment of the population.

10:30 Those that followed of course were in a different environment, and those that were much senior to me had probably a greater change of heart because they were experiencing these things at a policy level and seeing where the strength was coming from that would assist Australia rather than the UK, which we couldn't assist anymore, bring the troops home from the Middle East that sort of thing.

So can

11:00 **you recall hearing of the war VE [Victory in Europe] Day being announced?**

VE Day was, yes I remember VE Day very well I was at RMC and it was distinguished by the RSM being chased by a fire hose across the front of the parade ground, we

11:30 paid for it later but it was a good day. And then we had a ball at the Albert Hall or a dance at the Albert Hall a victory dance, there was also a victory party at the Services Club in Marnika and I think that was probably replicated all over Australia. I didn't see anything of the festivities in Martin Place or anything like that. And VE Day was probably a much bigger day to us than VJ [Victory over Japan] Day

12:00 but it was mainly memorable because Fango Watson got chased with a fire hose. The man that was holding it was a fellow called Geoff Shelton, Jim Shelton who was very well known in military circles.

So how was VJ Day different?

It was unexpected and yet it was a great relief, I

12:30 don't think anybody was looking forward to the possible invasion of Japan and although the public didn't, we'd been sidelined at that stage so I don't think we'd have had much to do with it anyhow, once again that's hindsight. At the time I think it was just a relief that the entire thing had been sewn up at last and most of the

13:00 propaganda at the time was centred on the way that it finished in terms of the atomic bomb in those days and Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the results of that so quickly coming to a head. So I think VE Day was much more a time for having a good time than

13:30 VJ Day.

So at what stage had you sort of suddenly decided that Duntroon was for you, that that's where you wanted to go?

Well I was doing quite well at school and I had the impulsion of the war was there and it's end was not in sight, this is 1944, it was obviously going well but the end was not in sight. So

- 14:00 the idea of going to the services and serving was quite strong impulse. On the other hand we had counsellors in those days that told us what we should do and I was told that I should aim for the Law, I'm probably sorry I didn't do that, I would have been much richer. But
- 14:30 I think service won out, you'd been in cadets for a couple of years and the ethos was there and RMC didn't bulk large in my mind as a goal in itself it was a way in, I didn't realise until I'd been there some time just how important RMC was in the terms of things militarily.
- 15:00 So I think the decision was largely made by the circumstances and if I'd missed there I probably would have been hopefully a QC by this stage, or a retired Supreme Court Judge.

So but Duntroon itself an RMC where do you think that sort of appeared as an option, was it because of your cadet?

It was offered, not an offer

- 15:30 of a place but to apply for a place, that was made available in all the major schools and the result was pretty obvious because in my class which was about 80 strong to start off with most of them were from cadets, most of them were from major schools, not private schools public as well as
- 16:00 grade public schools. And I think that's probably what caused us to move in that direction, there's a chance to get in the war this way otherwise we might have to wait another couple of years, or a year and a half before were eligible to join up. This way we get in early.

And did you need your mum and dad's permission?

Yes, yep and it was all beer and skittles

- 16:30 while you were outfitted you had to supply everything else, I've given away my steel chest, which my father purchased at great personal expense and pocket money was provided by parents, a limit of 10 shillings a week and cadets didn't see any other money, it was all on a trust basis, on a trust fund basis so
- 17:00 everything you bought from cigarettes in the canteen if you smoked to a new pair of boots to a new belt to a new hat all went out of the money in your trust fund, which was your pay, your trust fund. I finished up with 14 and 4 pence after 3 years and I think one of our fellows finished up with something like a 120 pounds which was phenomenal
- 17:30 we don't know how he did it yet. And as soon as I'd graduated my father undertook a campaign with the local member to have the 10 shillings paid by the government and he succeeded in about 1954, yeh they managed to get that paid.

So can you explain the process from filing out that initial application form to

- 18:00 **how it all happened?**

Yes there was a series of interview, most of these took place in Victoria Barracks in Sydney, one took place at Ingleburn which was a leadership test sort of thing, how many pieces of wood can you put together to get across a gap in the river or something or rather. And the committee interviewing panel

- 18:30 consisted of the commandant and the Director of Military Art and another officer who I now cannot see. I remember the other two because they, Eric Lacey Vows the commandant and the DMA were with the organisation when I joined it but the other bloke wasn't. In later years it became a much more complicated thing
- 19:00 but I think I had, I did have 2 interviews 1 without the commandant, the other 2 officers, 2nd one with the commandant which was after we'd been to Ingleburn and done press ups and things like that. And that was it in those days. I was then subject to my results from the Leaving Certificate, and all that was done therefore in 1944, I
- 19:30 went in in 1945, that was done in late 1944 and when I passed the Leaving Certificate at a satisfactory level I got a letter of acceptance, or my parents got a letter of acceptance, and they used to just like as though I was at school they used to get quarterly reports on my behaviour until I left.

Being the 3 years that you spent there bridged the war and Post war?

It did

Did you see any changes

- 20:00 **in Duntroon at that time?**

Oh yes there were, yes as I think I might have mentioned earlier that the staff at Duntroon at that time were largely taken from people who had been invalided out from active service for one reason or another. A New Zealand officer was Kim Morrison who'd been very severely wounded at Alamein.

20:30 Our infantry instructor Kit Miles who had been very badly wounded at Bardia and had taken a long time to recover. The, our commanding officer Colonel Knights had also been badly wounded. They also had other attributes as being extremely good swimmers, extremely good rugby players or extremely good cricketers and they formed the Coaching staff as well because sport played

21:00 a fair, a good proportion of our time was devoted to sport and development of sport.

Obviously we've spoken to hundreds of guys that have told us their basic training stories, do you know, can you tell us sort of how different maybe Duntroon is compared to that?

Well Duntroon in those days, remember it was on a

21:30 war time basis, our course was curtailed by a year we had 3 years instead of 4 and therefore most of the training was militarily based rather than academically based. We still had to pass the academic standards, but the majority of our time was spent in learning military skills. And the covered a wide field from simple drill

22:00 and putting on a good presentation for various visiting dignitaries and at our graduation parades and things like that, we were expected to excel in that area, to being number 1 on a gun, a field gun, driving a tank, driving a jeep, motorcycle, a whole range of skills. And then a series of tactical skills overlaid that in terms

22:30 of minor tactics. I remember Frank Hassett telling me once, General Hassett telling me that when he was at RMC the only thing he learnt about tactics was from Infantry Section Leading 1927, grad year, which said, "When attacked you go to ground and fire back at the enemy". And that was it, that was the training in his day, it had moved a quantum leap forward in my day and a lot of physical exercise

23:00 to compliment the sport but pure physical exercise. Challenging, cross country running, PT, some of our PT instructors we carry their scars to this day, and we thank them for it. And a number of mind stretching military exercises that we called TEWTS

23:30 tactical exercises without troops in other words you suddenly find yourself as a staff cadet being an imaginary brigade commander in the Tidbinbilla area of Canberra putting in a defensive position for a brigade. All good stuff because it opened the book a bit and let you see what sort of ground you were talking about and how you fitted in at the minor level. But you still knew that you were coming out of the system as a junior officer

24:00 and would go to a particular corps and progress from there. I found it enjoyable there was some rough times with academic training in particular, there was some hard times with sport, bear the scars to this day.

24:30 Broken jaw and broken arm that sort of thing, they were expected and everybody had that sort of thing. I think when I had my jaw broken was in 1947 and we were playing navy and I was running in cover defence and this little fellow, who in fact was an import from the air force

25:00 he was not in the navy anyhow, turned back on him and he got me with his knee and I was lying flat out there and my captain was saying "Don't carry him off let him walk, it looks bad if you carry him off" and I was saying "You let them carry me off Charlesworth". And the fellow who knocked me 40 years later appeared in

25:30 Surfers Paradise joined my Probis Club and he walked in the door with his, a friend who was putting him up for membership but I knew him as soon as he walked through the door, I said, "Cooper I've got you at last" 40 years later. I think we were lucky in that the standards that were available in those days were bought from Pre war

26:00 through the war and they were quite rigid in some ways but they gave you a basis on which to form and also allowed you to put trust in your colleagues and in your mates. You knew their limitations and you knew they knew yours and you could therefore operate on that basis,

26:30 you knew who was going to get into trouble, who wasn't going to get into trouble and you knew who to cover for and who not to cover for. So it worked very well. Senior class was the senior class and acted like the senior class, we had people who ranged from the boy bastard to those who were discerning and determined to lead

27:00 and do something constructive. And we in turn hoped to do the same when we became the senior class. Whether we did or not I'm not to sure but nevertheless we tried.

Being that basically you've got a melting pot of all these potential leaders of men, are there clashes of personality in that sort of environment?

Oh yes, oh cripes yes, yes there must be, inevitably and some of them exist for many years after the event.

- 27:30 They generally arose in our circumstances out of a number of things, there might be a competitive edge for being the brightest man in the bunch to win the King's Medal or the Queen's Medal. There might be another competition to become the senior under officer, the senior cadet
- 28:00 in the corps. Disappointment showed on the faces of those that didn't make either of those goals but they became subsumed after a while into the system which embraced them all. I mean you might be King for a year as the BSM the battalion sergeant major but as soon as you left you got back on your tail again
- 28:30 as lieutenant in a unit which had been around for a long time and treated you as if you were a newcomer and get working and get into it. So once again you went through another levelling process. But there certainly were, I don't know that you could say enmities but there were certainly clashes of personality, had to be.

And was choosing your corps that you wanted to go to was that one of the better

- 29:00 **parts of?**

Well you could put forward your own ambition but whether that was satisfied was quite a different thing. I have an idea that I actually wanted to go to Armoured Corps before infantry and then my third choice was Artillery.

Back then did they do the thing that they do now where they take you around and put on like a big show for everybody to show them what all the different Corps do?

No

- 29:30 no we'd had a bit of it all, we'd do some armoured training, we'd do some artillery training, artillery trek was one of the big things of the year, the armoured trek we were using Bren gun carriers is still remembered from our year in Goulburn where we came off about 10 days cross country and came down the main street of Goulburn on tarmac and had these carrier going all over the place because we couldn't control them. And Alan Morrison,
- 30:00 General Morrison now remembers I'm sure going through the picket fence of an old lady sitting on the porch in her rocking chair and pulling up about 3 feet from here and saying "Good afternoon Madam". Laurie Clark turned the carrier around in the main street pulling the wrong lever. No we had, that was our introduction to the various corps, we didn't go to Puckapunyal
- 30:30 to see the Armoured, an Armoured regiment or anything like that because at that stage there wasn't much to see the interim army had come into effect, people were more involved in cutting down and units were being carved up and disbanded, or they'd already been disbanded. New ones in the interim army were being put together, Beecroft was being established, that sort of thing.
- 31:00 So we didn't have a big show, we knew pretty well what we wanted.

And what were your 3 selections again?

Armour, infantry, artillery.

And you got infantry?

Got infantry yep.

Did you, what was the graduation like?

Graduation was pretty good, the parade was, actually we had several good parades during our time,

- 31:30 one that sticks in my memory is Montgomery because he came in late winter and we were all in our winter kit but he put on an overcoat, put on his grate coat and we didn't think that was too good he should inspect the troops in this thingo with all his ribbons and things. And then he gave us a lecture on how to win battles and he made the fatal error of saying "And if you pay attention to me you'll never lose another
- 32:00 football match in your entire career". And as we'd just won the grand final the week before that was treated with a certain amount of circumspection. That was a good parade though and the graduation parade was also a very good one. We were a very small corps then there were only about 150 people in the corps.

Did mum and dad come down for that?

Yes they did, yeh, did stayed at the Inslee Hotel and came to the dance,

- 32:30 or the ball. The social area is something quite different in Canberra in those days there was nothing, there was the Albert Hall there was the services hut and that's about it, there was also a picture show at Manuka and a picture show at Civic. The main social swirl was that provided by the Royal Military College and that was governed by

- 33:00 the social committee of the Corps of Staff Cadets at the Royal Military College. And we laid down the parameters of who would come and that sort of thing. There was an institution for example called the 4th class tennis party, when new class came in they were treated to a tennis party to meet some of the local young ladies, and some of these young ladies had been coming to the 4th class tennis party for about 10 years and sort of at the stage where I'm
- 33:30 never going to see another tennis party in my life, ask my wife. And the balls and dances that we held were the main attractions in Canberra for the youngest, the girls they had nowhere else to go, they had nothing else to do, we provided a venue for uniforms and long dresses and bands and things like that
- 34:00 from our own cottage band. And so we ruled the roost to a certain extent and we used to look after the young cadets in that they would put down who they were brining and we would say "No you're not bringing her, not bring her" for various reasons. Might be that she was already engaged to a senior cadet, might be something else entirely different.
- 34:30 And so we ruled the place with a rod of iron but it was a very very gentle rod of iron and I think we made a lot of friends at that time that are still, a lot of cadets married in, just after they graduated into families in Canberra, so I suppose we were responsible for a number of things.

How much leave would you get?

Very little

- 35:00 we got an Easter break and we got a Christmas break. The Christmas leave was about 3 weeks and the Easter break was just across Easter, the Easter break was too short for anybody to go home to the west or Queensland so generally you found that Sydney was the venue and I came in on my own there because of the show
- 35:30 and you'd take a tribe out to the show and go through the various bits and pieces. But the Christmas leave everybody went home by rail, I'm not too sure, I can't remember now whether we actually flew people to the west but they did get home. I don't think we did I think the Westerns still had to stay in the eastern states somewhere and so they were billeted out.
- 36:00 **So would you ever get into Canberra proper?**
- Oh yeh, oh yes for 2, 3 reasons, 1 was if you got an invite out to morning tea, lunch, dinner anything with edibles you went. Cause the food was astonishingly bad, I'm sorry
- 36:30 to keep on saying that the food was bad at this stage but really it was absolutely dreadful. We used to have things like bear's armpit which was apricot jam on a piece of dry bread and they used to have rock cakes that you literally couldn't break with a hammer. And a lot of meat and vegetables, canned stuff, you know near the end of the war and after the end of the war all these rations being
- 37:00 used up and quite dreadful. And the cadet's mess was never renowned for turning on a very good food. So anybody who invited us out for a feed we went and we found that the instructors wives were one of the best venues for this, some of the best cake cooks I've ever come across in my life were army wives
- 37:30 and they know that cadets can eat. And that was the same when I went back as an instructor we found the same thing again. So we went for pure food, we went for entertainment, you'd have a party at a house, timings were pretty restricted you had to be in by a certain time otherwise you'd get clobbered and extra drills and things like that, leave restricted. And
- 38:00 of course everybody tried to defeat that in one way or another. So you'd go to parties, go to the pictures, if you hadn't enough money you took the girl if you didn't have enough money the girl took you, simple as that and they knew, can we got to the pictures, yes whose paying, straight off. And the other thing was sport we played in the local competitions
- 38:30 and invariably put up a reasonable sort of show because we had a lot of time on our hands and we had our Chief Enemy, Royals, rugby union team was our, at Queanbeyan were the two teams that we loved to beat and I think that probably was the compass, well no there was one other
- 39:00 thing we used to have the chance every now and then of getting together a picnic out at say one of the dams or, in the countryside somewhere and we'd do that as a rarity, otherwise we provided the entertainment.

So what did you think of Canberra in general?

There was only about 45,000 people there when we were there and it was a very closed city,

- 39:30 it was before any large movement from Melbourne had come up, people had been there for quite a long time, the kids had grown up there, the 2 major schools Canberra High and the 2 private schools were about it, plus 1 catholic school. People used to have to send their kids to Sydney or to Goulburn to St Pat's [St Patrick's College] depending on their
- 40:00 religion. The people were a bit stand offish and there were very very deep social rifts in Canberra itself.

The leftovers from the construction of Canberra had, were still workman, still in suburbs which were comparatively low grade whereas places like

40:30 Red Hill and Muggaway you had the diplomatic area even in those days but it didn't impinge much on us. We did have one big occasion Bill McKell was the Governor General, he had 2 daughters that I remember, 1 of them had formed an attachment to our Battalion Sergeant Major Phil Stevens.....

41:00 **Actually we might just stop you there we'll quickly whack.....**

Tape 5

00:30 **You might as well start that story again?**

We did have one rather big occasion, near graduation there's a time called 40 days to go when the senior class sort of lets down it's hair a bit, within limits, within limits. At the time the Governor General was Bill McKell, Sir William McKell and he had 2 daughters one of whom had an arrangement with our battalion sergeant major.

01:00 He taught her to putt on the green outside the cadets' mess which is also distinguished by a memorial plaque. And we were invited as a class to go to government House, the social committee arranged busses for the girls and the class, we picked up the girls on the way and we went out to government House. Alcohol was a no no in those days for us,

01:30 at least visibly, and the Governor General however hadn't heard of this rule apparently because there was sufficient to go around. And it was a great night, a really great night, we had a great time dancing, singing around the piano, all that sort of stuff, nobody disgraced themselves too much and we all piled into the busses and went to take the girls home. On the way home we stopped in Muggaway and

02:00 John Crofts felt a need, now New South Wales at the time one could use the offside rear wheel of a vehicle in need but he was using the offside rear real on a bus, but typical Canberra every curtain was twitching and we were reported the next day. And it was obvious that the story had circulated that we'd disgraced ourselves in Muggaway and

02:30 we'd been drinking, that got out some how and another and so we were all paraded in the lecture room, there was only one major lecture room in those days. Lecture room 1 and the Director of Military Art came in fuming white faced and 40 days to go to graduation, he said, "You will never graduate, this is a disgusting dreadful horrible thing that has been done and you will never graduate, you are all going to be dismissed",

03:00 and stormed out. The Social Committee immediately turned to the battalion sergeant major and said, "You'd better get on the bloody phone". So he rang Betty McKell the Governor General rang the commandant the next thing we see is the commandant Eric Lacey Vows running, I've never seen him run before, running up the hill towards the Director of Military Art's officer, going in and the next thing we know were in the clear. We had a royal prerogative

03:30 on that occasion, it was a good time.

The last event that you went to stands out for you, can you tell us about the kind of air of excitement that there was though at that graduation, that you were completing this part of your military career and about to embark on the next stage?

Yes it was, it's tinged with sadness a bit because you are part of a pretty close community at RMC and particularly in those days, I think it's much more free now at

04:00 ADFA [Australian Defence Force Academy] but and at RMC itself. In those days we were fairly, a fairly closeted group and as you can see from the other social activities didn't expand much beyond that so that when we left it was a tinge of sadness, we were leaving safety behind and going into a world largely unknown. And we then didn't do things like a couple of weeks with the unit

04:30 you were going to or something like that, that was not known in those days, not done anyhow so you had no sort of pre unit introduction, you marched into your unit and there you were. So in a sense you were uprooting yourself after 3 years and I suppose there was method in the madness because that's about the time, the maximum time you had anywhere for the next 40 years, 3 years and bang off you were somewhere else.

05:00 And then on the other side there was relief at actually graduating and finally there was an expectation that you were going to go into something better. And the main things that you were looking at were completely irrelevant like making certain that the new uniform fitted and that you looked alright and that you had the right cap and the badges were right and the pips were on the right way otherwise you'd have to shout the mess

05:30 and all this sort of thing. These became so important it just wasn't true, at least for about 24 hours until it all died down. And then you split up and away you went in your various directions, some of us in

groups others singly to units, some to university to continue in studies at university. But in our time most people went to units first and then went onto university after.

What sort of physical sign up have you

06:00 **made at this stage?**

None, I can't ever remember signing up again, I took the oath at RMC in civilian clothes and I don't recall ever again signing a bond or any other enlistment thing, I was simply transferred from the Corps Staff Cadets to the Australian Staff Corps as a lieutenant and that was it,

06:30 straight progression and absolutely no piece of paper insight. Later a commission issued but not, no 3 years, 6 years, 10 years, 20, you were on the career path and away you went. So it was quite different to what eventuated later on and what's again turning the wheel, at that time

07:00 that was the way things were done.

How hard was it even just being a new junior officer in the army?

It was pretty difficult in your new unit, you were treated as a new boy and you got the jobs that a new boy would get. You suddenly found that you might be getting a number of terms of duty officer that others weren't getting and guard duty

07:30 and inspecting things like latrines and kitchens and various other things that seemed to be a bit beyond, certainly beneath the exalted rank that you'd go to, which you suddenly realised was the bottom of the pile. So the mess however generally an officer mess in those days had, and continued to reflect for some time the tradition

08:00 of the AIF, and the AIF which was voluntary body and mostly the great proportion of the officer group came from civilian life not from the CMF or the Reserve and had reached pretty good rank during the war, a lot of them. And the standards that they set in the messes was still

08:30 prevailing at the end of the war and prevailed for sometime thereafter. Because they carried on those traditions and therefore there were little things in say the mess life that a new officer found might be a bit tedious to start off with but you always made certain you said good morning to the mess president and the 2nd in command, the CO if he ever ventured in, and you were expected to do

09:00 that sort of thing. You were expected to do some of the more menial tasks in relation to the mess, you suddenly found a new officer was obviously the best bet for a treasurer or a secretary until the next new officer came at least. And the unit itself had that sort of ethos transplanted into it, they were very much AIF

09:30 oriented in terms of the way they were dressed and dressed, you can't do much with the uniform but you can have various things done to it and that was quite common to see a unit take a particular embellishment and make it their own. A lanyard it might be, a shoulder flash and that became part of the units ethos and part of the history

10:00 and was used as a sort of bonding mechanism throughout the unit just not the officers mess. And the reliance on good solid warrant officers and sergeants was exactly the same as it had been in an AIF unit. And at that stage of course we were getting very much younger people in who'd missed the war, still wanted to join the army

10:30 whilst the vast proportion of those who were returned or had been serving during the war in Australia wanted nothing more than to get out. So we had quite a large proportion of young people coming in and the main training institution was 2 Training Brigade at Greta and that used to take the new intakes in, they were real kids they were younger than we were, which was something.

11:00 We followed the same traditions in a way, I can remember running a dance at Greta for the brigade and we bussed the girls in in the same way that had been done during the war. I was the officer in charge of the darts, I picked out the biggest girl around and the one most unlikely to get a dance that night and waltzed her to the centre of the floor and fell flat on my face over, all this candle grease that the boys had put down.

11:30 And they all had a good night and then we made certain that everybody was back on the bus, all the girls were back on the bus and taken back home. So the traditions were still being observed.

So Greta was your first posting?

Greta as a location was my first posting was to 2 Training Brigade. And as I said I was posted to the reinforcement platoon, Transit Platoon and therefore

12:00 had a rather good time.

Was there any leave between RMC and there?

Yes there was there was 3 weeks, 3 weeks leave and then we reported. So we went out on the 11th of December in my case and went back 3 weeks later at Greta and away we went from there. We had a

small spell at Greta and then embarked for

- 12:30 Kure on the Westralia, they were still using troopers in those days not air and we take up a draft of soldiers to join Beecroft, a few navy personnel few air force personnel going to Iwakuni where the RAF was established. And took us about 10 days I think to get to Kure.

And did you have to put in for Beecroft or were you?

No, no you didn't put in for anything in those days

- 13:00 you were told where to go, what to do and how to do it when you got there. Got off the boat and was met by the assistant adjutant, taken shown a room, allocated your space and told to report to the CO at a particular time. Went in and saw the adjutant who'd been in the class before me at RMC and
- 13:30 looked at me as though I was something just out of a snail's shell or something like that, it was all reversed again, start again. Saw the CO, we were very fortunate the first CO I had was, well the first CO in Japan I had was Fergus McCaddy who was one of the youngest lieutenant colonels in the Australian Army I think, he was about 5 I think when he was made half colonel, a DSO. And
- 14:00 the other officers were largely very very fine regimental officers who proved out in the Korean War to a very large extent like Benny O'Dowd and Darcy Lachlan and Bails, the whole raft of them. Most of them were very good to young officers they'd been a young officer before but you knew exactly where you stood.
- 14:30 The 2IC was remarkable character he was I B Ferguson who later commanded the battalion in Korea and is well known and very well respected officer, he was a magnificent regimental officer, he built a little bit of an army of his own within the battalion. But he was very very well regarded, he was never liked, he was
- 15:00 too tough for that, but he was respected, very much respected. And the people who knew him before Beecroft swore by him and they kept that going. So we had a fairly good time, we were originally posted to a place called Okiahama which was outside the base area of Kure where Beecroft was
- 15:30 established but within the Beecroft area of influence. And we were only there a short time, about winter I suppose and we were shifted back to Hero, the occupation force started to run down a bit and from thereon we spent most of our time between Hero and Tokyo on guard.

What was the feeling about Beecroft at that stage when you were being sent over there?

- 16:00 Oh it was from a point of view from a young officer being sent there it was the only place to go. There was nowhere else at that time so it was far better than anything else on the books. And it was a good life, I mean you had Japanese servants, you had transport, the place was a bit of a disaster in many areas, I mean Tokyo was flattened, Hiroshima which
- 16:30 was just down the road was still completely flat. And nevertheless there were other areas that were absolutely pristine and beautiful and totally Japanese. The people were very good, we had a number of ex POWs from Japan in the battalion and while they might have had an edge in working the black market because they all spoke perfect Japanese
- 17:00 we never had any trouble with the local population whatsoever, that's all. No theft or anything like that. And to move to a big city from Kure to a greater big city like Tokyo and then find that lot of Tokyo was simply burnt out and then see how quickly it revived was astonishing, they really got their act together.
- 17:30 And Macarthur sitting over the top of us of course. While I was in Tokyo I think I mentioned I used to stand in as aide to Red Robby the commander in chief. I remember going with him on one occasion to the Deotchi building, which was Macarthur's headquarters, in a 1927 Rolls Royce, which belonged to the British High Commissioner, or the British Ambassador and
- 18:00 had been taken over by Robbie. The Ambassador was driving around in something else but not his Rolls Royce. And the building had steps which you had to pull out to get down, we drove up to Deotchi I got out, Japanese bloke pulled down the steps in we go, marching into the Deotchi, biggest building in Tokyo at that stage, 6 storeys high.
- 18:30 In through 2 great big bronze doors at the opening and a great hall right down to the back where the lifts were, or the elevators and they to had bronze doors, there were 2 of them one on each side. And as we went in the doors opened, we walked in turned round, up to the 6th floor doors open went in. Right at the other end overlooking the Imperial palace was
- 19:00 Macarthur's Office standing in front of his desk was Macarthur and outside the office was his aide, Colonel Prentice. I stopped with Colonel Prentice and my boss walked forward, Macarthur put his arms out like that, Robbie put his arms out like that, the doors closed, I never knew what happened, closets I ever came to meeting Macarthur. And Tom Blamey came up on one occasion to, that
- 19:30 was rather sad he was really showing his age then and he came up to Kure to the battalion and we showed him around the area and he insisted on getting out of the vehicle and talking to the digs. And

then we took him back to the mess and he sat down in an easy chair and I noticed he had a very old uniform on,

20:00 rather tatty, ribbons looking a bit sad and civilian socks, checkered socks, thought that's strange of our general. And I went away, I was the mess Secretary at the time, lowest man on the totem pole and I went away to make certain the tea was coming and I turned back and he was asleep, so we just sat there and waited for him

20:30 to wake up again, rather sad.

Can I ask what your impression of him was at that time, before you met him?

Yes as a young officer the 2 different aspects of Blamey had sort of permeated through. I think the one that was repeated most was the run rabbit run exercise at Labuan

21:00 but there was still a very great respect for him particularly from the older officer contingent and other ranks and certainly the World War I veterans were unwavering in their support for him. It was difficult to be judgemental because

21:30 the big fight that he'd had internally was with Rowell who was once again very highly regarded by RMC graduates because he was one but he was also a very brilliant man and we thought he'd been hard done by by Blamey. We knew from gossip that there was always

22:00 somebody after his job and whether it was Sturdee or Northcote or even Vasey which I always thought was a bit strange, the talk was always there. But as young soldiers he impressed us as being a very elderly gentleman and too heavy, the extraneous things

22:30 counted more I think for us than the deep political and military intrigues that were going on round him, and had for years.

What about alternatively Macarthur, what were your impression were of him?

Well Macarthur was, well actually I think he was a bomb but he had absolutely wonderful PR machine and it worked overtime for him, but

23:00 people were never told about his earlier life, how he wrote his own citations and things like this and had his mother write to Black Jack Pershing to Hood the Chief of Staff of the army to get him advanced and these sort of thing. They all sort of went back into the dross and out came the shining example who sort

23:30 of left his fellows behind in the Philippines and suddenly turned up on our doorstep and was our saviour. The bloke I liked best was a fellow called Ikleburger who was the commander of the 8th Army who occasionally stood up to Macarthur when he needed to, but he was the fellow who was sent up to Buna and Macarthur said, "Either fix it or don't come back". As it happened he didn't fix it

24:00 somebody else fixed it for him, but that didn't matter he was still a different stamp of fellow. No my feelings were quite against Macarthur when the war finished. When I went to Japan it was quite remarkable he had impressed himself on the Japanese population to a very great extent. Every time he left the Embassy where he lived to go to the Deotchi building the whole route was jam packed with

24:30 Japanese people waving, cheering as he went in the car to work every morning, same coming back at night, no not a rent a crowd or anything like that they just got there. And I remember on May Day in 1948 there was a large communist influence starting to appear in Japanese politics and

25:00 they called a May Day parade on the Imperial Plaza, I've never seen a million people before but there were a million people or more there, great sea of people and up drove a lone jeep with the provost marshal from Macarthur's headquarters, I forget his name now but he was my colonel's father in law a little later on, he married this fellow's daughter, that's another story. And

25:30 this fellow got to the Imperial Plaza and there's a dice there with steps up, wooden dice that they'd whacked together and this character with long hair and a sheepskin coat ranting and raving through the microphone and everybody's screaming "banso banso". I was on guard in that little hut I was talking about and wondering if I should call the 6th Cav or the 7th Cav to see if I could get something done with this huge mass of people. And

26:00 this fellow, the provost colonel went up the steps, military police they don't have provost, grabbed this fellow by the scruff of the neck and threw him down the steps. And with the Interpreter with him he said, "General Macarthur says that the rally is now finished and that you may all go home" and they did, they just went and it all dissolved in front of us, it was absolutely astonishing. And a wonderful

26:30 example of the effect that the name had on the Japanese population, in Tokyo anyhow, that was Macarthur.

What were your first impression of going to Japan and seeing the remnants of the war?

Oh some of it was quite horrifying but on the other hand like most Australians at that time our feelings towards the Japanese were not exactly friendly. But very soon you found that

- 27:00 the people were very nice people in general and it made it quite easy to become drawn into the general wellbeing sort of atmosphere that might prevail. We were suppose to be in countermands
- 27:30 we didn't have, fraternisation was a policy, didn't have much effect I must say but it was policy non fraternisation. There's the famous story of the American who was driving his jeep along the Imperial Way in Tokyo and was pulled up by the American military police because he had a Japanese girl in the jeep and he said, "No, no
- 28:00 she's not Japanese she's niece, she's from California," he said, "Darling say something to the military policeman," and she said, "Hello" so that was it. So relationships were very good, for a time I went to a place called Koala which was a rest area for Beecroft people, not quite certain why we needed a rest area, but the general was a very avid golfer
- 28:30 and this was one of the best golf courses in Japan so we took the hotel and the little town alongside it, Ito, was part of our Province, stuck out on its own as part of Koala. And the local commander for the time who happen to be, he'd take a platoon up for a month or so was also the Town Mayor and on arrival you were greeted by the
- 29:00 Mayor and the Chief of Police and the Chief of the Fire Brigade all on the platform with flowers and garlands and girls all waving fans and things, you couldn't walk through the town without people throwing flowers, absolutely gorgeous, you could easily be taken in. We weren't but it was nice to be able to say that the Chief of Police do this do that, and he'd say
- 29:30 "Hey, hey" and then do exactly what he was going to do in the first place anyhow.

It almost sounds like you've gone to a country that's been liberated the way you've been treated by the people?

No I don't think you can say that certainly their institutions had changed dramatically but not in a way that it destroyed the infrastructure,

- 30:00 the trains still ran beautifully, the police were still in place, the army had been dissolved but was still there, children were going to school in their uniforms, both male and female, strict uniforms, stricter control in uniforms. And it was only the periphery that the occupation forces were

- 30:30 really touching. You didn't delve deeply into the Japanese psyche at all it was a superficial contact.

Did you ever have a, any insights or feelings that there still was a simmering of say resentment or anything like that?

No never once not even when we were processing Japanese prisoners of war coming back from the islands.

- 31:00 There didn't seem to be a surge of resentment from the Japanese and as I said even the POWs that we had with us had no problems they were very happy to be in the position they were in relation to the Japanese again. So it was a good experience from that point of view,
- 31:30 the Korean riots I mentioned earlier were about the only operational matter we had to deal with the rest was purely ceremonial. We did train of course we had a Japanese Army training area at a place called Haramurah and that was a big training area for Japan, enough to use artillery on and we used to go up and do mortar training and small arms training and tactical training, keeping in.....
- 32:00 Yes and the battalions of the regiment used to compete, or still do compete for the Gloucester Cup presented by the Duke of Gloucester for the premier infantry battalion in the Australian Army and we were the only infantry battalions 1, 2 and 3 RAR. And we were about the only people that were in a position to do anything in the way of training at that stage the others were just sort of re-forming back in Australia so we kept on
- 32:30 knocking off the Gloucester Cup for some time and we used Haramurah as the basis to do the various tests that were required. For example deployment of the machine gun platoon, deployment and use of the mortars, anti tank and that sort of thing.

Were there any problems, disciplinary problems with the Australian soldiers in Japan?

Not a great deal we did have problems with,

- 33:00 I want to put this another way, most soldiers in Beecroft did not want to go home to early, it was a good life for them and they enjoyed what they were doing, it was great fun and they had a lot of fun there. As a result we had a very high incidence of VD [venereal disease] and no matter what you do you always seem to get a high incident of VD in those circumstances,
- 33:30 as we did in other areas. That was the main problem, discipline was not a problem at all, I can't remember a single court martial and when I was assistant adjutant I can't remember a charge more serious than simple drunkenness, and not too many of those. People just didn't want to get into trouble and so it was rarely not a problem.

And when you were first sent to Beecroft did you have any idea

34:00 **how long you would actually be there for?**

I did in sense that generally it was about 2 years, then as things changed back home that tenyer started to change to and some people were there for 3 years some were there for 3 years and went to Korea direct. Some like myself had something like

34:30 20 months and was sent back to another job in Australia. It was just a re-deployment of the resources because we were getting thin on the ground really.

And when you were told that you'd be going back to Australia how did you feel about leaving Beecroft?

I was sorry to go but when I came back there was 2 of us came back together and we

35:00 reported in to find out what we were going to do in Victoria Barracks in Melbourne. And there were 2 jobs, 1 was with 2RAR, which was forming up again in Puckapunyal and the other was with Headquarters 2 Cadet Brigade in Sydney. Sydney was my first choice and my friend Lenny Isles wanted to go to 2RAR so I suddenly found myself in Sydney

35:30 with 2 Cadet Brigade as the Training officer and thoroughly enjoyed it for a year.

And what was your main role there?

Well we had, I can't remember the exact number now but we had cadet battalions from 7 to 17, so I suppose that's 10 cadet battalions scattered all over New South Wales out as far as Hay, nothing

36:00 at Broken Hill, Wollongong, up as far as Taree and Armidale, Lithgow, Goulburn, few in Sydney one at North Head one at South Head one at Belmore and each absolutely stacked with cadets, so we had something like oh I suppose 20,000 cadets in New South Wales.

36:30 And they were great fun, I went round schools of all denominations, I went back to my old school and checked them out there.

That must have been a bit of a thrill was it to go back to your old school?

Oh I was feeling very full of myself at that stage except that the same headmaster and the same deputy headmaster was there and they reminded me of who I was and who I'd been at school, so it didn't last too long, the euphoria had disappeared.

But they must have been proud of you as well were they?

I don't know whether they were proud but

37:00 they were quite happy to see me still being part of the service that I'd joined I think. I have mixed feelings about the headmaster because I sat outside his office on a number of occasions. But the deputy head I thoroughly enjoyed, who was good. And you gradually found there were favourite schools, I like going to

37:30 Hay War Memorial High School out at Hay it was a tremendous school, tremendous teachers. Some of the Marist Brothers schools were absolutely magnificent teaching staff the way that the kids reacted to the teachers was terrific. Some of the great public schools were the same but far more formal you know Scotch College would be Scotch to the bottom and Sydney Grammar

38:00 were always training at an edge in uniforms. Waverley college was my bête noire [bane of his life] the OC was a brother called Brother Matsarini who when they ran short of blank ammunition rang the general not me and the general didn't like being asked for 5,000 rounds of blank ammunition, so I used to get a toe in the backside every time this happened.

38:30 And it pursued me for quite some time Matsarini went to Goulburn as the headmaster at St Pat's [St Patrick's College] there, another good cadet unit. The fellows who were running these cadet brigades were old, in the main, members of the Australian Instructional Corps which existed before the war, little carder of instructors, very very high in reputation. And

39:00 these fellows knew every trick in the trade and for a young officer to be put amidst these character was an education that I've always relished, they really taught me things that I've never even thought I would learn and I'm sure there are a number of officers I've never even seen, so see the same set of boots being counted by Army Ordinance staff in 3 battalions as they moved the boots from one to another, it was

39:30 absolutely joy to see them ring the books and come out with a beautiful stock take result when we knew we were all in chaos, it was absolutely wonderful, and the way they did it was great too. And as I say they came from the AIC [Australian Instructional Corps] mostly and the courses number 7 number 8 and number 9 the senior staff officer was a fellow called Laurie Male, he was distinguished in the Australian Army for 2 reasons

- 40:00 he'd been the RSM of the Darwin Mobile Force which was the only regular force we had in existence before the war as infantry, we did have some gunners and gunners but we didn't have infantry. And the Darwin Mobile Force, which you've probably heard of was formed and he was the RSM. He was then went to 8th Division and was a guest of
- 40:30 His Imperial Majesty's for some years and he still loved rice and he was a huge man and he had lupus which meant that his head was enlarging and his hands were enlarging, over a period, and he was a very imposing figure Laurie Male and he struck fear into everybody and yet he was such a gentle man.

I'll just get you to stop there.

Tape 6

- 00:30 And the commander of 2 Cadet Brigade was an officer called Jerry O'Sullivan, he to was a very distinguished man in the Australian Army, he'd led the, he was the drum major for the band that went across for the Coronation Contingent in 1936. Also a member of the Australian Instructional Corps, a very imposing well built man and a very gracious man.
- 01:00 I remember on one occasion we were running the Army Ball in the Trocadero in Sydney and that was our job 2 Cadet Brigade we ran the ball. And I was down there having a bit of trouble with one of the people on the staff there and I just couldn't get him to do what we wanted to do so I finished what I could and went back to the boss and said, "I'm really having trouble with this bloke" he said, "Oh get in the car we'll go and see him".
- 01:30 We went down to the Trocadero in this great imposing man with iron grey hair, beautifully stature and walks in and this little fellow about my size was there and Jerry took him by the arm and said, "I understand we've got a problem Sir" and this great big thing saying Sir to this little fellow you could see the beam coming out of his face, he said, "Oh I don't think we've got a real problem," he said, "Well just tell me about", we were all fixed in about 5 minutes
- 02:00 it was absolutely gorgeous. And they were the sort of people who a young officer was thrown in amongst and really it was a great education for the 15 months I was there. While I was there the war broke out in Korea and in those days I still belonged to 3RAR in Japan, 67 Battalion became 3RAR. And
- 02:30 I was still on their regimental list, really an officer for 3RAR detached for duty somewhere, that's the way the things worked in those days. So I immediately said, "I'm entitled to go back and join the battalion" and Jerry said, "Oh okay well yes you'd better see the general". General Berryman was the general involved and I got an
- 03:00 interview and I was given the greatest rocket of all time and told to go back and do what I was bloody well told and stay where I was bloody well put and do what I was told again. And so that's the end of that I'll never get back to the battalion, and Korea was going to be over by Christmas in those days. So I said to my fiancée, "Look it's no use waiting we may as well get married," and so we were on the 24th
- 03:30 February 1951 and 6 weeks later I was in Korea, so it worked somewhere along the line.
- Before you got that posting to Korea was there something you were doing here as well with the mines, with the mines gold strike?**
- Oh yes, no that was the coal strike, yes that was just after I came back from Japan in fact I was on leave in August 49
- 04:00 and the open cut mines the workers had gone on strike and the power situation in New South Wales was extremely parlous so the National Emergency Regulations from the war had not been repealed and this was sufficient for the government to activate those regulations which meant that they could put the troops in to do the job. And this they did but there weren't too many actual miners available but there were a lot of truck drivers and various other things
- 04:30 and the gunners could do a bit of mining. So I became adjutant of 504 Special General Transport Company which consisted of about 150 vehicles of S&M Fox which were completely un-roadworthy and part of the staff of this little unit with drivers gathered from everywhere, there were warrant officers and there were private soldiers, sergeants and corporals
- 05:00 all mixed up together as drivers just to get the vehicles on the road. And we were out at Mangaroo out near Lithgow and it was bitterly cold, bitterly cold, ice on the ground and we weren't too popular. As we sort of went out my boss Charlie Thornhill and I drove through Lithgow to the sound of "soldier bastard" and no rocks or anything but we were not popular. But anyhow we did a good job as far as the mines were concerned,
- 05:30 we probably ruined them for about 20 years but we got more coal out of them they had previously in 10 years. And the reason we were able to get it out was because we knew that S&M Fox had given us all the bomb vehicles that he had but we knew that he had something like 150 almost brand new tucked

away somewhere near Orange. And he'd left 2 brand new Foden trucks

- 06:00 his pride and joy, in those days they were worth about 20,000 pounds each which was an immense sum for a truck and they were 20 tonne trucks. And so we sequestered them and he said, "You'll never be able to use them you can't get them onto the Chinaman", the Chinaman's the loading ramp for coal and you push it on with a dozer and push it into the truck. And I said, "By the time we've finished we'll be able to get them under the Chinaman," he said, "You wouldn't do that"
- 06:30 I said, "We would do that," he said, "No, no not good they're my beautiful trucks," I said, "We'll have the others instead," and he said, "Okay". So we got 150 trucks from Orange, all came in with lights and engines that worked and all that sort of thing and we started to run coal and we did so for about nearly 3 weeks, quite exciting.

Why were the civilian

07:00 coal miners on strike?

I don't know now I can't remember exactly, I'm sure it was, I don't know because I think it was a straight union dispute against the coal owners and it was a wage matter but the details of it I'm sorry I've lost. But it was sufficient to bring the whole industry to a grinding halt including underground mines.

- 07:30 So the only way of getting coal into the power houses, which was the main source of power in those days was to use the open cut mines and use them vigorously to get coal in, otherwise everybody was in blackout.

How did most of the guys feel about being used in a, basically a union dispute?

Loved it, loved it thought it was great. No it was absolutely hilarious I mean we worked like Trojans,

- 08:00 we worked around the clock, shift work all the time and ate well, camp was miserable, there was a fascinating, our colonel was a fellow called Leo Cook once again a famous name in the Australian Army, very handsome man in his day. And we'd built a, or the gunners had built for us a water tower at the camp site in Marrangaroo and we'd put a large
- 08:30 galvanised tank on top to reticulate water through to the showers and the cook houses. And they'd put the CO's toilet, for want of a better word just down the hill from it and it was very posh, little outhouse and everything. And one morning he was down there and the thing tumbled and down came the structure
- 09:00 water filled tank went right over the top of the dunny and the scaffolding fell round it as though it had been positioned around it without touching him. He probably needed to use it more than once that day. So it was rather good. The quartermaster Neville Wilson and I had a short
- 09:30 wheel base 2 ½ tonne truck to drive around in, had a cab, had a heater and we used to go to the mines and have a shower, cause the only place you could get a hot shower and we kept those facilities going for the troops involved. And so we had a pretty good time.

What was some of the specifics of your role as adjutant in a special company like that?

Well

- 10:00 it was thrown together very quickly so it was a matter of finding out where people came from, putting them on a nominal roll, making certain that all their entitlements were up to date and they were given the correct pay and that sort of thing, organising pay for them. And generally carrying out the administration, producing routine orders and camp instructions to facilitate the operation,
- 10:30 normal adjutant's job, nothing unusual in that at all really.

Did you have any different powers?

No.

Or vaguely remember something that you could sequester?

Oh under the National Service, under the National Emergency Regulations we could sequester transport, buildings, plant

- 11:00 not people, we could take physical assets and we did and operated them.

Other than those trucks that you just talked about what else did you sequester?

Well we had the dozers and other machines used by the gunners to cut into the open cut and graders to keep the roads

- 11:30 open and turnipals, carriers to bring the load out, re-load into trucks and take them off to the railway station, put them on the rail, on the trucks and take them down to the powerhouse and keep the power going.

- 12:00 No great military application except administration really. And the powers were quite severe if you wanted to put them fully into operation, in fact I think we did, I wasn't involved but we did in Melbourne during the wharf strike down there, we actually put troops on the wharves under the same regulations,
- 12:30 the government put the troops in. Not a mad keen on that sort of thing, aid to the civil power in that sense is something that soldiers do not like to do, you can't win. The other one the coal strike that was quite different we certainly weren't loved by the local population but we were forgiven.

Was that difficult dealing with the local population?

No, not really no most of them didn't talk to us.

- 13:00 **And how long did you say that was for?**

Oh this was about 3 weeks, 3 weeks and then we were out and it was all over and the miners went back to repair the damage we'd done. But as I say in so doing we'd put up a stock pile that would last a considerable time, so there was no threat of further action being effective for some time, so the object was achieved.

So at the time then

- 13:30 **that war broke out in Korea how much did you know about the situation over there?**

Not a great deal, it had been known probably better in military circles than it was in general public circles because the division of Korea into the 2 halves Russia half, at the end of the war and the American half and the

- 14:00 attempts to unify those two had some publicity. So the fact that there was a problem there was known and the fact that you had a more or less agrarian, it's an overuse of the word but an agrarian south and an industrial north with coal and other resources, or iron ore resources as opposed to the south where those were not quite so
- 14:30 good meant that there was an imbalance in the country which obviously had to be fixed sometimes, still hasn't, but sometime had to be. And so there was a general awareness in a military sense that there was a problem arising there and the reports of North Korea's Army becoming more and more belligerent in it's policing of the boarder
- 15:00 and the number of incidents that were happening and the obvious size of the Korean Army was becoming a big worry to the occupying power. The Americans at that stage had handed power across to the South Koreans to Syngman Rhee, who was just as much a dictator as Kim Il-sung on the other end. But
- 15:30 they retained control of the military while they were building up the South Korean Army and the South Korean Army was a bit of a mix, it had leftovers from the Japanese Army, from the war, it had warlord armies from Quantong Province that had been fighting there and come back to Korea. And it
- 16:00 was very very mixed up piece of kit and the Americans tried very hard to sort that out and make it into a regular force. So we were aware that there was movement at the station but it was still a surprise attack on 26th June 1950, when they came across, there's no doubt that it was a surprise. And that gave them a lot of headway and
- 16:30 they managed to get fairly well down the peninsular as far as Pusan.

Being that there'd just been 6 years of a world war and knowing that North Korea and South Korea basically had Russia and America behind them, why was it thought at the time that it would be a very short thing, that it would be over by Christmas?

Well that was General Macarthur's saying.

- 17:00 That was founded on the fact that the Russians although they were providing logistic support were no longer providing direct military support, they'd withdrawn their forces. China had not moved in so that there was a vacuum in power terms in that the US was still committed in South Korea but Russia had moved out and China had not taken over the role,
- 17:30 China wanted to get the Russians out of the way anyhow. So Macarthur in the offensive after the North Koreans had attacked and been thrown out and the envelopment through Inchoong with 10 Corps meant that we were dealing with the North Korean Army and we'd taken a fair bit of it out and we were headed north.
- 18:00 And it was, we got to Pyongyang and we headed for the Yalu and it then became a problem for the Chinese, the Chinese didn't want an American based country, supported country right on their doorstep. And so they intervened and of course since the war started they had been getting ready to intervene.
- 18:30 The Russians still provided some air support and my air force friends tell me that there were Russian pilots flying Mig 15's across the Yalu, or on the Yalu, but most of the support came directly, in terms of manpower from China from thereon.

Would you say that most fellows that were sort of of your age and the ones coming through even

19:00 **sort of newer into the forces than you, having been at the tail end of World War II were most guys keen to get to Korea?**

There was an element of that. There were a number of people who had missed out on active service with the benefits that that brings with it and also the adventure it brings with it and this looked as though it was going to be pretty short.

19:30 So there was that element that excitement and patriotism didn't play a great part it was policy and when we deployed we deployed in support of the United Nations, because it wasn't just the Americans it was the United Nations under these circumstances that were fighting the war with. And the Americans were the people

20:00 who are running the war for the United Nations. I forget how many countries we had involved with this, a flag in there or a pendant in there with a lot of flags on it, Thais, Greeks, French. The French were absolutely wonderful they sent over a battalion but they had a general in Tokyo who dropped his rank to lieutenant colonel to command

20:30 the French battalion but he bought more staff than there were in the battalion with him, had a great big headquarters for a little battalion. I said Greece, I think there were 18 nations involved by the time we were finished, UK of course, Canada,

21:00 Turkey and that forms part of the Kapyong story the Turkish brigade, relationships were very good with them. So we were we've got to go back to that question of what were the sort of motivating factors and mainly it was that. We were also very short of troops by that stage, people had got back into civil life, the army had run down

21:30 and we initiated a thing called K Force and bought in quite a number of people from the UK to enlist in the Australian Army, some good, some bad, most good, most good. But a leavening of people with Second World War experience, most of those people had been in war,

22:00 either Burma or Europe and knew something about active service, a number of our Australians been the same. But there was also a leavening of youngsters who had never seen active service before and that was the makeup of the unit that was put together in Japan. And some of those people in Japan had been in Japan for something like 4, 5 years during the occupation

22:30 and were due to come home suddenly found themselves going to war. And that resulted in 2 different streams which had an effect later. Those people who had served in Japan for more than 2 years only did 8 months in Korea, everybody else coming from Australia did 12 months. So it meant at the end of 8 months we were going to lose the basis of the battalion,

23:00 it's going to march out on us. It also meant that in another 4 months we'd lose another group of people, unless the unit was replaced as a whole we'd lose another group of people which had gained experience, so it was going to be a bit of a nuisance, and it proved to be.

The soldiers that were there just for the 8 months did they have a choice to stay longer if they wanted to?

No they didn't and there was some quite difficult times

23:30 for some of them and I'm sure you'll be speaking to some of them too. But no they had no choice and we had company commanders, company sergeant majors the backbone of the battalion simply taken away and they had to replace it, very difficult job.

With, just going back to saying that we were deployed in support of the United Nations,

24:00 **compared to what it's grown to now, being so new back then how was the UN regarded?**

Well it was regarded with, it was held in high regard and that was probably mainly because remember Doc Evatt was the first President of the United Nations Assembly in San Francisco before it moved to New York. And we had a deep involvement with it and so as a country we thought it was a good thing

24:30 I think. And for that reason alone the support for a United Nations force acting in this way was pretty good, there was none of the argument or trouble that we had with Vietnam at all or Iraq or any of the others, just didn't happen. And there weren't

25:00 that many that went, there were only 17,000 in total over the whole, in all 3 services over the 3 years, so there's not a great number. It was a tough war, it was the toughest war we'd had for a long time but tougher than a lot of the Second World War areas, much tougher and operationally very severe.

25:30 And we had a relative high casualty rate for a loan battalion during the Korean Campaign.

At the time that war in Korea broke out though you thought you weren't going to get there?

Yep.

So how did that come about then that you got married?

Well because I wasn't going, simple as that, I said to Edna "Look I'm going to be stuck here with 2 Cadet Brigade or national service training"

26:00 which had just started, "I'm never going to get up there in time so we may as well get married".

And where did you get married?

St Phillip's Church in Phillip Street in Sydney on the 24th February 1951.

And were you married in uniform?

I was and supported by my class mates, photos available and the reception was held at

26:30 the Macabean Hall in Darlinghurst, I don't remember a great deal about it but apparently it was a wonderful party.

Why don't you remember very much about it?

Oh I think we were too busy, not because I was mellow or anything like that far from it, was just too busy and it went on well after we left, well after we'd left as usual, very good wedding.

So then you said 6 weeks later you were on your way to Korea?

Yep.

27:00 **So from the time that you got married how long was it before you got notice that you were going to be going?**

Less than a month, hmm and so we had to re-arrange all our plans and we moved into my in-laws place and were allocated a veranda and a bedroom which we turned into an all electric home, there was 1 power point which was the light coming from the ceiling

27:30 which was festured with plugs which lead to small stoves and heaters and hairdryers and all sorts of things, and that sufficed until I left.

How difficult was that for the both of you being newlywed and?

Pretty grim, pretty grim, on the one hand I've got to say I was sort of relieved to know that at least I was wanted back in the unit,

28:00 but grim to leave your bride.

Did it make you any less keen to go to Korea?

Gee these are difficult questions, I don't remember it being, I remember not being very happy at going at the last moment but I don't remember being all that sad about it, I wanted to get back once the decision was made. And we flew up, the name I mentioned before Jim Shelton and

28:30 I flew up on a converted bomber, a Lancastrian and over night in Manila and then went onto Iwakuni and I then, we then came back from Iwakuni which is not far from Kure to the base at Kure which Beecroft Base was still there and I got the call immediately and this was not into April

29:00 and Jim Shelton was given a training roll up at Haramurah, the training area. So he was very annoyed that I'd beaten him across, that had ramifications later too. After Kapyong he still hadn't managed to get over so I sent him a white feather and he was over within 24 hours, he must have waved it in everybody's face,

29:30 we're still friends.

Within that time then between the couple of weeks still at home in Australia were there any special training that you underwent?

No, no none at all.

Did you have any knowledge of where you'd be going in Korea or exactly what your role would be?

I knew, no not a great deal because what had happened in the intervening period was the war

30:00 movement that had been going on since October, when the battalion deployed, war started in June we didn't get into it until October 26th. Between October the 26th and March, end of March we'd virtually gone up the peninsular as far as P'yongyang nearly to the Yalu river with the 27 Commonwealth Brigade.

30:30 And then we'd been pushed back beyond the 28th parallel to just above Seoul and it was rather

confused, the picture coming out at that stage was rather confused and communications weren't as good as they are today in any way shape or form, neither was reporting. So we finished up with rather a garbled picture and in fact

- 31:00 when I arrived I arrived at Pusan by ship and got a train to Taegu, was met by an officer not of the battalion but of another little Australian unit there that looked after people coming through, Transit Camp and put on a vehicle and taken up to the battalion and I was home again.

I was going to ask did it feel like that re-joining the battalion?

Yeh, yep.

- 31:30 Then I was told I was a new boy so better learn it all over again, but I in fact took over the same platoon as the battalion I had when I was with Beecroft, not the same personnel but the same platoon, 2 Platoon A Company.

What were the particular challenges of re-joining a battalion like that when you'd been away?

Well the simple fact was that they'd been in operations for nearly 6 months, yeh round about

- 32:00 6 months and the teams had become very very well adjusted to one another and you were imposed on your platoon or whatever, section of the organisation it was more or less without, they had no say and you were lucky, I was lucky that I had a couple of faces I knew and they knew me

- 32:30 and that made it a little easier. And then I remember making a speech saying, "I've always been regarded as a lucky platoon commander and I hope will continue with that vain," and it fortunately worked out that way for the time being. But then I knew all the old, my boss my company commander had been the senior lieutenant in the battalion when I was with it before, Benny O'Dowd.

- 33:00 Many of the platoon commanders were contemporaries of mine, most the company commanders were contemporaries of mine so the adjutant was Lenny Isles who'd I'd mentioned earlier he'd come back and re-joined the battalion earlier. Ferguson was the 2IC and he'd moved from 2IC to commander at that stage because Charles Green the original CO had been killed, very early on.

- 33:30 So in a sense it was a home coming, later on it was even more so when I moved away from the platoon and became assistant adjutant and I was doing the job I was doing for some months a couple of years before and looking at the same name rolls and saying oh there still here, made it very easy for me to sort of fit in.

- 34:00 **The platoon that came under your command though, had they seen fighting already?**

Oh yes, oh cripes yes they were well and truly in yep. Yeh they'd been through the Apple Orchard, a whole raft of minor actions and a couple of major actions before they got me. And just before I arrived

- 34:30 they'd been through a series of ridge actions where they'd been trying to clear the enemy off bridges as we got near and nearer the parallel, called after fish, salmon, sardine that sort of thing, there were nicknames for the operations. And they'd been very hard because working a ridge very precipitous ridges and you're on a 1 man front

- 35:00 there is no great competition to be the first man, but they did very well by flanking. And there was confidence in the commanders and you had to fit in and make certain you got it right and I had one of the best platoon sergeants that we ever had called Harris who was famous for saying that

- 35:30 he was going to send his mother-in-law a present, a box of chocolates with a grenade inside, that was about his thingo. But the rest of the boys were pretty good, a mix of young and old, Spec Rafren who'd been with me before, couldn't see a thing beyond 4 feet, used to stand in the middle of a fire in a grate coat and say "Is there

- 36:00 something burning somewhere" he didn't leave the battalion. Mick Servos who was my forward scout who was President of the Association, National Association. Monty my so called batman who was also my sig [signaller], in those days we used to have a radio set called a WS88, it fitted in two pouches, some officers used to carry these things,

- 36:30 others didn't. I was one of those that didn't because you had an aerial sticking up and this attracted a certain amount of attention from the opposite side so Monty used to carry the set and he used what we called a drop aerial, instead of the thing sticking up like that was a wire that you just put up like this. But that meant that you had to keep on putting you hand up and his hand kept going up and down and on one occasion oh, with

- 37:00 regularity, so he switched back to an aerial after a while.

What had happened to the platoon's previous commander?

He went out wounded Jack Church had gone out wounded in the hand in a matter of about 3 weeks before, he was a class after me at Duntroon and.....

We were talking about how Church

- 37:30 **had been wounded you came in, we hear, we've often heard stories from infantry of how it's difficult for them, or maybe not difficult might be the right word but the challenge for them when an officer comes in who hasn't seen action and they have. Do you know was that a challenge for you?**
- Oh yes my word, my word, I was fortunate that within about 3 days we were in the biggest action we were likely to have for some months
- 38:00 and we came out with some credit, that helped me immensely.
- Before you went into that action was there a time and place and was it protocol for them to be able to catch you up on what exactly they'd been through?**
- Not quite, what happened was that as I said the company commander was an old friend and one of the platoon commanders was an old friend to and
- 38:30 they filled me in together with the Company Sergeant Major Tommy Muggledon, who you might even be talking to, another famous name in Australian Army history. They filled me in and the other thing was that the battalion was so well grounded at this stage that if we stopped and went into a defensive position everybody
- 39:00 dug in, there was no mucking about, you laid out the platoon and everybody dug in straight away, there's no messing about. The jeep would come up to the bottom of the hill, they'd go down a thousand feet or so and haul the stuff up from there and you'd always find that you had additional ammunition, you always carried up a extra couple of Bren guns, this was done without question and without even thinking about ordering it simply because that had been the drill and it worked
- 39:30 and so it was going to be done again. And those drills were, and that attitude was very evident and so what I had to do was fit in with it very quickly and that's what I tried to do, I think it worked, yeh it did because my platoon sergeant said, "He turned out alright", that was Harris. So
- 40:00 all that was accomplished in a matter of a few days really before we went into action at Kapyong.
- I'll just.....**

Tape 7

- 00:30 **So you were just about to hook up with the Turks?**
- Yes Anzac Day was coming up and a lot of preparation had gone into tying us up with the Turkish brigade which was also in reserve, we were in reserve at the time, just out for a few days. And pulled out mainly because of Anzac Day really and the Turkish brigade was sending over a large contingent and
- 01:00 their general had been over and we discussed all the bits of pieces, and obviously a large amount of arrack and a lot of beer was going to be drank and various delicacies were being prepared and it all went haywire, all went ape. And we just got, well what happened was the 6th ROK Division, Republic of Korea Division in front of us
- 01:30 they'd relieved us in the line and they'd broken because it was the first really concerted major attack on the central front that the Chinese were involved in and they came on in large numbers. We were put into blocking positions, Canadian battalion Princess Patricia's Light Infantry
- 02:00 and ourselves forward and the Middlesex Battalion which was the third battalion in the brigade at that time was held back. I was lucky as the last arrived I got the highest hill and it was a little pimple up off the road, everybody thought this was going to be a piece of cake as usual, as you usually do and so everybody who could get on low ground got on low ground, while
- 02:30 we were sent up the hill with all our, up the Yarma with all our stuff. And we settled in there and we didn't have long to settle in before it all started and it started with a rush of refugees from the towns north of us and then the ROK Army units in complete disarray coming through. And then the New Zealand Field Regiment which had been in support of the Koreans
- 03:00 came thundering past at a very last hour which was a great hazard because they couldn't give us predicted fire. Or they could only give us predicted fire rather because they had no survey in, they went back into their gun position and had to try and do everything by guess and by God. And then the Chinese hit us and they'd managed to come through on the road that separated the Canadians and ourselves
- 03:30 following the refugees and the ROK people, they got quite considerable numbers through us, they were dealt with. I mean we stabilised that, there was some very heavy fighting there and then the night started to fall and they started to move round towards my position and beyond that to D Company which

was on my right.

- 04:00 And we had a torrid night and they got between my platoon and the rest of the company down on the lower ground, in the morning we had to clean that out, lost a bloke there. We had, we were very fortunate we had 1 killed and about 12 wounded, most of them not severe, couple severe but
- 04:30 not too bad at all. And we watched in the morning as they, all through the night you'd hear whistles and bugles blowing as their means of communication lined up, flares going up and we had people no further away than 10 metres I suppose but we were on a very sharp incline and so most of their stuff was going over our heads, in tends to
- 05:00 fire up when you're shooting up hill and they did exactly that. And I can remember my greatest moment of terror was we had a Chinese gentleman with a long bamboo pole with a couple of cakes of gun cotton on the end with a string obviously to pull the string and ignite the gun cotton and blow it up. And I was
- 05:30 standing foreign legion style on the top of the ridge with my trusty Smith and Wesson revolver and it took me 18 pressures to get 16 rounds away and in desperation and complete terror I threw the pistol at this poor bugger and it went out and I forgot it was on a lanyard and it came back hit me on the shin. And I'm dancing around the top of the thing with streams of stuff going all over and my platoon sergeant's there on the ground screaming with laughter with the batman and the mortar man,
- 06:00 all thought it was great, finally pulled me down and got on with it. And we held there, down below they had to fight back onto their own ground, but we managed to hold up the top and they flooded round us towards D Company and took D Company on the next day by which time it was starting to be perfectly obvious that we couldn't stay.

Can I just ask you there Lou when

- 06:30 **you're a young platoon commander you've arrived in Korea and the Koreans are coming back and you know something big is about to happen, what's going through your head?**

The drills take over to a very large extent and we laid out, we were unfortunate in one way that the ground that we were on was rocky and still pretty hard

- 07:00 from the winter too and so we had to build up sangars [fortified lookout post] which was a damn nuisance because you, if a sangars hit you get rock going everywhere. So a lot of time went into that, a lot of time went into getting up extra water and extra rations and God bless the platoon sergeant and the company quartermaster sergeant for that because they sent up more than we needed actually and we were able to use it for the rest of the company the next day. So there
- 07:30 was a hell of a lot of activity going on in preparation, you didn't have much time to think about what might happen, you were in the business of seeing it sort of develop in front of you. And quite different to other situations I've been in but this time there was no time, on this occasion there was no time for worrying at all, it just didn't work out that way.

Would you have said you were even maybe excited?

Oh yes

- 08:00 your adrenalin was pumping, not initially when we went in because we slugged up the hill went into the usual patter of defence, got ourselves sorted out, opened a sea ration of ham and lima beans or frankfurters and beans, there was always beans of some sort, or turkey roll. And we sorted ourselves out, got the phone lines in
- 08:30 made ourselves as comfortable as we could and just waited and see what would happen and it started to happen.

Can you remember the first shot you fired in anger?

Oh that was probably my first shot fired in anger and it had no effect on the enemy whatsoever, and it had a drastic effect on me because I got rid of my Smith and Wesson and got myself a Colt 45 and I finished

- 09:00 up at the end of that first day with a Chinese Tommy gun, American patent but made in China and I carried that for about a week after that action, I swapped that for something else after that.

I've heard stories that the copies are better than the originals are they?

This one worked quite well, we had, so our moment of danger passed on the first night

- 09:30 really and the 2nd day we were seeing Chinese soldiers littered all over the place. We managed to get in supporting fire from the American 42 mortars before they bugged out, it's an intensely accurate weapon, ring fired unlike ours, no tail fin and you bring it in within about 40 metres with no trouble at all. And that kept us
- 10:00 pretty quite and the main battle still developed down on the flat. C Company behind us didn't fire a shot the whole time.

With the calling of the mortars who's doing the authority on that?

Oh you did that yourself you just relayed that through the MFC at Company Headquarters, he passed the information back, checked it to make certain you weren't making a complete donkey of yourself and order it in. He might put it out a couple of hundred metres and walk it in,

10:30 and he probably did, we were using 2 inch mortars as well. Spade mortar, little spade mortar. And I can remember being chastised once I refused to let them fire, one of my Bren gunners fire he was trying to get this coat who was about 1200 yards away and I said, "For Christ sakes don't be bloody silly you couldn't hit him" "Oh you see the enemy you fire, you fire" "Not this time".

11:00 And then we went through the withdrawal procedure, I suppose before that the other major event was we were napalmed by the Marines, inadvertently. And I think probably one of the most bravest actions I've seen in a long time was the 2IC of Don Company which was napalmed standing out waving a

11:30 bloody air panel at these aeroplanes trying to tell them it was a friendly area and get out, they did they saw him and got out, Mick Ryan a very very courageous thing to do. But those casualties were a very sorry sight, very bad, very badly burnt and there are stories in the book you can read on it.

What sort of effect does friendly fire

12:00 **instances like that have on the men?**

Oh you, not good, not good they're amazingly resilient because you curse like hell, stupid bloody Yanks or stupid bloody Kiwis or whoever it might be when you get drop shorts from the artillery or aircraft strafing. And aircraft doesn't happen often but you can never guarantee that you're not going to get drop short

12:30 from the guns at some stage, you know fire thousands of rounds something's got to happen sooner or later and barrels wear out and all sorts of things. And the result is it give you a argument to have with the Kiwis next time you met them, but there's no sort of long lasting animosity there's a hell of a bust up when it happens but then it's all over and done with because

13:00 the next threat's there and you've got to get on with it. So it doesn't cause any lasting chasms at all except that it gives you something to chiac the Kiwis with when you see them next, or the Americans whoever it be.

So how did that withdrawal go?

The withdrawal was, looking back on it now and looking back was one of the best parts, military parts of the operation. We

13:30 started to go out around about 4 o'clock in the afternoon I think and B Company passed behind us and then we went up, C Company had took a blocking position and D Company went right back and held the river at the place where we were going to come out. C Company held first and then we took over from C Company, D Company came through us and then from thereon we Freddy

14:00 Gardner and Harold Monroe and I, the bridge was only big enough to take a section and a half really, not a platoon, you couldn't put a platoon across it. Sheer drop about 300 metres on one side, miles down and they were on our tails and we leap frogged back and it was almost a copy book job. It didn't feel like it at the time but it was it was pretty good piece of work.

14:30 And we got further back as darkness came and we finally broke contact and I suppose we had probably more casualties in that time than we had when we were forward. But we managed to get all those out. Night came down, no moon and by this stage I'd thrown my

15:00 pack over the side of the cliff cause it was in the way and I didn't think I'd be using it again, so my blankets and various other bits and pieces had gone but I felt much freer. And we finally moved back and then started in single file to get down to the river and the order of march was 3 Platoon, Company Headquarters

15:30 my platoon and Freddy Gardner, Freddy Gardner only had 11 people left at this stage. And we stopped and I fumbled forward along the ridge, Freddy came behind me and we'd lost contact with company headquarters in front and we had a hurried conversation between Fred and I, there was a fork in the track

16:00 which one would we take. So I said, "We're going to take that one and keep away from the PPC [Princess Patricia Company], Canadians which means we should get back on the river just about the right place". And off we went and we got down to the river and there standing in the middle of the river was a fellow called James Hartchi Young from B Company. He was glad to see me and I was very glad to see him and we went across and rejoined the battalion. The rest of the company

16:30 went miles out of it's way to come down but they made it to without further incident. And that closed it off, that's a very prosaic way of putting it.

You mentioned lobbing your pack off the cliff cause you didn't think you were going to need it, obviously you've got some serious things going through your mind at that point?

Yes there were, yeh, I thought oh god I've got to see this night out at this rate.

17:00 **And what does that do to your resolve when?**

Made me very restless, I must say I felt much better after I'd lost the weight which was hanging on me, it was just too much to carry.

How do you change as a soldier when you cross that bridge where you think I'm probably going to be done for, how does that change you?

Well I suppose as a platoon commander which is really a

17:30 platoon leader I suppose you just can't afford to worry about it too much. If you've got people who are hurt, we had something like 40 casualties in that train going out carried by the Chinese prisoners we'd taken. And there's a famous story of the CSM B Company using the Chinese prisoners to carry out all the excess

18:00 weapons that we, our wounded couldn't carry and we had people bathing the burnt people, trying to do something for them, very little we could do. It was a terrifying night and I haven't answered your question because I find it difficult to answer I think.

18:30 It's not really a transition point, it was just in the way my pack really, get rid of the bloody thing, I might never need it again. But I wasn't thinking of giving myself in easily or anything like that. And fortunately that was just about the last action we had, picked up a section of Machine Gun Platoon which had been

19:00 left behind, I grabbed hold of them and we pumped a few belts into the area that the enemy was following us up on and obviously kept them quite for a while and we managed to make the break.

When you first got there what had you expected of the enemy?

When I first got where?

To Korea?

Oh well at that stage

19:30 the Chinese had come in and I had very little, nobody had much time for the North Korean Army, which was probably incorrect but every engagement the battalion had had with North Koreans they'd absolutely wiped the ground with them, right through to the very far north. But with the Chinese it was different, Chinese were good soldiers and

20:00 the fellows that hit us at Kapyong had marched for something like 24 hours or something before they actually hit us and we were lucky that they'd done that because they were very tired and they were thrown straight in, keep the momentum going. And I think probably if they'd had a chance to rest up before they hit us things might have gone very much differently.

And equipment wise how were the

20:30 **Chinese identifiably different to the North Koreans?**

Not much Burp guns and SKS predecessor of AK47 and some elementary stuff like the pole charge I mentioned and flares, used very sparingly, mortars,

21:00 very good mortar man, very good. And a mortar to an infantry soldier is the worst weapon you can get really because you don't hear anything, very little warning, shell you can hear the thing coming you know what it is you know what sort of thing, you adjust very quickly to that but you never quite catch up with a mortar it's a bit of a nuisance. And vice versa of course we know that, but the Chinese were very good soldiers

21:30 and they responded very well and very quickly to the circumstances they found themselves in and so it seemed to be a different kettle of fish than dealing with the North Koreans.

What about the physical geography of what it was like there?

Well we were on the central front at that stage and it was extremely hilly, very sharp cliffs

22:00 on both sides of a pathway on the top of a ridge, that's a one man front sort of thing, occasionally opening out into a little coal and then coming back again. Very difficult country to navigate in and very difficult country to fight effectively and without good support, and we were a bit light on in support at Kapyong.

22:30 We did get the Kiwi gunners into action on the last day we were coming out and we asked for a smoke screen, Benny O'Dowd who'd taken over by then the CO had been isolated from the battalion and couldn't get forward, did come forwarded on one occasion to pick up some wounded in some tanks, 72nd Armoured Company, Battalion rather, Company C.

23:00 And then he was isolated and handed the battle over to senior company commander who was Benny O'Dowd and Benny really ran the whole bloody thing and did it extremely well, and didn't get a thing for it, we've always been very annoyed about that. Fergie got his DSO but Benny didn't.

What about vegetation there?

We were

23:30 just at the end of winter, it was still sparse, vegetation was very poor not a great deal of cover at all. Some, fair bit of snow still on the ground and as I said shail rock on the top paddy down below, most of the area had been cultivated, most of the arable area had been cultivated at

24:00 some stage, it had been out of use during the war but it had been cultivated. But not a great deal of forest, vastly different to when I went back, it was completely overgrown, had great difficulty deciding where I was, but you can pick it out, take your time.

And how well were you guys prepared for the cold?

The first winter we were not prepared for the cold

24:30 we were in Australian service dress, First World War, Second World War service dress. We had boots ankle brown, hadn't changed to a black shoe army at that stage and gaiters, slouch hat. The Americans supplied us with pile jackets which were a fleecy lined

25:00 jacket and field jackets, although not everybody would get those. And the 2 were reasonably good, gloves were very clumsy and made weapon handling very difficult and the footwear I think was probably the worst feature and head gear. We had to get rid of slouch hat and put on

25:30 something else, berets, anything, the slouch hat wasn't any protection at all. So we weren't too well off during the first winter, some of the foot gear was Eskimo country, some uklucks and things like that that they'd pulled out of depots. The Brits sent us some stuff over and it came via

26:00 Hong Kong and the crates arrived and I can remember to this day they were beautiful crates so therefore they must have been very old and you can make out through the stencilling they'd been round the place for a long time and in a lot of areas. But one of the places they'd been to was Archangel 1921 and we got, they were, opened them up and they were leather helmets, fur lined, leather jackets

26:30 fur lined and they just crumpled to dust in front of us, shocking thing, dreadful, looked so lovely. And so that went out the window too, next winter we were better prepared, much better prepared.

In the meantime were you getting any comforts fund stuff that helped?

Yes we were but nevertheless not generally spoken about. The greatest number of casualties we had were self inflicted wounds

27:00 during that period, people simply could not take the cold and over a period we have something like over a hundred people evacuated with self inflicted wounds, astonishing number. Most of them were minor finger joint, worst toe joint, simple things like that, bullet through the hand, anything to get out. They used to watch one another and, particularly when we were operating at altitude

27:30 we were still very cold even though it was getting into Spring, you'd see the patches start to come up white on the face and you'd immediately start to rub it. Every night you'd check the platoon's boots, check the feet, check the faces, check the hands to make certain everybody was okay, do the same in the morning to make certain nobody had been caught overnight. And if they had start rubbing again,

28:00 if we couldn't do it evacuate.

And who do you find yourself blaming for those sort of privations, the fact that you didn't have the gear that you needed?

Oh you mean did we blame the government, no, no soldiers are very funny people. No let me tell you about when we changed our uniforms into battle dress, British style battle dress blouses and things and they

28:30 sent these up to us in Autumn and the troops took one look at them and fell in love with them and immediately petitioned the CO not to wear these because they wanted to keep them for leave, never wear them in action. And we had plenty of signals from Army Headquarters saying please they're battle dress we want you to try them out and see what they're like, no way we're not going to wear these. So we

29:00 have strange ways of approaching things, but we overcame that we did wear them.

And you had your own batman as well?

I had Monty who was my signaller, batman and general confidant, while I was with the platoon and he and I got on very well together, he used to prepare the odd meal for me and start digging the trench or the slit trench and put up the hoochie [makeshift shelter]. And then when I came back he

29:30 used to relax and I used to carry on from there, at platoon level it's a very different situation to company and battalion level.

It's a very unique relationship isn't it between the batman and an officer?

Oh very much so, yes it is, yes my batman from Vietnam lives down at Runaway Bay and has great pleasure in telling me how his son is doing as CSM B Company in 1RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] in Townsville.

30:00 But there is a relationship, sometimes it can be abused to particularly at the battalion level you've got to watch out that they don't overstep the mark and use your name as their's. But platoon level it's quite different, it's too close to ground, you don't have to worry about that.

And what about the NCOs and officers what

30:30 **are they like?**

Oh the officers were generally in 2 groups, 1 were the, 3 groups I suppose, the company commanders were basically those people who'd been in Japan with the battalion and while they changed, or with a battalion in Japan.

31:00 O'Dowd, Lachlan, DeNess, A, B, C Company then D Company Gravner ex Australian Army sent to Burma back into the Australian Army after the war, Reg Saunders had C Company during Kapyong and

31:30 most of these fellows were extremely good regimental soldiers and very good within a battalion context, they knew exactly what to do. That's not to say they were infallible or anything like that but they had the knack of reacting in a positive way to a situation that needed a positive solution. And I can't remember any of them ever getting worried about anything, there might be the odd oath

32:00 flung around but it was mainly sorting things out and getting on with the job. Platoon commanders were in another series of groups, there were some Second World War officers who took specialist platoons like Machine Guns and Anti Tank. The platoon commanders were mainly from RMC, either my class or

32:30 the class after and then later the class after that leavened with a few people from the British Army, in A Company we had 3 quite disparate people, me from RMC, Freddy Gardner from the Gurkhas [Regiment of Nepalese fighting under British Army] and Harold Mulray was a sheep farmer from Northern Queensland thin as a whip and ate like a horse and used to bound up a

33:00 mountain like a mountain goat. Freddy used to run down a mountain like mountain goat from his Gurkha training, I staggered up and down. Very good feeling among the officers, very good tight group, well oiled and the company sergeant majors were all old hands, well known, well respected, even loved, Darkie Griffiths,

33:30 Tommy Mulgeton, ask my wife about Tommy Mulgeton, I think they've had an affair going for years. And the other company's similarly served. We did have a couple of people who were forced on the battalion, there were 2 different cases. One was a fellow called Arch

34:00 Luken who Ferguson the CO hated and therefore would not let him come to Korea to finish his time, he'd been with the Occupations [British Commonwealth Occupation Force] since 1946 and if you didn't get across to Korea he'd never go home and he had to wait till Frank Hassett came, to come across, Fergie would never let him over. Similarly with, he had competition from a fellow called Wings Nichols,

34:30 Nichols was a great identity in the Australian Army and one of the few holders of the Military Cross and Bar, there are only 4 and Nichols got his 2nd in October 1951 and it came as a periodical, which meant that he didn't get it immediately after the battle but we gave him a MRD [?] to keep him on. And he used to ring me up, I was the adjutant at that stage and say "This is Major H W Nichols MC" - an insult,

35:00 we already had him in for his 2nd MC. Those were the sort of people who were, Nichols was not allowed across either. As soon as he came across with Hassett he blossomed and became a magnificent company commander and very distinguished. So it's the treatment they get I suppose in a way.

What about the NCOs?

Well the NCOs had by this stage been proved by fire,

35:30 and there were very few non starters, they were a great group of people and those 2 groups that I mentioned earlier, the ones that had 8 months to go and the ones that had full 12 months to go, we lost a great number of good NCOs in that first batch in May 1951 when they did their 8 months. And we were just fortunate that there were enough people in the

36:00 system to, and were on an individual replacement basis, to fill the gaps and hold the line until October and then we had to go all through the process again, it was very enervating. A lot of them we were saying earlier just didn't want to go.

And before Kapyong started the battle there you were about to have your Anzac

36:30 **Day with the Turks, had you actually met the Turks previously?**

Yes oh yes they'd come across and we were discussing these, and we'd had a few drinks and parties, not parties but few drinks and talk to one another as best we could, most of the officers could speak English, there was a great repour we were really looking forward to it, this was going to be a great thing. We weren't quite certain what sport we'd play, league

37:00 or union [rugby] was not well known in Turkey and I don't know whether wrestling was going to be on or not. But there was a fair amount of expectation to be a great big ding and we were really loving it.

How momentous did that occasion seem when here you are with former enemy, Gallipoli the history together and suddenly you're allies?

Well I think you've got to go back a long way for that because the

37:30 respect we had for the Turks was echoed probably with the Chinese in Korea. But always remember that we, the people at Gallipoli thought the Turks were very good soldiers and when they did meet, like those burial parties and things like that, they were obviously very close to one another, the people who'd come from rural backgrounds in Australia

38:00 suddenly found they had something equivalent in the Turks, 50 yards away. And then when it was over and Gallipoli became an icon to use an overuse word and Convoluta Turk put that thing up there saying 'Your mothers know', I can't repeat it properly now but he virtually said that we have taken your sons into our hearts

38:30 and bosoms. And it was a great healing factor I think for the soldiers, soldiers always liked Johnny Turk.

That's interesting given that all the time that had passed that feeling was still existent in the Australian Army wasn't it?

Oh yes of course it was because Anzac was a great thing anyhow and I mean nationally it was great things and you had to have someone to have Anzac with for god sake apart from the Kiwis,

39:00 we forgot the Brits, the 29 Division and the French, 50,000 French wipe those off and stop them, stop them with the 2nd Corps we just wiped those out. And we concentrated on the main game, ourselves the Kiwis and the Turks.

And you mentioned about how your batman had to dig, start to build, dig trenches and that and it was virtually impossible wasn't it to dig?

It was, well it was on that occasion, 6 weeks later when we moved up through

39:30 Gloucester Valley and moved into what was called the James Town Line we were on a feature called the Lozenge feature, cause it looked like a lozenge, the digging was easy there. So for the first time we went down and started to construct bunkers and they were the most rudimentary things you've ever seen in your life, they were absolutely bloody disgrace and most of them suffered

40:00 the indignity of being torn down and re-built as soon as we put them up they were so rickety.

And before you became adjutant what other sort of role did you have as the section, sorry as platoon commander as far as looking after your men went?

Well there's always, something that I've always approached, you've got to look after them and that means checking

40:30 primarily on health, on welfare, making certain that they were writing home, making certain that you were writing home, writing home if they can't write home, answering questions from the parents, writing the letters after casualties, checking feet, checking weapons. In our case it was a check

41:00 because there was no way and a weapon was going to be left in any condition other than perfect. It was just the drill your weapons were always done, your gear was always checked and where we could, particularly as the weather moderated, we went on a one for one basis where if something wore out or got torn we replaced it straight

41:30 away, that's a platoon commander's job to do that with the platoon sergeant.....

Tape 8

00:31 **When you were talking earlier about when you were withdrawing and you had Chinese POWs with you, what was the orders about how they were to be treated?**

I can't remember any direct orders being given. We had a general order that

01:00 prisoners were to be treated as prisoners, or prisoners of war and these people were treated as well as

we were and they were quite willing to do this, they carried out the wounded on litters, as I said carried out all the excess weapons. No shade of a dispute or a likelihood of a breakout

01:30 cause as I said they were pretty tired. But they were of great service to us, they went out with B Company early on so they weren't impeding our operations during the actual withdrawal itself, they'd already been cleared of the area. And once they went back they went into, we had no facility on a Commonwealth basis for POWs apart from immediate caging with the military police and then they were handed over to the Americans

02:00 for processing into the Korean system as in POW cages further south at Pusan or one of the islands.

I know we were discussing earlier their military capability but what was your personal regard for them?

Very high, very high very tenacious and illustrations

02:30 have been given.....

Sorry?

No the soldiers themselves like soldiers everywhere seem to have much the same attitude as we have in that they had to sort of keep a sense of humour. There was the famous incident of one of our fellows firing desperately at this fellow who was popping up and down behind a rock and shooting back and our bloke kept missing and finally the Chinaman put his shirt on a pole and waved it to

03:00 make sure that he knew it was a wash out, he was on the rifle range. There were various incidents where our wounded had been treated well, once they left the army's hands our POWs were in bad company. But within the limits of the capability of the Chinese Army to look after them it did its

03:30 best, we couldn't ask for any more, it did as well as it did for their own troops, their standards weren't as good as ours, but they did what they could. They were meticulous in trying to clear the battlefield of their casualties as we were, don't like to leave anything behind, any body behind or anybody behind, not any body. And they were the same

04:00 they tried to recover their wounded and get them out and they tried to recover their dead. So a general respect grew up for them then they produced their artillery which was very effective and we had some of the heaviest concentrations that had been seen since the Second World War in later times in Korea

04:30 later in 1951 and they were very good gunners so you had a respect for their professional aptitude. We didn't have any air threat, we did have a bi-plane called Bed Check Charlie which used to come over periodically and throw mortar bombs out at great personal risk and finally somebody shot him down much to the horror of everybody else in the organisation, or in our organisation we thought he was sort of a pet

05:00 and he never hurt anybody, just threw these things over indiscriminately. So it sort of soldiery, I had to say the word camaraderie but a soldiery respect was certainly there between the Chinese and the Australians and most Commonwealth troops too with the Chinese.

Again we were talking about what equipment they had what about in terms of uniform, were they better

05:30 **equipped than we were?**

In terms of winter uniforms initially the Chinese were, they were wearing padded uniforms, their footwear was not particularly good and they did suffer obviously a number of, large number of casualties from frost bite from poor footwear. They improved that during the year, for the next winter. But their general uniforms were quite adequate to the task, they started out white in winter,

06:00 padded white and they grew with the landscape and the, as the time passed they got greyer and greyer, probably more effective. Their kit was not bad, they were a bit more basic in terms of self protection in terms of hoochies and things like that, I can't remember seeing any evidence of,

06:30 at a platoon level of soldiers carrying that sort of kit at all.

Some of the navy fellows that we've spoken to that were involved in Korea have spoken to us about it being so cold that they'd get up in the morning and the guns would be completely iced over?

Yep.

Did that sort of thing go on as well?

Oh yes, yes weapon care, you slept with it, it was the only way to keep it from

07:00 freezing over so you pulled the Bren gun in with you or pistol or whatever it happen to be, that was kept undercover. And trucks had to be specially looked after, they were run every half hour, had anti freeze didn't work, they'd run every half hour to keep the engine warm, right throughout the day and night. And a cup

- 07:30 of tea, in the worst circumstances a cup of coffee or something like that you'd pick it up and if you put it down for just a short time and you pick it up it would be frozen, from boiling to frozen it was so quick it was just incredible. And we weren't used to that, that since Syria I don't think we'd had anything similar in terms of temperature, something like Russia perhaps we'd had no experience
- 08:00 or, it was very cold and it created a number of problems, skin problems from the clothes and as I say wounds and frost bite. And I think we used a few strange medicines to, frost bite
- 08:30 was treated with a thing called Zambuck it was a cream used by footballers to ease aches and pains, but you could rub it in, it was like a Vaseline. And you had to burn down the odd house and keep warm and that sort of thing if you had the chance to do that. Otherwise it was very very difficult,
- 09:00 when you put people out into that in operations as we did later on you had to be very careful how you timed the operation, how you arranged to get them back in and how you fostered them when they got back in from the patrol in front of the wire for example. They were quite dangerous events without any enemy, simply the weather.

What happened with the burning down of houses, were they

09:30 abandoned houses or

Oh yes, oh yes it was a complete war zone, nothing to worry about, there were no inhabitants as such left in the war area, they'd all been evacuated, in the war Zone Area, they'd all been taken out and all the animals had been taken out too, bullocks and oxen, even chicken, although

- 10:00 we might have accounted for a few chickens on our way north. But mostly people had gone, been taken out by the government, South Korea.

Did you see any South Koreans around?

Any what?

South Koreans?

Oh yes I mean just south of us was Uijongbu which was about 20 miles south and from there on you were in a bustling community. A typical

- 10:30 Asian community with arable land cultivated into paddy and rice and vegetables and small villages and the towns crowded with refugees. And Seoul was a very big city and slightly bashed about because it had been taken twice and misused a bit. But it still had a big population and still maintained, because it was a rail
- 11:00 head for one reason, maintained a large number of refugees.

In that war zone though were there any South Koreans still left, civilians or had they all?

No civilians no, well let me qualify that we had the Korean Service Corps which were civilians who carried for us, were our porters, these were organised a little later in the war. We had say with the battalion something like

- 11:30 4 or 5 hundred porters and they were quite remarkable, they used to carry up our rations, our ammunition and water, through artillery and enemy fire and they pulled out our wounded at the same time, on the way back. We looked on them with great affection, a few of them actually came to Australia with connections with
- 12:00 company quartermaster sergeants and things like that that have lasted through the war and well beyond, bought them in as immigrants. I used to pay them and I think one dollar, one pound for heavens sake, no one US dollar, one US dollar was worth 43,000 won and they used to get paid something like 10 dollars a month so we used to go down to Seoul
- 12:30 with a trailer and fill it full of Korean money at the bank and come back and line them all up and pay them and then they went past me we'd doled it out with the Dole sergeant and then there were a line of compradors, people they owed money to for food and clothing and whatever and gambling and they passed their money over to the fellows as they went past
- 13:00 and finished up with very little at the end. But they were a great asset but they were the only civilians we had in the war zone itself.

What was your perception of how the UN forces were received?

Well it's a different situation to say Vietnam or East Timor or even Iraq we were in a war zone so therefore our contact with the local people

- 13:30 on an army level was very limited. If we went on leave you didn't go to Seoul or Pusan you went to Tokyo or Hong Kong for R&R [Rest and Recreation] for example. So that our contact with the people was not great at all, much greater after the war than it was before the war, still maintained to this day locally

- 14:00 and overseas. We had, we didn't have the opportunity to carry out aid to the civic action type programs in Korea, the operations were too intense, and we were a bit too small for it too.
- 14:30 **The action that we spoke of before at Kapyong that wasn't the last one that you were engaged in was it?**
- No, no Kapyong was in April and we moved up to the Imjin River in May and we took up a position there. The Chinese were in occupation north of the river and then gradually withdrew towards a fortified line north
- 15:00 of the river. We were the first patrol across the river since the battle of Kapyong and the battle that enveloped Gloucesters in particular, the Gloucester Regiment went into the bag, or the battalion of the Gloucester Regiment went into the bag in the area that we'd now come into. In fact we'd bivouacked in Gloucester Valley all the way north
- 15:30 and also found 3 British tanks there which we drove away, untouched by the Chinese and untouched by anybody else, one of them went to the War Memorial and I think we managed to sell the other 2 to the Americans. We weren't good at selling things to the Americans we used to steal things rather than sell them. Where were we?
- I think we were about to get onto Operation Commando?**
- Yes
- 16:00 so we started to develop operations across the river and I was still with A Company at that stage and we went forward about 10,000 yards north of the river on a couple of occasions and only struck minor opposition, incurred a few casualties. And the decision was finally taken to move north of the river, we moved north in August and started to prepare for a major offensive
- 16:30 that eventually came up in October in the first, beginning in the first week October. And that was Op Commando and the Australian contribution to that was, has been well documented elsewhere and I wouldn't want to go into it in any great detail. It was a very well executed piece of work, it was a joy to, a military joy to see
- 17:00 how well we operated, we accomplished our missions, we took our objectives, cost was high but not that high. And the unit showed that it was capable of doing a great deal as a formed body. It was one of the best actions of Australian infantry battalion ever and deserves to be ranked up, won us a Battle Honour
- 17:30 and Maryang San and Kowang San 2 mountains and we feel very proud of that one. My own part was very restricted I was, I came up daily to battalion headquarters and checked in. Famous occasions well there was the occasion when there was a battalion headquarters and Arch Luken,
- 18:00 the Support Company commander, we were being shelled and Arch Luken said, "Well I think I'll get out of here it's no place for a white man," and out of slit trench alongside came Reg Saunder's face and he says, "No place for a bloody black man either". Frank Hassett was the CO and the thing ran like clockwork, not quite, there were hitches but because he'd created a system where we always had something in hand,
- 18:30 we could deal with the eventualities that they produced themselves. And it was a very very fine action.
- For the purpose of the archive could you just give us an overview of the action?**
- Yes the action involved the taking of some major hilltops
- 19:00 which dominated the area north, to the north which we wanted to cover and force the Chinese from these places. The most important 2 were hill 355 and hill 317 and there was an intermediate one called hill 217, there was also another one called 199. To go back in the story the brigade was
- 19:30 allocated its tasks and our brigadier was a very distinguished British officer who'd been involved in Arnon, the airborne assault at Arnon, he not only was involved in that he was involved in the relief of the airborne division and was very well decorated and very highly regarded as a battalion commander. Unfortunately he didn't translate too well as a brigadier
- 20:00 and the COs got together and worked out a plan for the operation and I remember going down to the orders group and the brigadier got up and gave his spiel and the brigade major got up and gave his spiel and the signals officer gave his and I was writing madly away and the CO said, "Don't worry about that". And I thought god I'd better take some insurance here and make a few notes,
- 20:30 he said, "No no don't worry about that". When the orders group had finished the 3 COs descended on the brigade major and they dictated the orders. And shortly after the battle the brigadier was relieved and went to Kenya and one of the, the British battalion commanders took over the brigade. It was a sad end for the brigade commander but the plan
- 21:00 that the COs worked out worked remarkably well. And there were repercussions later on but we survived those.

So who were the COs were they?

1 Australian Frank Hassett, Kings Own Scottish Borderers a fellow called McDonald and the CO of the KLSI [?] whose name has just escaped me for the moment.

So

21:30 2 British and 1 Australian?

Yeh and a New Zealand battery, field regiment commander and that was the cabal that sorted things out and probably just as well. Just to sort of illustrate it the brigadier was famous for going round and sitting at the battle map near the intelligence tent with a chinagraph pencil putting Bren gun

22:00 positions on a battle map and not something a brigadier does usually, sight Bren guns, team commander maybe but more likely a company commander. And standing by him was his Australian Intelligence Officer Paddy Utridge and the brigadier would say, I was there on one occasion when this happened he said, "Well that looks pretty good Paddy" and Utridge said, "Yes it does indeed Sir". The brigadier got up

22:30 and left and Paddy immediately got out a petrol soaked rag and rubbed it all off the map, so the stage was set. We moved forward into an area that had been cleared by the Canadians for us to start the operation, Canadian brigade and in particular the Royal 22nd Regiment, a French Canadian regiment, they held what we call a forming up place. And from there we launched into the battle and we took first

23:00 hill 199 and then moved onto 355. Before we got to 355 we had to take 317 and the fog came down, it was very early in the morning, it was probably fortunate in a way but it made navigation very difficult for B Company and A Company who were the assault companies at this stage.

23:30 And they did run into some trouble, the fog cleared and Hassett then put C Company through those 2 companies and swept up the hill 317 and took it and held it, which was far more important than just taking it. And we then moved B Company up there and swept on towards 355. And it was a race for 355, there's always been a dispute as to whether we got there

24:00 first or the KOSB [King's Own Scottish Borderers] got there first and we know bloody well we got there first. But as the CO of the KOSB became the brigade commander it's very difficult to prove that, we know. And in doing this we used a great deal of artillery, the entire corps artillery, every gun within range was used in support so we had something like 72 guns

24:30 from the division and probably another 40 or 50 guns from the American units, plus our own mortars being used to give fire support. We didn't use air in close support we used it back to try and keep the enemy artillery quite and we used South African Air Force and Australian Air Force and the Marines beyond the battle seeking out the enemy artillery.

25:00 Which was very difficult to do because they'd dug it in to the side of the hills and all you could see was the odd flash at night coming from a hillside, but they were very good gunners and they kept going at us hammer and tongs. The Chinese were taken by surprise when we took 355 but they were ready for us when we moved onto 317 and the battle on 317 was far more intense

25:30 than that on 355. We had a number of casualties mainly in C Company and B Company and we had support from the 8th Hazzars which was a British cavalry regiment using Centurion tanks. Now we got those tanks up the hills

26:00 so that they were being used in direct fire support, must have frightened hell out of the Chinese to have a great big tank sitting on top of a hill thumping away at you with armour piercing, lifting the top off the bunkers and being able to do that while our people moved up the hill in close proximity. It was so accurate that you could keep on using a tank gun until they were just yards away so it managed to get us in with

26:30 minimum casualties. Nevertheless we did suffer quite badly the evacuation casualties was very well organised and we used the people I spoke about before the Korean Service Corps plus our own people of course to get people down. We used for the first time helicopter evacuation, first time in the war that we'd used, very little G2 Alpha helicopters, American pilots and

27:00 I remember things flashing into your mind. I remember on one occasion during the battle we had a casualty Darcy Eckles was the acting company sergeant major of B Company, he was hit in the throat and the company Medic managed to stop the bleeding which was very difficult with a carotid artery and we got him down to the landing

27:30 point and we got a chopper in, waiting from him to come down and the pilot said, "I'm not supposed to stay here," and I said, "Well he's only about 10 minutes away or thereabouts we'll get him to you as soon as we can", "Yeh but I'm not allowed to stay while there's artillery on, you'll have to do something about it," I said, "What stop the artillery?" he said, "No, no flash a gun, flash a gun". So I pulled my pistol and said, "You've got to sit down here until he arrives." He said, "That's better, that's better", so he was satisfied.

28:00 We got him down and the Doc stabilised him again and we forgot one thing, we put him in the capsule

on the side of the chopper and we didn't tie his arms down and he tore the dressing off in flight and he was dead by the time he got to the MASH. He was a very popular sergeant, great soldier and it was so silly,

28:30 we just didn't think of it, he was out like a light when we put him on and just couldn't do a thing about it. Those things sort of hurt more than others that you sort of get from time to time.

As adjutant did evacuating the wounded come under your jurisdiction?

Not evacuating them, finding out where they went. We had great trouble because our wounded would go through a number of channels, that chopper for

29:00 example would go back to either Norwegian Mobile Army Surgical Hospital or to 1066 Mobile Army Surgical Hospital it was a US hospital. Then they could go back from there without us knowing anything about it direct to 121 US Evacuation Hospital across to Tokyo General back to Triplah in Hawaii, San Francisco and the first we hear about it is in the Stars and Stripes. We had one fellow

29:30 who went that way and finished up in a UN parade in New York and he was lumbered we saw him there and said, "Hogie's in New York get him," so he was back very smartly. But it was difficult to find out where they went and without that you couldn't notify properly because sometimes it was not possible to get the notification as they came out, just not on. The Doc was the principal there and he said what happened

30:00 and mainly it was triage and getting people away as quickly as possible. The evacuation nevertheless was very much better than it was in the Second World War and the support was absolutely fantastic from both the Nor MASH, the Norwegian Army Hospital and the American, both specialists and Nor MASH was chest and stomach wounds and so if you had that you went immediately to there either

30:30 by road or by chopper and surgical teams were waiting for you specialising in those things. Others went to 1066 and they dealt with a more general surgical procedures. So the system was pretty good and a lot of people survived who otherwise wouldn't have because of the system.

When you were talking about that it was hard to try and find where they had gone to, to track them all what

31:00 **were the communications channels, what process would you follow?**

Simply dog work, when you had an operation like this I had somebody down at Nor MASH I had somebody down at 1066, I always had somebody at 60th Field Ambulance anyhow, the Indian Field Ambulance was their immediate backup and they looked after our general health, apart from our own doctor, he'd refer people back to 60th Field Ambulance with

31:30 pneumonia or something like that, where you'd need something like 5 or 6 days' rest before you could come back again. Or small surgical procedures, they'd be dealt with within the division itself. You had to have reps on the ground and checking these people as they came in, you had coms [communication] with them, you could say "Look we've sent out Darcy Eckles and he's gone to 1066" and they'd say "Yes

32:00 chopper's come in, he's dead". Okay get his papers, his dog tag and anything else of a personal nature and you go through that and then bundle it up and send it off.

So in a circumstance like that where someone is killed their personal effects etc come back to you?

They came back through me yes, through my team.

And then what

32:30 **happens?**

Well they're returned to the next of kin.

By you is that your ... ?

No we send those to, we had a little branch of the Army Records Office in Korea itself, 6th Advance 2nd Echelon they called it, strange name and they dealt with such things. They looked after all our statistics and they looked after the belongings of next of kin and processed those back through Japan and sent them

33:00 back by air to Australia.

Did you ever have to write to or contact the families?

Oh yes I had to write to wives and mothers and fathers, yes not a very nice thing to do. You find you get into a sort of routine I suppose and you say the same things over and over again, there's never anything disparaging sent or anything like that.

33:30 You leave a soldier with as much dignity as you can give him.

How do you face a task like that?

You face it because it's there and it's got to be done, somebody's got to do it and platoon commanders usually have to do it first and occasionally there are people higher up in the organisation, a company commander might get hit or something like that or killed then the CO

- 34:00 would have to write, or the adjutant writes for him. And then if he feels so inclined he'll write himself and normally he'd write in his own hand, as I did, everybody wrote in their own hand there was no typing or anything like that.

How much detail do you go into?

Not much, not much, the first indication is a notification by signal that he's either been wounded in action,

- 34:30 killed in action, battle casualty non battle casualty. There's a number of non battle casualties in any war, in any situation, there are non battle casualties sitting in Holsworthy, car accidents, tripping over a tent rope, whatever. So the notification process used to go through to Australia, normally handled by the personnel services in each of the commands in Australia

- 35:00 involving either the police or the church and delivered to the next of kin.

The letter that you would have had to write for Darcy?

That would have gone by normal post.

Would that stand out to you as one of the more difficult that you had to write?

Yeh course it would, one of the more difficult things I had to write, one of the most difficult things I had to write yes, absolutely, not a pleasant

- 35:30 task but a necessary one, necessary one.

I lead you off track there sorry we were half way through Operation Commando?

Well were nearly finished actually in an overview. The co-operation between us on the ground and our artillery from the New Zealanders in particular and all our forward observers were New Zealanders and they'd been with the companies for months,

- 36:00 they were part of the company, something I've never forgotten and used in Vietnam, same thing. They were part of the company like drawing teeth to change a forward observer in a company, the company commander would scream the platoon commander would scream, everybody would scream so you had to leave him where he was as long as you could. And they were very good people the Kiwi officers, as good as ours anyhow

- 36:30 and we in fact had Australians engraved into the New Zealand regiment from time to time. And the cavalry or the tanks were quite remarkable, it was a posh British regiment one of the last posh British regiment the 8th Hazars. The CO was Sir Guy Lauther and our squadron commander I can't just recall his name at the moment but he was

- 37:00 famous for putting his troop commanders, all of whom were honourables out in front of him and driving along with a Centurion tank with a shot gun raising grass and shooting in the Korean paddy field. But in fighting they were terrific they really were. And when we were finished and finally taken out for a rest we got congratulations

- 37:30 from the divisional commander and the corps commander and at the party which we had, relief party Sir Guy walked in with the regiments pendant and stuck it in the ground and said, "We are now allied". No normally it takes about 20 years to work out alliance between an Australian unit and a British unit but there we were we were allied

- 38:00 and the wires ran hot with Canberra and London but Her Majesty decided that Sir Guy was right and that was it so we still are to this day allied with the 8th Hazars in battle, forged in battle and the best way to do it too. And at the back of that was a very sound logistic system which finally came together, mainly because the 2IC we had at that stage, a fellow called John Carey

- 38:30 was something of a genius in terms of putting rackets things together to make them work perfectly. And things like rations and ammunition and petrol and lubricants, stuff for the burners, all seemed to appear like magic and be in the right place at the right time. He earned an OBE [Order of the British Empire] but he earned it it was a terrific job. And the company commanders at the other end were absolutely superb

- 39:00 and we all felt very pleased with ourselves as a result of Operation Commando.

Compared to Kapyong when basically you'd just arrived and hadn't spent much time with your men, how was the experience difference for you in Operation Commando?

Well I wasn't in the same position for a start, I was on the staff then a little more removed from the battle than I was at Kapyong.

- 39:30 The risks were not quite as great and my roles were much wider in a sense that I personally typed up the order for issue on an old beaten up Remington typewriter which was the only one we had. Our Gestetner [early wax sheet copier] was a flat bed Gestetner which had a silk screen on it,
- 40:00 have you ever heard of such a thing? A silk screen with a roller with ink like this and we'd run out of silk screens and we used nylon stocking that we got from the American PX [American canteen unit] to stretch over the thing to roll and produce the printed copy. And the boast was that if, on this particular occasion we really got into trouble because the CO said, "As soon as that order is produced I want it out to the company commanders".
- 40:30 And it was produced about 2 o'clock in the morning before we hit off about 6, so when it was delivered about 2.30 I was not the most popular officer in the battalion, nevertheless the CO had said it was to go.

I'll just stop you there and we'll change tapes again.

Tape 9

- 00:31 One of the big differences between the 2 battles Kapyong and Operation Commando was in the command and control situation. In Kapyong battalion headquarters exercised very little control throughout the battle and it was mainly run by senior company commander and it was a defensive situation not an offensive situation. But in Commando we developed a
- 01:00 completely different system, Colonel Hassett's system was to move with a small tactical party forward all the time, he had his intelligence officer, either myself or Bill Keys the adjutant or the assistant adjutant the supporting arms commander, gunners all with him all the time and they moved by vehicle or foot whatever was necessary to get to where they could see to do the job and that meant that they kept up with the battle all the time.
- 01:30 That was one of the big differences the other was in communications, we'd changed sets recently and the new 31 set was far better than the older version we had which meant that communications with the company were far more secure than they were before, secure in the sense that you could get through. And that meant that the passage of orders was much better
- 02:00 than it had been in the past. The briefings for every operation that Hassett undertook were always in detail, always supported by either an operation order or confirmatory notes and always expected to be issued either at the orders group or shortly after. And those drills put the maximum flexibility possible into the lower
- 02:30 command as they knew what the meets and bounds were of what they were doing and how to get on with it and what to do if somebody else stumbled and they had to take up the ball. And as a result of that close supervision the drive that we needed for Commando was accomplished, without it we would never have been able to do it, we'd have been held up somewhere in the fog or some other circumstance would have overtaken us. But the system of command control was
- 03:00 extremely good then and worked like a charm. That and the fire support and the simple dash of the soldiers was quite incredible. The stories, the individual stories are worthy, and have been written several times. They show that Australian soldiers are just as good
- 03:30 as their forebears and we had something to prove, Kapyong had done it for Anzac Day but we still had something to prove to the older generation of Australian soldiers that the new army was capable of carrying out the task it was given and we hoped that we'd shown them that in Commando.

Getting a little off the serious side were you visited from the entertainment units at all?

We certainly were we had

- 04:00 a number, the first one I remember is Gladys Moncrieff who was getting on them, Moncrieff Park is just down the road as you know. Gladys came up with her pianists friend and we were coming out of the first phase, preliminary phase of Commando, it wasn't Commando itself it was prior to it, about August I think. And we came out and the boys were looking for a rest and the CO said, "Find a place where we can bring them straight in,
- 04:30 it's Gladys Moncrieff and I don't know how they're going to receive Gladys Moncrieff". So I found an amphitheatre and we pulled everybody in, issued them beer, Gladys sat down, or stood down with her piano playing friend on the piano and sang all these 'Home Sweet Home' and 'I'm dreaming of a white Christmas' and whatever she, lot of musical comedy songs. And went over like a tremendous,
- 05:00 troop was so bloody happy but it was Gladys and they were pleased to see her. Later that night we gave a little party for her in our tent that we'd put up as a mess, she told the CO that she'd been allocated quarters in the red light district in Seoul and he was furious. My father had sung with her many years before and I'd spoken to her about this and she'd remembered all that and we'd chatted on. And

- 05:30 when she was on the way back the CO said, "Look you better grab a vehicle go down and sort this out, make certain she's put in proper accommodation". Off we went, myself, pay sergeant and chief clerk and the driver, off we went and we finally tracked her down to the commander in chief's residence in Seoul. He kept the old British Embassy as a residence in Seoul, whenever he came across he stayed there, and he kept it maned with a staff sergeant who was
- 06:00 an ex-member of the battalion and a couple of Korean servants. And we tracked him down and he'd already found that Gladys was in dire straights with her friend, dragged her in, put them into the Embassy, bathed them, champagne the lot, so everything was fixed. I knock on the door smelling like 3 months worth of bath and not too well received at all. I said, "The COs said I've come down to, I've been sent down to look after Ms Moncrieff." He said, "I'm looking
- 06:30 after Ms Moncrieff," and tried to close the door, the foot was already in the door and I said, "My CO said we're looking after her so you may as well get used to it staff". In we came, we had a bath, in a bath in a real bath it was absolutely gorgeous, we had dinner, candle light dinner and that was a very good entertainment visit from my point of view. Some of the others were quite different, Danny Kay, a bit morbid when he arrived
- 07:00 and we took him up to B Company and Wings Nichols who I mentioned earlier had more or less fortified his company position with about a million sandbags and there was wire everywhere, he was not going to get caught at all ever again. On the way up we had some incoming we thought, few explosions everybody dived out including Kay and Larry Adler who was with him, dived out and it was the gunners just clearing some debris off the track further up. So up we got to B
- 07:30 Company and Wing Nichols greets him and all of a sudden there's a scream on the wire and this Chinese soldier comes charging through and we all should of twigged at the time cause he was screaming "Banzai" and firing shots in the air. And Nichols pulls out his pistol and goes bang bang bang, shoots this character, blood everywhere, 2 Digs throw down their shovels and say "God he's done
- 08:00 it again," pick this character up and take him past Danny Kay and he's standing there with his eyes popping out and the fellow giggled, blew the whole deal. Larry Adler was very much funnier than Danny Kay he told the story about going down to 121 US Evacuation Hospital on the way through on their tour and he got in there in a ward and all these dark negro people were in the ward
- 08:30 black ward. And he's starting to play soul music, everything that he thinks could stir the negro blood and he wasn't getting any reception at all and he said, "The sweat was pouring off my brow and I came out and said to the nurse, what's going on in there, I've been playing all these wonderful American tunes?" she said, "This is the Ethiopian ward". Then we had Lady Mountbatten
- 09:00 Lady Mountbatten we were advised that Lady Mountbatten may require a separate toilet and would we please arrange a suitable separate toilet. So our toilet, we were in the line at this stage and fairly static our toilets were 44 gallon drums with a hole knocked in the centre, square knocked in the centre and a wooden plug put in the top and burnt off periodically by the doctor. And so we put up a special one for Lady Mountbatten
- 09:30 and she arrived and in her jeep was this wonderful guards officer who was about 6 foot 4 high and about as thin as a match with a wispy little moustache, brass buttons, beautifully polished sand brown, gleaming cap, gleaming shoes, nothing like a front line soldier at all and under his arm he had a toilet seat. And we motioned to him and he took it up and put it in the
- 10:00 special thing, we put a canopy around it and off she went. She was great, she went and she went straight into the troops and she went from company to company and they really enjoyed her, she was really good and really worked the fellows very well indeed, she had them laughing and chacking and carrying on. And time came to leave, down got in the jeep blasting down the track and all of a sudden it screams to a halt, the guardsman gets
- 10:30 out runs up the hill, procures the toilet lid puts it under his arm races down and jumps in the jeep and off they go again, one of the better trips. That was more or less the style of entertainment we had. I think we actually had a film on one occasion but I can't remember what it was, no I can't remember.

What sort of correspondence had you had during all this time with home?

We had a good letter service

- 11:00 because the basic service had been established between Beecroft and Australia for some years and all we did was plug into that and we sent our own mail down to Iwakuni, put on a RAF courier across to, no sorry down to Kimp'o, put on a RAF courier put it into Iwakuni and it was in the Beecroft system and just went straight through, no stamps were required or anything like that. And no stamps were required on the way back
- 11:30 either. So it, the mail worked quite well so did parcels they worked quite well too. I remember being sent, let me put it another way we were in reserve, no we weren't we were in the line and the CO had established a little CO's mess so that he could bring the subalterns in, the junior lieutenants to give them a break and give them a decent feed,
- 12:00 it was only about half the size of that room there and a cookhouse outside. And the 2IC was one of the

best cooks in the Australian Army, Bill Finlayson a gourmet gentleman of the first order. And we had things arrive from all over the place, we had anchovies, we had olives, we had caviar, we had Metaxa Brandy from Greece, cause the Greek battalion was near us and various other things all came in. And my

- 12:30 dear wife sent me a parcel with some anchovies and olives in it and I said, "Please don't send me this stuff we don't need it up here", Bill was looking after us. And that worked quite well because we'd over a period everybody came in from the companies and spent some time to battalion headquarters and usually we put them on duty officer for a few days to give them a rest from operations in the company areas, where were we?

How hard was

- 13:00 **it being away from your wife, I mean you'd only been married 6 weeks when you got sent off?**

Oh it was pretty hard and the correspondence still exists but you're not going to see it.

Was it unusual for a young officer like yourself to be married?

No, I see what you're getting at, in one way it was very difficult because if you were dependant on your pay you were really in

- 13:30 a hole because your wife had to work. I think my pay was 4 pounds 8 [shillings] and 4 pence with 1 and 9 pence a day exchange rate in those days of which a large amount went in my superannuation and didn't leave much for anything else. Fortunately grog was cheap and so was cigarettes, I'd started to smoke, after Kapyong I was so frightened one night I decided I needed a cigarette to calm myself
- 14:00 I didn't smoke until that time, so I started smoking then and didn't stop until 1979. But the separation was not good at all and marriage was not necessarily discouraged but it wasn't encouraged but I was 24 by then and she was 22 and I told her I was going to marry her when she was 11,
- 14:30 so it was a long standing event. I'm just thinking most of the junior officers were not married and most of the company commanders and senior officers were, so there was a split.

So how did your time in Korea wrap up?

I wrapped up as, I became adjutant of the battalion

- 15:00 and I enjoyed that time very much indeed, that was at the time we were consolidating all our operating procedures and getting things sorted out, some of which have lasted right through Vietnam and into Iraq and beyond, will go beyond. And getting those documented and putting them together and looking after things when the CO wasn't there.
- 15:30 On the famous occasion he went on leave and took Peter Scott with him the brigade major rang up and immediately asked us to send more people out on patrol and we had something like, including standing patrols we had about 150 people every night out in no mans land in some form or other. And the pressure was on to increase that number and Frank Hassett had said
- 16:00 "Not in a fit," and so I said, "If you'd like to change the number we have on patrol I'll arrange for Colonel Hassett to come back and as our national representative he will make the decision, it will not be made by anybody in the battalion at the moment, we will not change the number so would you like us to revoke our national directive" "Oh no thanks very much", that was the end of that. But I got on quite well with
- 16:30 the units on both side, British units and the American units. We had in that situation we had 1st Cavalry Division on our right, famous United States division went into the Philippines, Macarthur's own, 7th Cavalry involved in it, Custer's last stand and all this sort of thing, crossed sabres. And they were famous with rolling with the punch, in other words when they were hit by the Chinese or anybody they went back a long way
- 17:00 and left a large gap. And we got fed up with trying to keep up with them cause they used to pull us back to if they went. And I was sitting there looking at this map thinking oh my goodness, in the dead of night, around about midnight, and I'm thinking now if these buggers go were all going to go in the bag well never get out of here because the terrain didn't lend itself to fighting out. And so let's not have anything happen
- 17:30 with 1st Cav. And there was a hell of a lot of noise going on, lot of bombardment coming in on 1st Cav and the phone rang and it was the brigade major again, Ken Bright and he said, "Lou have you heard the dreadful news?" and I thought oh god the bloody Cav's gone and I said, "No what's happened?" and he said, "The King's dead" I said, "Thank Christ for that." Never forgave me, never forgave me,
- 18:00 I was an outcast from the Empire from then on. And it was a very satisfying job to be adjutant of 3RAR and I was almost a professional adjutant by that stage, several jobs after that were also adjutant jobs and I used to do it on my ear. And it was a good boss, he was a good boss to work for Frank Hassett and we had a good battalion headquarters staff,
- 18:30 Peter Scott the intelligence officer was a great friend. And we followed one another for many many

years, class behind me from Duntroon and then by my side always really, great friend. And good 2nd in command, good RSM, we lost our first RSM. Dusty Ryan who you might

19:00 speak to I think by the sound of it was RSM at Kapyong and he had to go out with the May people because he'd been in Japan for so long. His replacement the CO didn't like so that was deferred, and we had a young fellow called Chin with us and he was in an arcane posting called the instructor, warrant officer Instructor P&R T, Physical and Recreational

19:30 Training. We had no sort of physical and recreation training to do so he became the acting RSM and he stayed through in that position from about July through until November when a new RSM was posted in. But he later became RSM of the army and a much loved soldier, much loved soldier and died in Western Australia a few years ago. So there was a tremendous team and

20:00 the company commanders, the nets that we had, I've never seen communications like that until Vietnam again, we had communications everywhere, phones and the sigs were magnificent because we were bombarded, we had more rounds come in on us during that period than we had during Commando and it was heavy stuff, 122 and quite devastating to get hit, fortunately we were well dug in

20:30 and the casualties were very light. But the communications used to go out, particularly the line communications would get blasted and the sigs would go out in this and patch them up and get us back into communications again, absolutely fantastic, things I would never think of doing myself, certainly then.

So did you come out with the rest of the regiment?

21:00 No I was sent back again, I finished my time cause I'd come up at an odd time, I finished my time 12 months and went back and went to 4RAR as a company commander, 4RAR was at Ingleburn and was servicing the regiment with reinforcements and I had the reinforcement company. A devastating position to be in because we were picking up a hell of a lot of people then that necessarily

21:30 didn't have the best providence and I'd get my draft together to go and the CID [Criminal Investigation Division] used to come out from Liverpool and go through say, "We'll have him, we'll have him," and the draft would disappear and have to build it all up again. We used to have, it was a very strange unit we had an average of 3 suicides a month in that unit, nothing to do with the military, nothing to do with the training

22:00 pressures from outside in all cases, never established a link between joining the army and taking life. But they did it in the strangest ways, simple hanging to a batman putting his rifle to his jaw and, carbine actually couldn't do it with a rifle. And one fellow we could never

22:30 figure out how he did it, he must have done it with his toe, fired it with his toe. Was not a happy unit in some ways I was glad to get out of it and I went to the School of Infantry and within about 6 months we had almost the entire battalion staff of 3RAR back in harness again. Hassett was the CO, I was the adjutant, Grosvenor from D Company

23:00 was one of the instructors tactics, Greville 2IC C Company was instructor in infantry, Scott, Philip Bennet, all ex 3RAR all back in harness again in the same place, good 1952.

You mentioned to us earlier that at that stage in the Australian Army it was quite small?

It was I think we were roughly about between going

23:30 down but the lowest point I think we reached I think was in 54, about 19,500 and in 52 with Korea going cause Korea finished in 53 and we got an immediate drop then, we had about 24,000. Now we held that 20,000 odd right through just about until the early 60s so we did know

24:00 virtually everybody and everybody knew everybody else, Digs the lot. And we still managed to do things like an SAS [Special Air Services] Squadron and an airborne platoon, put people through Specialists Courses, keep some gunners going, keep the skills alive. I really feel that the fellows who were at the top of those, in those days did a remarkable job with the material they had. And we still kept the traditions alive

24:30 to a very large extent to, it was a good army life in those days.

And the next thing Singapore?

Next thing was the CMF [Citizens Military Force] in Canberra with National Service, about 1,800 troops and as I think I mentioned earlier 2 regimental policemen Clive and Kerry Pakauer.

25:00 A wonderful unit because it was based on Canberra with public servants, and public servants in those days could get leave at any time for service with the reserve, or the CMF as it was in those days. So if anybody was short of a course at the School of Infantry they were on the phone to me saying can you round up 6, 8, 10 fellows by Monday, yeh no trouble, ring the contacts bang off they go they were professional course goers that you just called up and

25:30 they packed their bag, I think they never unpacked it, and off they went to Seymour or wherever it was,

and we stretched all over the area. It was a good unit the officers there were a mixture of public servants and businessman and it was a good mix, very good mix and the troops were good too.

- 26:00 Before National Service CMF's had been something else, used to go into camp and the first thing up was the sergeants mess and the 2nd thing up was the officers mess and the 3rd thing up was probably the tents for the troops if there were any. And you'd do some training or whatever it was, I could never work out, who was going to have that. And my 2 sister battalions
- 26:30 in the battalion the 45th Battalion in Sydney was the adjutant was Mal Lander and 34 Battalion at Wollongong was Colin Townsend, later distinguished in Korea and Mal Lander was my 2IC in Korea, in Vietnam. And we decided that we'd jazz things up a bit so the next camp was scheduled and they thought oh well we'll be going through the same thing
- 27:00 sergeant mess up first, officers' mess. They got off the train outside Greta and there was a line of truck waiting for them, they went straight into the Pokolbin State Forest and didn't come out for a fortnight and they reckon it was the greatest thing that ever happened. I remember seeing one character on Queanbeyan Station saying to the RSM, who was standing there with his pace stick under his arm and he's saying, "Hey sport," which is quite the wrong thing to do to an RSM,
- 27:30 "Sport would you give this case of grog to that fellow leaning out the window there?" "Yes," said the RSM and the bloke leaning out the windows saying, "Oh no". And one young fellow had given us a fair bit of trouble, it was nothing great but he used to never turn up for parades and we had to prosecute him and it was a dreadful business in those days, it was an administrative nightmare. But we got him
- 28:00 on the train, he thought he was going to Greta and he was still wearing dancing pumps and he's climbing up the mountain and standing there in the round and he's got a ground sheet over him and his pumps flapping as he walked up the hill and I said, "How you going Thompson are you enjoying yourself?" he said, "Never better skip, never better". Then off to Southern Command for a year in the general staff down there and training, then to Staff College
- 28:30 and then off to Singapore. We went to Singapore by sea, we went to Singapore by sea on a British India Tramp Steamer with a gentleman aged 80, 3 racehorses, 4 cockies, 1200 sheep, 3 racehorses, 26 Holden cars on the top and we picked up, we went to every port between Melbourne and Fremantle
- 29:00 and we picked up 700 goats at Fremantle for the Gurkhas in Singapore and that night the Goanese purser was there licking his chops and there was a bleat, we had goat kidney, kid curry the next morning for breakfast of all things. Very interesting trip and we arrived in the Rhodes on Christmas Day, the party for our arrival had been going on for
- 29:30 3 days and we missed the lot. And then I spent the next 2 years, 2 ½ years mainly involved in logistics and running housing for our troops, both military and civil and in Malaya as it was then and Singapore as well and ration and that sort of stuff and visiting up country because
- 30:00 3RAR was up country so I used to go home every now and then. And go up to Grick[?] and see friends, paddle up to Grick and I think there wasn't much action at that stage in 1958 to 60. But I remember going up to Butterworth to celebrate the firing of the 50,000th round from A Field Battery.
- 30:30 And I said to my boss Ernie McNamara, I said, who was a gunner I said, "What have they fired 50,000 round at?" he said, "I don't know." I said, "What I'm really worried about is I think the Brits have billed us for the lot instead of spreading it over the brigade". And they had too so we managed to recover a few million bucks, just Singaporean, on the way. That was an interesting posting.

Did you take your family up there?

Yep we lived in Singapore just off

- 31:00 Bukitima Road in the Durnurma estate and the kids went to school there, we had a kampong down the back, Chinese servants, Malayan Caboong to do the gardening. A very good existence, still some security measures in terms of kids going to school escorted everyday, same with the family, always escorted everywhere. And
- 31:30 that applied right throughout the peninsular at that stage and was greatly relaxed and certain routes only were regarded as black routes during the night periods.

Cause it was a Pentropic Battalion up there?

No it was a tropical warfare establishment, simple infantry battalion with 4 companies, Headquarter Company, Support Company, no frills. The Pentropic

- 32:00 came in just about that time and I'd come back to RMC as the Instructor Tactics, Instructor War Administration first up and then as Instructor Tactics. And I found in later years that I was wearing my students as my junior officers, had to be good. We went from RMC to the
- 32:30 Pentropic to 1RAR and that was in Pentropic Form at that stage. Pentropic organisation has been largely land basted but it's a very effective organisation but you had to have professionals running it, nothing that the reserves could run.

Can you explain to people that don't know basically what that means?

Well instead of a battalion of about 800 we had 1200 and we had 5 rifle companies each of which was about 200 strong and

- 33:00 each of which had their own support, mortars, machine guns with them, didn't stay with them for long. Any rifle company that's got that tail hanging on them doesn't move very fast, so they were brought back into battalion headquarters. An anti tank platoon and Sig platoon and the usual headquarter company with the quartermaster's platoon and the transport platoon,
- 33:30 And a very big battalion headquarters with a colonel, full colonel as the boss, a lieutenant colonel as his Executive Officer and what we call the GSO2, General Staff Officer Grad 2 as the operations officer, and staff to match. And as I say it was a very effective organisation if you had some professionals running it, it took some running you couldn't sort of let it run on it's own
- 34:00 it didn't work. And we always felt I think it was a political decision rather than a military decision, it followed from SEATO [South East Asian Treaty Organisation] talks and the introduction of the Pentomic Division by the Americans which they only held for about 18 months and got rid of it. We were slagged with this one for about 4 years until Vietnam came along and we then reverted to what's to us
- 34:30 a more normal establishment.

A lot of the soldiers we've spoken to went to Singapore speak very lovingly of their time there, they enjoyed it immensely?

Oh yes it was a very good posting. Not only was it exotic but I think the wives enjoyed it tremendously, in fact there's probably some problem caused as a result of it later on with girls coming back and suddenly finding

- 35:00 that nobody to look after the kids and that sort of thing. We had a couple of things happen, I remember we changed from A Field Battery to 105 Field Battery and I signalled down and said, "How many married quarters do you want for 105 Field Battery?" and back came the answer "3". 1 for the battery commander, 1 for the battery captain and 1 for a troop commander who was bringing his, I thought gee
- 35:30 this is very strange I said do they know that, more correspondence passed and then suddenly the numbers changed and we started to get, would you add another 12, another 14 and we finished up with something like 70 odd which about normal for a field battery. And apparently when the ship left, Captain Cook I think it was at that stage, left Brisbane the Vice Squad
- 36:00 was down on the deck waving the girls goodbye as the newly married couples went off to Singapore from 105 Field Battery. And we had a hell of a time sorting them out, we had a drill in Penang to pick up one of these girls and they'd immediately destroy their passports and all their official documents, they just put them on a plane. We picked them up in Singapore put them straight into the Australian High Commission gave them a certificate of identity out
- 36:30 to the airport on a plane and home, it was the only thing you could do. And a lot of unhappy gunners but a lot of happy people in Penang too I think but nevertheless that's how it worked out.

So how long were you in Singapore?

Just over 2 years.

That was like standard time?

Yes it was yeh I had to stay on a little longer because we were building a new conferment at Bukit Arenda

- 37:00 and we were just in the process of handing that over and we had a lot of trouble with standards. Our standards are much higher than the Brit standards for example, the Brits would use a 4 cubic foot refrigerator and that might do well in London but it doesn't do much for you in Singapore and we had 10 foot as a standard, 10 cubic foot as a standard. And took god's own trouble to make certain that we got that through
- 37:30 they reckon that was extravagance. In fact it was not the smaller one was about the same price as the larger one on the scale that we were buying, they just had a strange attitude about it.

So how soon from returning home from that did Vietnam things start to raise it's head?

Well it started in 62 as far as the army was concerned

- 38:00 when we deployed the team, or started to deploy the team Ted Sarong into Saigon and then further north into the Montagnard country and then based up on Da Nang finally. And from 62 to 65 the team plus a flight of the RAF at Vung Tau were the, Caribou flight, were the
- 38:30 only Aus connections, not even the navy was involved at that stage. Then after Tongking business we were gradually drawn in. We were starting to look as though we might get there, in fact we'd been studying this sort of thing for some time, we'd had a fair amount of experience in Malaya in terms of

basic tactics in jungle

- 39:00 that had evolved from New Guinea and various other places and Burma as well. But in a counter insurgency area it's a little different and the way that Malaya, Malaysia was handled could not apply in South Vietnam, or Vietnam. So a lot of those lessons were not applicable and I take it that's why the government was so circumspect
- 39:30 about the way that we were to be used when we first deployed into Vietnam as a unit. And we got news of that, in early April there was a march in Sydney, a Churchill Remembrance Day or something or rather and we marched through Sydney and the General Hans Anderson took myself and my operations officer and the 2IC to lunch and told
- 40:00 us that we'd better get ourselves sorted out. And that was the first intimation that we had and the official announcement didn't come until some time in May. Between that time we'd done the 50th Anniversary of Gallipoli, I took the battalion up to the War Memorial and that was a wonderful day. It was wonderful that we turned on a great show, it was a tri service show and it worked well
- 40:30 and obviously very much appreciated by the crowd and the troops were great and so were the Digs. And you'd see these fellows being wheeled up between our ranks it was something else, cause there were still a few survivors round in those days. And we didn't get a word from Army Headquarters at all and my director an old friend Bill Morrow came down to see us at the railway station and I said
- 41:00 "We haven't had a bloody word from the CGS[?]" "Haven't you?" about 20 minutes later the CGS comes racing down, John Wilton comes racing down "You did alright you did alright". Then in May the government made the announcement and from there on we started rolling.

Tape 10

00:30 **So when you say from there things got rolling?**

Well we were still under a caveat of secrecy and the only people who knew in the battalion were myself, the quartermaster, the 2nd in command and the ops officer and we put together a number of things that would see us through. Our biggest hurdle was that nobody else knew what we were doing so when we applied for new gear

- 01:00 or replacement gear it was going through at the same pace that it normally does, which is painfully slow. Fortunately in Eastern Command General Daly was the general Officer commanding, the Chief of Staff was Fergus McCaddy who was my CO in Japan and the colonel administration was Blunk White who'd been a company commander in Korea with us and had also been an instructor of mine when I was a cadet. And

- 01:30 they knew, they'd been bought into the plot, so I went in and said, "We've got to do something about these supplies situation, I can't get new vehicles or vehicle parts or new clothing, anything like that and we've got to stock up before we go". And all of a sudden the gates opened and those things started to come in and we got going. Then the announcement was made and publicity took over for about oh a couple of weeks

- 02:00 and we found that we were going to be in Bien Hoa and that our role was the defence of the air force in conjunction with an American airborne brigade, the 173rd Brigade. And we had a visit from one of their staff officers who hadn't been there so he didn't know a great deal but he knew a lot about the brigade which was, a strange piece of kit. It was put together by General Butch Williamson who was a very very

- 02:30 highly decorated American officer and who had two battalions of airborne battalion, an artillery battalion, various other supporting arms as part of his brigade. And they were equipped for nuclear war but not actually for jungle warfare so they had to do some rapid re-training themselves. And they went in and established themselves at Bien Hoa

- 03:00 except that one of the CO said, "I think the most dangerous thing because I've been there before is to make certain that the port of Vung Tau is secure" and as Vung Tau's one of the nicest resorts in Vietnam then and it is now, I think it was about twelve thousand people and there's now about seventy thousand people, it's a very lovely place. So first of the 503rd spent something like a fortnight on the beach before the general had time to go out and find out they were relaxing on the sand, sunbathing

- 03:30 rather than doing anything else so that CO got sacked up they came to Bien Hoa. Shortly after we started to arrive, we arrived.....

Actually just before we get onto your arrival over there we'll just go back and I'll just ask you a couple of little things about the preparations too. When you were saying, when the government made their first announcement that Australians troops were going do you remember how much information they gave the public?

Quite

04:00 a deal actually in terms of what the public would need to know anyhow, or could absorb, the newspapers are out there somewhere. But it was a fairly simple announcement that we'd been requested by the South Vietnamese government to go to their support and that we were doing this in this way and we'd had the team up there since 1962 and that we were now committing an infantry battalion to assist in the defence

04:30 of the air base at Bien Hoa. So it looked as though it was a pretty restricted role really, and there wasn't a great deal of comment about it really.

I was going to say I mean the reaction to the war later on is?

No, no you wouldn't have known it, wouldn't have known it, we marched through Sydney and all that sort of thing before we left, cheers, crowds all that sort of stuff. HMAS Sydney loaded and people all throwing streamers and crying and all that sort of stuff. No, no panic at all

05:00 and no, not a whiff of a protest at all. We had the feeling that the public was right behind us and I think they were too when we were on our own. Well it got a bit different National Service came in, or maybe, the perimeters changed but it was regular army and we were doing a job that we'd been told to do by the government. It was not quite as clear cut from that point of view as,

05:30 from my point of view because to get something like twelve hundred troops I'd gone through about three thousand six hundred of the available troops in order to get to that number. Had to cross them off for compassionate reasons, one leg missing or something or rather, they just disappeared. And we had to just delete these people from the unit and bring new people in all the time until we got what we wanted. So we had a corps of good people,

06:00 terrific people, but I finished up with the cream of the army and felt it because they'd been very very carefully selected out of the available few that were there, available to be selected.

And what was the troops' reaction when they were told they were going to Vietnam?

Oh great, great anything to get away from the Pentropic Division. And in fact a break from the normal routine of training

06:30 because the training during the pentropic days was very intense, we spent something like 9 months of the year in the field, we were always out, if not on a battalion basis we had companies everywhere and battalion headquarters going after one of them. But we were always out in the field, I don't know how we got away with it because funds were tough. I could simply say, we'll send a company to Broken Hill and put them in armoured personnel carriers, do this do that, get choppers to come in, no problem, everything happened.

07:00 And then we went back to our old establishment and it looked as though the old ways had come back again, things were very difficult to get done. We knew that we had an airborne roll, I had something like two hundred odd paratroopers in the battalion, qualified paratroopers and I had something like a hundred ex SAS people who were too old for the SAS and come into the unit as officers

07:30 and senior NCOs, they'd done their time with SAS. So we were pretty hot shot outfit and we could build on that and put the people in the right places, so it worked pretty well. When we had to move we moved part by air and part by sea and I made one error there, I thought by putting the companies that were coming by sea in the aircraft carrier on

08:00 a hard physical program that they'd be better acclimatised by the time they got up there, taking a fortnight to get up, that didn't happen. They took just as much time to accustom themselves to the local conditions as the people who arrived straight off the plane, about a fortnight. So it took us a little while to get in there, before we went we actually had an air photograph of the area, we got that and some maps, got those sent down to us

08:30 and we laid out our battalion. And we laid it out in a most peculiar way to the American, no regular lines or anything like that, all companies were separated out, wire was everywhere and it was designed to be held by nineteen points so that we could all get out and fight leaving the base secure. And the

09:00 general didn't like that at all, the American general didn't like that at all but we told him that's the way we do it and we'd be very grateful if he'd just let us get on with it. And we did we constructed this thing so it took quite a while to develop and during that time we were doing operations anyhow. So we moved into Bien Hoa, we had a parade in Saigon, they swept the parade ground for mines before we went on parade.

09:30 It was about the last time we were all dressed up in brass and polish and that sort of thing and then we started training. We thought that the Americans would be miles ahead of us in helicopter operations using choppers but we had for some years been using four or five choppers from the RAF and we'd developed our skills and our drills on that basis, all we had to do was expand those and we were in business.

10:00 They'd never done anything of this at all, they'd been paratroops so in fact we were slight ahead, though we never sort of disclosed it they were starting to pick up the drills from us because as I say all we did was simply expand the drills. We were in heaven instead of having five choppers we had sixty

and we just put our boys on the same way we always did and off we go.

Going into Vietnam at that early point what knowledge did you have of Vietnam and it's

10:30 people and it's culture?

We had, strange enough a considerable amount of information about Vietnam, it had been an area for military thought for many years, ever since the French and Dien Bien Phu in 1953 and even before that. And Group Mobile 100, Silfours[?], Spooks they'd all been necessary reading for an army officer,

11:00 and the lessons that came back from the team in 62 and 65 were also examined very carefully. We even set up a Viet Cong village in the Pentropic days in Holsworthy to train on with ordinance and search and those things, tunnel the lot, everything, panges. So we were well on the way we weren't taken by surprise by the environment

11:30 at that time or the method of operation, we knew it would be different. We were circumscribed in the role that we had was protection of the airfield, by some judicious wangling I managed to get that expanded to take in an area of operations outside the airfield for our own protection. But in fact to take us up to the river that boarded on War Zone D and that

12:00 gave us much more freedom of action and allowed us to develop into patrol systems and dominate the country around us. As a result no attack on the base occurred while we were there, from that direction, it always came from another direction because they couldn't come through us, it was too difficult. About the only thing they used to come and watch were our pictures, cause we used to put the screen up down towards the Don Nai, we'd sit on one side the Viet Cong

12:30 would have a look on the other side, and if they understood it, that was great. But apart from that we owned that piece of territory and did for the whole time we were there.

When you say that you got there and you realised that you were slightly ahead of the Americans in sort of the operational procedures, what about in terms of local knowledge, did you?

They'd come from Okinawa and they didn't know a damn thing about it except they had about, in the brigade of roughly

13:00 about three thousand people they had something like forty odd people who had actually served in their teams in Vietnam, in the earlier days. They also had a large contingent of boy soldiers, something like four hundred boy soldiers of seventeen, seventeen and a half who should never have been allowed to come, they weren't allowed to be in an active service area, cause they came.

13:30 And they had to shuffle them out later on and replace them, so they had personnel tribulations. As I said they'd been training for something completely different and now they found themselves doing something that we'd been thinking about anyhow. Not boasting about it it's just that we had a small edge, we couldn't see ourselves doing a para drop anywhere so there was little point in training it to be parachute, a parachute

14:00 battalion at that stage. Although the general said to me, Butch Williamson said, "I'll train the rest of your boys as paratroopers if they get an airborne haircut and a pair of shiny boots," shoes they call them. And so I announced this and we needed two hundred volunteers to start off, this is very early in the piece so I had all these Australian soldiers with airborne haircuts and shiny shoes which was most unnatural,

14:30 in the jungle and we never managed to get the program going, so we all grew our hair back again, all those that had to grow their hair back again.

Did that surprise you when you got there and realised their lack of local knowledge?

No not tremendously you're talking a big army, it's not like us. And they have different philosophies that we can't afford to have,

15:00 you know they don't mind spending a few people to do something whereas we don't do that. So their attitude is to get gung ho, get in and do it and get out, particularly units like paratroops, special forces units, those sort of things, get in do a job and get out. And they thought that's probably what they'd be doing instead of sitting around Bien Hoa, but they were sitting around

15:30 Bien Hoa. But they were in fact the Mac V Reserve in Vietnam as the troop build up began, there weren't many troops there at that stage. And we couldn't be involved in the reserve role because that meant going outside our, guarding the air base business. So they used to go off and try and salvage a Republic of Vietnam

16:00 force that was in trouble somewhere at Phuoc Vinh or some place further north, and we would mind the whole base, nothing every happened fortunately. And we gradually managed to get Army Headquarters to look at us doing a larger role. The relationship between ourselves and the Americans was great, really was they gave us

- 16:30 kit that we couldn't afford or we couldn't get, particularly communications equipment. And we were using things called a nine and ten set which were antiquated when we took them up and very unreliable and they gave us a thing called a twenty five set and it was like going from stereo, from mono was absolutely fantastic. We in turn showed them how to use a shower buckets and you know what a shower bucket is? Well it's a canvas bucket
- 17:00 with a rose and you fill it up with hot water, stand underneath it and turn the rose and down comes water, they didn't have anything like that, they didn't have any bathing facilities at that early stage. So they went for a very high price, a couple for a jeep or something like that would be quite easy, slouch hats as usual were good barter material. But troops melded very well together and very
- 17:30 quickly became used to one another. I sent my people out with them because they'd been there first, only a couple of weeks before, sent them out on patrol with the Americans and they came back and said, "For god sake don't send us out on patrol they're so noisy, you've got no idea, it's dreadful we'll get into dead trouble if you send us out with those". So we gave that up and they came over and had a look at the way we did things, we were on silent
- 18:00 signals and cautious movement and probing rather than throwing ourselves at whatever might be there. It didn't stop them ever doing that and it didn't stop us doing it our way. But we did manage to get our area of responsibility expanded and we could operate into War Zone D because it was possible for the enemy to infiltrate from War Zone D towards the airbase and thereby create a
- 18:30 threat. So our initial operations took place in War Zone D and we tried all sorts of combinations, in fact one of the things that I was very anxious to do was use the facilities that we had available to us from the Americans, such as the transportation systems, choppers and things like that and the artillery and the tank support and armoured
- 19:00 personnel carrier support, all those things to give experience to my own soldiers. And that's what one of our primary aim was to make certain that every soldier was capable of bring down fire, knowing what to do in conjunction with tracks with armoured vehicles and being quite aware of how heliborne operations actually work and their part in it. And
- 19:30 that worked out quite well because we had corporals bringing down concentrations of artillery, no trouble at all and confidence grew within the unit in doing those sort of things. The band, I took the band up with me, the bands are always very temperamental people but I thought we'll take the band up with us and all their instruments and they were the most unfit part of
- 20:00 the entire unit. Their active service role is stretcher bearers, and they allocated out to companies about four to each, companies once again these fellows are like gold to them they refuse to let them go once they got them. But when they came back into camp after operation they all got together, they were getting fitter and fitter, the music was sounding better and better and as
- 20:30 soon as they got back they grabbed the instruments and started to play, and it was great to hear the band booming out over all this old rubber forest that had been chopped down by the Americans. The enemy was very difficult situation, we were in the middle, unlike Korea, we were in the middle of a population, the population was
- 21:00 part of the scene. I was a bit worried about getting into things like civic action because I didn't know how long we would be there and whether we could continue it through, but we did do a couple of pilot goes at helping a village do a particular project and making certain that project was finished and that would be it. And I made one company responsible for that, another company responsible for another project so that
- 21:30 they became identified with those, in our own area. We found that we were getting into a bit of a routine with choppers in operations and we tried to avoid using them because it was a signal that you were coming. It's a bit ridiculous on occasions, there was one occasion where we went in and secured an
- 22:00 airfield for, secured an airstrip for a drop by the Vietnam Army airborne brigade and thirteen Hercules came over and they threw out something like twelve hundred soldiers and all these little fellows with P14 parachutes, old style parachutes in the hot morning weather were drifting up not down, with all their gear on except for the corps commander, who Vietnam's Corps commander General Vin,
- 22:30 who'd jumped out and was rather a large man and he plummeted to the ground like a, came down fast, chute opened. But by the time he got down the airfield had turned hot, we had some enemy fire so we had to sort of rescue the general and then round up all these people as they bobbed up and down in the thermals, going up and down. They were the funny sides of those sort of operations. My first casualties were my
- 23:00 own as a result of an accident getting out of a truck filled with troops, somebody had a grenade with a pin that hadn't been fully opened and as he got out dragged the pin out of the grenade, the grenade went off and we had three killed and several wounded. And all our own fault, people love to put grenades on their webbing equipment, do a Ridgeway or whoever it was,

23:30 First War grenades, we discouraged the procedure from thereon, but it was a sad day.

What does that do to morale an accident like that?

It hurt the company that was involved very deeply and they had to sort of be very careful how I used them for a while until they got their confidence back, but once they got it back it was all right.

From the time that you first arrived how long was the period before you actually started going on on?

Fortnight from the time we were complete on the ground and we were out,

24:00 we were out the night we arrived, we were patrolling outside our area but on operations, the first operation was a fortnight after we came. And that was one day, no contact on that particular day.

And when was the first enemy contact?

First enemy contact was in War Zone D and that was A Company and a little unfortunate in a way, forward scout of

24:30 2 Platoon, A Company saw these two Viet Cong armed and he was about to shoot them and he said, "Hey one of them's a woman," and it was and she shot him in the stomach. And so the bloke behind him had no scruples and polished them both off and from thereon we became absolutely unworried by which sex it was that was firing at us, and that was our first casualty and that was our first

25:00 contact. And there we were using our own systems, my system was to be allotted an area and go into a central point and get out from there as fast as possible and as far as possible on the basis that a company, an infantry company with good artillery support can see off a very decent size enemy force. It's compact, it's well armed and with support,

25:30 particularly air support and artillery it can see off an enemy battalion with no problem at all for a limited time until we can move in. So that was my system, go out as far as we can and then work those areas very closely, day by day and clear every map square. Not that it was every clear because when we moved out it they moved back in, but at the time we were there it was clear. And we used that system quite well for some months

26:00 and we had to change it for other circumstance but for some months it worked extremely well.

Most of the Vietnam vets that I've spoken to were there much later in the conflict, with that incident you were just discussing with the Viet Cong women, by the time the men that I've spoken to that were there later they were aware that the VC could be men, women, children, did you have any prior knowledge?

Oh yes

26:30 yes no doubt in our minds that we were dealing with the population or an element of the population which was not confined to just males. And no easy to pick up because they melded in with the population, either because they were frightening the population or they were supported by the population. So it was not easy to segregate your enemy,

27:00 the only chance we had of doing that was to say this is an area anybody who moves in that area, it's been proclaimed is fair game, and then clean that area out and then go back and do it again, and then go back and do it again. And that probably did okay for the role of protecting the airbase but it wasn't really helping the entire, the total effort in Vietnam very much

27:30 and it wasn't all that satisfying either. So when we came onto large operations like 'Ben Cat' and the 'Iron Triangle' we were still using the same tactics because they worked quite well but we were hitting much more severe opposition and much more well co-ordinated opposition. And we ran into things like clusters and booby traps, much more frequently and we used

28:00 every method we could think of to get rid of them before we moved into an area, bombard an area, at one stage we almost reverted to World War I and put the troops behind a barrage and moved the barrage forward to explode the booby traps while we moved behind into the area that we wanted.

Can you talk a bit more about that, what was the barrage?

Artillery fire, brought down in a curtain fired

28:30 overhead and brought in as close as possible and then you lean on the barrage, you walk forward, shells explode that way, away from you, guns are placed behind you so that there's not a great deal of danger as long as you don't get a drop short. And so you can go forward behind that and the explosions set off secondary, the secondary explosions are the booby traps that have been set in the brush and jungle. And that was relatively effective

29:00 but very expensive and very time consuming to, but it was worth doing. We could also put the armoured personnel carriers through if the traps we were getting were mainly grenade or small explosive devices rather than shells buried in the ground which would knock off a carrier, we've had a couple of our

carriers completely totalled with bombs

29:30 on the road, command detonated. But you could still put them through lose jungle or grass and do a good job of clearing the area so that you could move through it with relative safety.

As CO how often are you out in the field with the men?

Every time they went out, every time they went out,

30:00 I lived just like them, my communications were a bit different but my CP was a tent cover on the ground with two, a drill we'd developed in Pentropic Division, two slit trenches the bit in the middle became the table, shelter over the top, airdrops in from remotes and away we went, that was it. Just alongside us

30:30 or a little way away was the fire control centre with the gunners, the mortars, the air controller, where you'd bring in air. We used to frighten the Americans by putting up a device we had in Malaya, a balloon which we'd push through the canopy, large yellow balloon, acetylene gas, just pour water into the mixture and it gases up the balloon and we'd raise it through the canopy and it would sit

31:00 above the canopy and you'd say to the pilot, or the American air controller, "Lay your eggs four hundred metres due north of that balloon," and they said, "That balloon you want us to". Or sometimes we'd pull out and leave the balloon up there if we'd struck a tunnel system and we wanted to destroy that, we'd pull out, couldn't do it with ground explosives but decent size bomb makes a bit of a racket there, and

31:30 we'd pull out and let the air come straight down on the target. Say there is your target, that balloon is right over your target go for it, come down and drop it right on it. And we did some strange things like moving the guns by chopper for the first time, we had little guns, the New Zealand guns I had were Italian L5 Howitzers

32:00 which fired the normal 105mm shell but were very light and could be lifted by a large chopper, a Shanook in total or could be lifted in three parts by a Hucy. And we'd move the whole battery in by air plus it's ammunition and whack it down and we had support straight away. Or we could throw,

32:30 we devised a mean of putting them in the back of an APC [armoured personnel carrier] so shuffle the gun, break it down and put it in an armoured personnel carrier, take it through, put it out in its gun position and fire from there. And those techniques were sort of developed over a long period, trial and error. Anybody who wanted to try something I'd give them a go because it was a chance we'd never had before and

33:00 never have again probably. It was stuff that we could send back to Australia for those that were coming behind us, and every patrol was documented, every single patrol was documented, every single action was documented as fully as we could and all sent back to training, to director of military training in those days and he'd disseminate that out through the army as what was happening, not as doctrine but what was happening and

33:30 gradually doctrine started to evolve from that.

At this stage what thoughts were forming for you about how long this conflict might go on for?

Oh I had no doubt in my mind that it was going to go on for a hell of a long time anyhow, even when we started, there's no doubt in my mind. The Americans were very much more robust in their thought that it was going to be quick but I could never see that. I remember saying to my general, although I don't think if anybody I'd rather be here with as allies for the next twenty five years

34:00 than the Americans and he said, "What" and I said, "Well it's going to be a long war" he said, "No, no". And the Australian feeling was it was a long war, going to be a long war.

How was the day to day experience comparing for you to Korea?

Very much different, the tempo of operations in Vietnam was extremely high and very exhausting.

34:30 We'd be out on operation for say two weeks, we'd come back we'd have a couple of days and then we'd be off again. And that was repeated time and time again, the strain on the troops was tremendous, the strain on the commanders was tremendous, we had to institute rest programs to make certain that everybody got a break of some sort. And it was absolutely essential that they did take those breaks otherwise we would

35:00 have had real trouble. We had not very many medical troubles as such, a lot of skin troubles initially and you'll see pictures of my people walking around with nothing but a pair of shorts and thongs on, the Doc said, "Let them get some sun on their skins," cause we were in the monsoon season, "When it's shining lets get some sun on them". Evacuation again was extremely good, dust off, the American dust off pilots were fantastic, they'd

35:30 come in anywhere that was possible, put a rota, even bend the thing under the canopy to get in get out with a casualty, they were fantastic and a lot of trust was reposed in them.

What sort of casualty rate were you experiencing?

In battle casualties I wasn't there for the twelve months remember so in the twelve months it was something like thirty eight killed and about one hundred and fifty wounded

36:00 out of.....

What about in the time that you were there?

Roughly about half that, a fairly high rate really, much higher than I wanted bearing in mind that I didn't want to spend people if I could possibly avoid it, I couldn't see much point in doing that, I wanted to do a good professional job as best we could and present a very good face to the world but I wasn't interested in death or glory

36:30 at all. I had too much at stake I had the best of the Australian Army who was with me who was going to train the next lot to come, they could do all the grandstanding.

With the booby traps and things like that was it a completely different type of casualty than you'd seen before?

Yes, well no booby traps generally, you incur the same sort of casualty which are blast casualties and usually in lower limbs

37:00 or in the abdomen. And the majority of my fellows were hit in the legs, some very badly, some lost legs some lost arms, some were killed. But the sort of casualty that is very difficult to treat on the spot, all you can do is what our doctor used to do, get there as quickly as possible

37:30 and stabilise them and get them out into a specialist area and let's see what can be done then.

Lou I can't even imagine what kind of thought process and feelings you must have when you're leading young men into battle when you know that they or you might not come back, can you talk a little bit about that?

I've often thought about it, I sort of hold myself responsible

38:00 even to this day for those that were hurt, were killed. No matter what you try to do to plan against that you're only one side of the equation and you've got an enemy who's just as tenacious and determined as you are to accomplish their aim. And you try not to let that get you down at all, when you actually have casualties it's

38:30 a very bad time for a commander, but you can't show it and I've had people literally die in my arms who I've liked, admired and just seen them pass away. And that's a dreadful thing to have happen but you can't let that get you down, you've got another twelve hundred soldiers that you're responsible for and one, two, three, ten

39:00 they can't overcome the responsibility for the others. So responsibility and training tend to keep you on net and working towards what is the final goal for that particular operation. But you do heave a sigh of relief when it's over and you get a chance to relax for a few hours, before you start planning the next one. But the tempo was very very heavy, heavier than anything we've

39:30 experienced in any war, including the First World War in terms of commitment to troops to ground all the time. With the aid of R&R and three weeks leave at eight months programs that were instituted that was a great relief. We also had a one day in Saigon forty blokes from each battalion

40:00 in the brigade would go into Saigon. My policy was that if we didn't get forty back then only thirty went next time or the number that came back went. So that anybody that went ack willy [AWL, absent without leave] and got full and missed the bus and didn't turn up until the next day automatically got twenty eight days field punishment and twenty eight day loss of pay. And it was not looked on with favour by his mates because he'd stolen a,

40:30 not because of anything else, but he'd stolen a place on the leave bus. And we tried to get people into Saigon for that, there was danger in Saigon as well of course but there was everywhere. The operation 'Crescendo' after we'd done 'Ben Cat'.....

Actually I may just interrupt you there.....

Tape 11

00:30 **You were just about to tell us about that operation?**

Leading up to?

Yes?

Yes that was 'Hump' in November 65, that was a particularly disastrous one for us in a number of ways,

worse for the Americans. We were clearing an area to the east of the airfield, well to the east and I didn't like the look of the

- 01:00 LZ [Landing Zone] we were going into and I spoke to brigade and said, "I don't like that, were not going in there we'll go somewhere else, I'll go and have a look". And they said, "Right oh okay," and I said, "Who chose that?" and they said, "The operations sergeant." I said, "The operations sergeant chose a place where my battalion's going to land". And as it turned out it was a hot LZ there and I changed it to another one, we went in and it was okay and then
- 01:30 we had to clean out the other one to let the guns in and we found that if we'd have landed there it would have been extremely difficult. We were on one side of the river and the Americans on the other, we did our usual thing went in cleaned out, the companies started to patrol and find and fix. Americans on the other side, first the 503rd went straight into the jungle and the canopy there was about one hundred and fifty feet high,
- 02:00 great big tall trees, so a very full canopy. And they walked into a horseshoe, two ridges meeting at the top and they were in the middle of the horseshoe, all hell broke loose and they lost about forty dead in a matter of minutes. It changed the whole character of the operation because it wasn't meant to happen. They then started to reinforce and losing more people, at the same time my A Company ran into
- 02:30 trouble to with probably a company of Provincial Viet Cong, D455 Battalion, well trained people and well equipped. And most of the fire was going this way, I wanted it to go this way so I switched the New Zealand and the Australian batteries onto my task and let the Americans look after themselves for the time being. And the general said, "Can you pull in and
- 03:00 look after the base while I get these people out?" And so I had to pull out and A Company had several casualties, we got some of them out by air but two were left behind, they were the first and only two I'd ever have left behind in my career. And desperate attempts to recover them were made but they were on the
- 03:30 base of a tree on the far side, on the enemy side at the base of a tree and caught there, and both were obviously dead, no doubt about that. But leaving them there was a tremendous jar. Anyhow we pulled back and took over protection of the LZ while the Americans tried to, first the 503rd tried to extricate themselves from the other side. They needed to get choppers in and
- 04:00 we'd bought up with us some petrol saws, chain saws and they weren't meant for large forest giants but they were all that were offering so we whipped these in and the choppers lowered them down to the Americans, who had managed to stabilise the situation by this stage, and they had with them a war correspondent, lets talk about war correspondents too. War correspondent, a Canadian who'd been a logger
- 04:30 and he, directed the operation and they felled trees to make enough hole in the canopy for the evacuation choppers to get in under, go down up and out, tremendous flying, absolutely fantastic flying and they got our their wounded and their dead. And they brought them over to us and we looked after them and our Doc took over and then the American doctor arrived, we started to get out the wounded and look after the dead.
- 05:00 But we still had our two people missing and we, the operation was pulled off and we went back into camp and I immediately fronted the general and said, "We'd like to go back in we've got two people there we don't know what happened to them," and he said, "Yeh okay plan for it". And within twenty four hours we were off in a different direction and that has hurt the unit more than I can say, it always rankle that we had to leave our two
- 05:30 people behind, not good at all.

And did you ever go back to that area?

No, people have been back in that area and tried to find, with Vietnamese help and tried to find remains but it had been unsuccessful, they have been searched over many many times now and we'd even got the US organisation that looks after, tries to find these things working with us in that area. We weren't the only ones to leave people behind

- 06:00 I think about eight missing in action all told including RAF but it was not good, we didn't like that at all. I was speaking about war correspondents. The press, this was the first war that was reported in detail as it happened and I had a galaxy of press, had forty war correspondents, I established a separate camp for them near battalion headquarters and wired it in and
- 06:30 I had such dignitaries as Gerald Stone and Creighton Burns and oh god I don't know now, nearly anybody who was anybody now or then was on my list as a war correspondent. And I decided the best way to do it was to allocate these to companies and that worked to a certain extent because each of those companies started to get tremendous press from their own press reporter
- 07:00 who became part of the company and as I say it worked quite well. But it didn't do me any good when we had our minister come up with the secretary for the army and I was demonstrating to him that we were having problems with footwear, we were being issued with boots tropical studded with 1944

stamped on them, which was a bad year for army boots, real

- 07:30 rubbish they were falling apart as quickly as we put them on. And I had some fellows with rather large feet, like Thorpe [Ian Thorpe, Australian swimmer] size seventeen and I had two pairs, the only two pairs in the army were on the shelf in the quartermaster's tentage waiting for this fellow to take them out when he needed them. And White the secretary for the army said, "Who do they belong to?" I said, "That's Corporal Loftus, he needs those and when they
- 08:00 go were sending him home, he hasn't got anything to wear". And then I showed them the clothing that we were issued with which simply evaporated in the tropics. I pulled out a shirt and it ripped apart, just fell apart and that made great play in the papers, it's all over the scrapbook 'CO tears shirt in front of minister,' and all this sort of thing. And Forbes was the minister, he was ex RMC graduate MC, not a bad bloke
- 08:30 and he said, "Oh we'll do what we can to fix that," and things did brighten up a bit. But the best thing he did was the brigade was a dry brigade and the general was a Baptist Lay Preacher, typical American, the chief of staff of the army was a Baptist Lay Preacher so every general who could possibly do it was also a Baptist Lay Preacher and no alcohol. So I called in
- 09:00 the padres and I said, "I've got a little job for you, I want you to go to every unit in the 1373rd Brigade and get a drink". And Gerry Cudmore and Bill Archson went off and came back about forty eight hours later and said, "No problems here's the list and here's what we got", Scotch mainly. So we knew Forbes was coming up so I went down to Butch Williams and said, "I'm going to ask the minister for
- 09:30 a beer issue for my blokes." He said, "Can't do that this is a dry brigade." I said, "I've got two padres outside and here's the list, that's your dry brigade, now either I get my beer or I bring the padres in," and he said, "This true?" and I said, "It's more than true do you want to try it". So when Forbes arrived he sat down at the briefing and said, "Before we start I just told Brumfield to issue beer". And the general said, "I was just going to announce
- 10:00 it I was going to have beer in the brigade," so we got it in the end. And then we found it was a problem because the issue was one can per day, we were out on operation for fourteen days and came back, it built up and the RSM came into my office, my tent, one day and said, "I've just come back finding a soldier with a sugar bag, or a sandbag full of beer going up to Bien Hoa sentry breathing fire in all directions."
- 10:30 So we had to have a issue and drink system. And my beloved 2IC Mal Lander, we were in debt as a battalion when we left Australian, regimental funds were in debt to the tune of about seven thousand pounds, changed while we were there. And I said, "We've got to dig ourselves out of that, we did it in Korea we earned a lot of doe there we've got to do the same here". So the Americans
- 11:00 had PX facilities in Saigon but they had none at Bien Hoa and so we set up a canteen and we bought our stuff from the PX in Saigon and we sold gofers, which are cans of drink, ten thousand of those a day at a one cent mark up, and we sold cameras, anything that was in the PX we could get for you, we could get for you cheaper. And so regimental funds became endowed with a vast amount of money for the first time in many years and they blew the bloody lot
- 11:30 after we got back, spent it on band uniforms or something like that. I found my own relationship with the general was quite good and I managed, I had a bit of interference with my headquarters in Saigon saying, "We want you to get a better body count," and all this sort of thing and I'd say, "Stiff, not interested in that, let them have the body count I just want my own people being counted every day and we'll do the job".
- 12:00 And my American general said to me, "General Jackson my Australian boss wants us to give you a bigger role." He said, "What bigger role can I give you?" I said, "I don't think you can give us a bigger role and I'll tell you when I want one, don't worry about General Jackson you just ask me and I'll tell you when I need a change", and we worked on that basis for the rest of the time and it worked quite well. He only got in my hair on a couple of occasions, one was
- 12:30 the drink thing and the other was he had a tendency to try and command from a chopper and he used to come on our company net and his call sign was six, which was our mortar call sign and this call sign used to confuse our people until they knew what it was. And then general would come up and say, "six do this and do that," and finally got a rude reply from one of the platoon commanders and he came storming in in his chopper, got out, and I'd been pre-warned of course and
- 13:00 turned around to the assistant quartermaster who was wearing a AQ[Assistant Quartermaster] net back[?] I said, "Give me your shoulder straps" one star, one pip. And the general came across breathing fire and I said, "Here you are Sir you want to command the platoon you may as well wear the badges of rank". I said, "Don't try and do that with us, we tried it before it doesn't work you can't do it properly." He said, "Well we've got to learn." I said, "Well learn on somebody else don't learn on us". So relationships were pretty good,
- 13:30 the same with staff and we had trouble with some of their procedures the worst of which was a frag order. And I can remember being at what we called the snake pit which was the area near Bien Hoa airport where the choppers were laid out, ready to go, so one hundred and twenty choppers all there ready to go. And the battalion had gone, I was sitting in my command chopper and up comes a despatch

rider from brigade and

- 14:00 said, "Frag order," and it's just written on a piece of paper and says 'Your LZ has changed from orange to black,' and there they go up there, that's the order so it worked but it was not what we used to regard as good habits. They had a habit of briefing everybody who came from the day they left Okinawa and they'd go through the entire campaign
- 14:30 from leaving Okinawa every step of the way and one of the points was that was the end of the line for D16, that was the Armoured component of the brigade and the presenting officer, that was the end of the line for D16 and everybody in the audience would say it with him regardless of who was there, Westmorland or the Ambassador or some visiting general everybody, "That was the end of the line for D16" so they got the message sooner or later. Westmorland used to come out
- 15:00 to us and say, or the general would say, "We are going now for a briefing now general," and Westmorland would say, "No I don't want a briefing now I'm going to visit the Australians". And he used to come up and see us quite often and talk to the troops and he said to one of them, "What's your job soldier?" and he said, "I'm the company clerk," and Westmorland said, "Clerk, clerk he goes tic toc", "No, no" said the soldier, "I'm the company clerk,
- 15:30 clerk", "Oh clerk" difference in.....

I've read and heard that Westmorland loved the Aussies?

Yes he did, yes he was, we were the only group of, the Koreans were very very insular they looked after themselves tremendously well but nobody else and the Thai's didn't do very much, there were other contingents I can't remember who they were now. But at least we were involved and we were trying hard. So they

- 16:00 every time he came out he used to come to us and I had an occasion to go in and visit with him, we had McNamara the secretary for defence was out with McMahon Ball the ambassador and a number of dignitaries and I went to dinner and our Australian Chief of the General Staff was there to, John Wilton and Tom Daley. The only two half
- 16:30 colonels in the place were the, my general's PA [Personal Assistant] and me and my general's PA an old old gunner friend pulled me across to the side of the room and said, "Come over here near the curtains and talk in a quite way they'll think we're talking about something important". There's all these generals lying around all over the place discussing what's going to happen the next year and were talking about something important. Different means. So
- 17:00 there were humorous moments too.

And you'd started smoking in Korea?

I did.....

How did that, did that increase in Vietnam or?

Oh yes, increased in Korea, I was smoking, we had it in the rations for a start and everybody smoked, everybody even the CO Frank Hassett who didn't smoke, took up smoking

- 17:30 had to give it up cause he had a crook chest anyhow but everybody tried it. And I just took to it and I came back from Korea and I was smoking a couple of packets of Ardath or Craven A a day and Dulce will tell you that I was smoking like that when I, 1979 when we both gave up and I was sitting on a bed in Woden Valley hospital waiting for an angiogram and the doctor came in and said,
- 18:00 I'd just pulled out my Benson and Hedges and said, "Oh to hell with it I'll give it up," tossed them back in the dressing gown pocket and the Doc came and gave me a lecture about a mile long about how I should stop smoking and I said, "I have". And he went into saying, "All this expertise has been exhausted on you with no effect because you won't give up smoking", I said, "I have" he said, "When did you give up smoking?" I said, "About ten minutes ago", haven't smoked since, haven't smoked since.

And who was your batman in Vietnam?

I had two,

- 18:30 I inherited one from my Pentropic days and Rocky, Rockingham. Rockingham was distinguished by being probably the most terrified man in the battalion, the RSM, used to drive the RSM up the wall because he was supposed to be in front of me protecting me when were on a trail and he almost invariably fell behind me pushing his rifle up my rucksack, this was considered to be a very dangerous practice for a man like Rockingham to be doing to the CO.
- 19:00 Fortunately he got some skin complaint and we had to send him back to Australian, and not wishing to repeat the error again I decided to pick the most intelligent man I could find so I took somebody from the Intelligence Section Paul Slattery and he and I became master and slave for a while, he looked after me. I was having a lot of trouble then from an old injury to my neck and the Doc had rigged up an iron bed and

19:30 I used to tie my feet to the, or slip my feet into two shackles at the end of the bed and he made a little harness and we tied a brick on the end and I'd put the brick over and stretch out the neck to see if it would go, cause the arm would go, I kept on dropping my armour light, my M16 on the ground which wasn't appreciated and it was getting a bit painful too. Paul Slattery used to, we used to cover, Paul Slattery used to do up my boots because I couldn't do them

20:00 up, hand had gone. And I was sitting there with my slave at my feet cursing as he laced up the boots and in walked the deputy commander of the brigade and said, "What the hell's going on here?" and shortly after that I had to come home for surgery, most disappointing.

In the meanwhile had your own R&C [rest and care] or R&R?

No, sorry

20:30 my own?

R&C or R&R?

No I'd had a couple of days in Saigon with my boss and a couple of days at the, went in for a conference at Mac V headquarters and stayed overnight at a hotel called the Brink Hotel which is an American officers' hostel which was later bombed, but that's the only break I had while I was there. I sent the others out though,

21:00 I remember on one occasion sending out the OCB Company and I said, "You've got to go Ian, you need a rest" and he said, "But who's going to run the company, who's going to command the company?" I said, "Arnson will command the company while you're away," he said, "Arnson, Arnson will command the company?" I said, "Yep Arnson will command the company", that was the governor of Queensland. So he was sent off and Arnson did a very good job we set up an operation so that he could just go down and exercise the company and he did

21:30 very well indeed, he'd been one of my students at RMC to so I thought that was appropriate as well.

So you'd gotten sick, you'd started to get sick at that stage?

Well not sick I was in pain, didn't sleep very much, could have been other reasons for that I suppose but mainly was neck, still is to a certain extent and loss of power in right hand,

22:00 slight tremor now still and inability to move above certain areas.

And what did all that stem from?

It stemmed from having my jaw broken in 1947 on the rugby field at number one oval which impacted back on the spine and I'd been having treatment for it for some time, probably should never, you don't knock back opportunities

22:30 you would never have done that.

Was it sad in any way that this injury was caused by a sporting related injury rather than?

Oh yes, oh no, no rather than a war caused injury well it was during the war still cause we were still at war legally at that stage so it counts as a war caused injury. And there's a picture in my study of my last day in

23:00 command of the battalion. I came back from Penang where the Butterworth where the British Specialists had had a look at it and said, "Stiff boy" and I came back and went round and said, "Goodbye" to them, they were in the middle of an operation at village called Sucan and I don't look too good I must say. And there are a couple of pictures in the scrapbook which I always look at from time to time, one before I left and one at the end of six months and there's a different

23:30 definite change and demonstrates the strain. I didn't find the strain of operations all that difficult, physically I found it was starting to tell quite dramatically.

It must be very hard to leave your boys mid tour?

Oh it was dreadful even when I came back, when I came back that question was asked and I think the question actually was, 'Would you rather have Christmas here with your family or be with the battalion?'

24:00 I said, "I'd rather be with the battalion I'm sorry but I'd rather be with the battalion". And nevertheless they seemed to, still to this day keep me on net with things that happen from time to time, I'm a patron of the association. Some respect somewhere I think but a time I never ever forget, very graphic time

24:30 in Australian history, military history of course.

I don't know if it's even possible to compare Vietnam to Korea but how would you?

In terms of operations it is possible to do it, in that the tempo of operations in Korea was spasmodic and therefore you had, particularly in the later stages you had times out of the line when we got to a static

warfare situation,

- 25:00 times out of the line where you could be in reserve without gun firing reaching you, only the normal vehicle accidents, diseases and whatever catching up with you. If you put an infantry battalion in a map square you lose forty men a week from one cause or another, whether it's reposting or falling over a tent peg or whatever, lose forty people. So you've got to have replacements in to do that,
- 25:30 but the tempo of operations was quite different, very very heavy for a few days down, very very heavy for a few more days then a few weeks off out in the line, rest, recuperate, sports all that sort of thing. Where we tried to do that in Vietnam with inter company sports, even a Melbourne Cup meeting with captured VC bicycles
- 26:00 with the padre as the chief bookie, which was a pretty good choice. And they all helped but because you only had such a short time in base before you were off again the tempo started to catch up on people and we were getting very tired towards the end of the six months period and
- 26:30 when they came back they were very very tired. And that was despite the fact that we recognised that that was there and tried to do something about it by the way that we constructed the camp and we even relived some of our soldiers, we'd take the cooks out and they act as rifleman, take out all the storeman and leave our other blokes back that needed a rest, try everything like that to try and get a bit more
- 27:00 relaxation into the tempo, but it was difficult to do.

So what happened when you returned to Australia?

I had about nearly 2 months in hospital all told then I was posted to Staff College as an instructor and spent a couple of years there. And then was posted to the United States to go to the Armed Forces Staff College at Norfolk

- 27:30 Virginia and I was doing all right there and Westmorland became chief of staff of the army, and the chief of staff of each service came down to that establishment in Norfolk and gave a talk to the student body, cause it was a joint service organisation. And Westmorland said, "And I'm glad to see my old comrade in arms Lou Brumfield among your body of students", I didn't have to do a thing for the rest of the course, I just my wife used to say, "Haven't you got to go back and do some work?" I'd say, "No".
- 28:00 No point, they used to do everything seven times, I'd do it once that's it no more. But that was a great fillip and it was a good course to, we had another gentleman there a Major John Vor from French Foreign Legion and Westmorland said to him, "Major did you serve in Vietnam, in Indo China?" and John said, "General Westmorland I served in
- 28:30 Indo China" he said, "How long did you serve in Indo China?", "Twenty five years" said John, Westmorland said, "You beat me". Then I went up to Washington to join the Primary Standardisation Office which was in the Pentagon. In fact September 11th the attack on the Pentagon the area that was hit was our old office area, I got emails and photographs
- 29:00 from all over the state showing this is our office, remember this is the window where the general used to sit. And that was a quadripartite with Canada, United States, Britain and Australia represented and we ran a series of working groups all over the world covering a multitude of things and much more information than Australia had a capacity to take in. But develop tactical
- 29:30 theory, bridging, conversion tables for tanks, the Leopard tank for example, you know the American inch is different to the imperial inch? By .00000025 something like because the imperial inch is based on the gold standard in Victorian times the Americans never picked that up. So all our conversions of that nature that were,
- 30:00 great tolerances had to be put into metric so that we have a single issue to work on. So the conversion tables are higher than the table themselves. It was a very good organisation.

So when you look back on your career what are the highlights?

Well the highlights are very briefly RMC itself, not necessarily in the right order

- 30:30 Beecroft and Korea, Korea professionally was a good step up and a very steep learning curve, very quick learning curve. Malaya in which I learnt more about logistics than I had in the past, and appreciated that more in the past, and of course Vietnam where I had the chance to apply
- 31:00 some of the lessons that I had learned and use some of the people that I'd actually trained myself, that's an enlightening experience. In later terms there was a lot of satisfaction in being commandant at Canungra where we changed from the Jungle Training Centre to the Land Warfare Centre, there's a story in that too but it doesn't matter. And then I'd spent some five
- 31:30 years with the Joint Policy staff in Defence doing the conversion of the PNG [Papua New Guinea] Defence Force from it's Australian to PNG base thinking that it was going to take over the country and got it well equipped and properly organised because there was nothing else that was going to run PNG, we missed out slightly there. Then the 2 final postings one in defences director to general service and conditions

- 32:00 where removal and housing were the main topics and trying to make some impact on a very very difficult subject and keeping rentals at a reasonable level for poor accommodation. And where I went back as director general of personnel operations and I think the one thing that stands out there was the change from military pay being aligned with public service pay,
- 32:30 and that was only remarkable because we held an alliance between the three services for over six months to create a single block against defence itself and any other outsiders like treasury and department of finance and they got the same answer every time they asked, sailor, soldier, airman, it was quite incredible nobody believed it would ever happen. And so that's when I got my CBE [commander of the British Empire], it was for that I think but
- 33:00 I always say there are three classes of the Order of the British Empire that I'm aware, well there are others MBE [Member of the British Empire], my bloody efforts, OBE [Order of the British Empire] other bastards efforts and CBE carried by everybody and that's me, including my dear wife, there you go.

And you retired when 1983?

March 1983 I went to the Greek Isles

- 33:30 and backpacked around Greece for some months and came back here.

And was it a sad day when you demobbed?

Yes, yes it was of course, mind you I think probably by that stage I started to realise that I was sort of pushing against the wall a bit and not making much progress,

- 34:00 things were a bit dead in the water by then and I got tired of fighting the civilian staff, I got tired of fighting the other services, on points that really didn't require any battle at all. Common sense didn't prevail to a very large extent it became entrenched position after entrenched position, navy wanted an aircraft carrier and god knows what they'd do with it when they got it, we couldn't buy the aeroplanes, so let's have more soldiers, simple
- 34:30 as that I think. So I went with regret but not reluctance and have enjoyed myself ever since. As soon as I got out I was appointed colonel commandant of the Royal Australian Corps of Military Police which was one of my directorates and I held that esteemed position for two terms and in 1985 I joined the Administrative Appeals Tribunal as part time member and I had
- 35:00 two year posting to that and spent eighteen years there and finally decided it was time to go when I was 75. I'd reached the same age as my mother when she stopped working and I thought that was good enough.

Can you talk a little about PTSD [post traumatic stress disorder]?

Yes what would you like to know?

Did you have problems when you got back from Vietnam?

Yes I did, I don't know whether they were routed in Vietnam or earlier but I certainly had problems and I recognised those.

- 35:30 I think that it's very difficult to put a general label on them but I certainly had problems and I found myself becoming violent, I drank too much, I didn't like what I was doing and I found myself at a stage where I was almost on the verge of trying to strike my wife.
- 36:00 I'm horrified when I think about it now, I didn't know anything about PTSD but I knew I was in trouble so I sought assistance here and got some assistance here and later took more psychiatric assistance in Brisbane and I'm on Prozac now, have been for over 10 years.

How important was it just that

- 36:30 **simple finding out that what is wrong has a name?**

Oh it was immensely important, my whole marriage, my family, my friends all of those could've disappeared. You know there would have been people who hung on and said, "Sorry about this old fellow keep going and all that sort of thing", but that wasn't good enough from those people that were involved, apart from myself. I was

- 37:00 just fortunate that I realised I was a nut, if not a nut I was desperate and I had to get help. And I was fortunate enough to get good help and since then I'm not too bad, am I Dulce? It hurts, I don't know what did it you see things flash in front of your mind, I can remember Vietnam and
- 37:30 some terrible things that I saw there, masquerades and things like that, children being killed inadvertently and napalm and all that sort of stuff. There all there but things that come into mind are going back to pick up our dead at Kapyong after we'd recovered the area, that was my job as that stage, assistant adjutant I went back, the map that I used is in the Royal Military
- 38:00 College in Kapyong's company Barracks in Kapyong, got dead marked on it. Then in August, September,

September we lost three blokes crossing the river out of an assault boat, we lost them in August they surfaced in September on my birthday, your birthday so they'd been in roughly about three weeks,

38:30 the water was cold but it's the worst job I've ever had in my life. I can't look at a manila envelope without thinking about using half a dozen of them to get rid of the smell, trying to get their documents into. The quarter master and myself and the RQMS had to sign up the bodies, nobody else could come near them, I couldn't go near them but we still had to do it. So those might have had an effect to and Eckles the bloke

39:00 I mentioned earlier who we let die inadvertently, and the loss of other good friends, all may have had an impact and built up. It was probably just a little bit of a nudge at Vietnam that might have turned the corner.

And you told us earlier that young soldiers when you were instructing had asked what sort of debrief you had after?

What sort of counselling we had after the battle, well of course there wasn't any

39:30 and there never had been and there still won't be. I mean it's very difficult to line everybody up and say, "First man to the padre will be you and you'll go in alphabetical order", that sort of thing. It doesn't quite work that way, the counselling comes within the organisation to a very large extent and the reliance on the organisation on its own people to make certain they survive. It's not an easy

40:00 thing for people to deal with and yet I've seen so many cases where it's been ramped, in the time that I was with the Tribunal that it's denigrated those that have a feeling.

What's the final thing that you'd like to say to young Australians that may see this?

Well I think there's been a change in the services that goes well beyond my time for a start it's

40:30 twenty years, almost to the day probably, just past the day, therefore I'm no expert on what the army does today. I keep an interest in, I'm always impressed when I go up to visit the battalions either Holsworthy or here on feast days like Kapyong Day or Coral or whatever, I'm always impressed with the way they turn out and the way that they can explain themselves and show you what they do in terms of their jobs. That's very good.

41:00 I see some Americanisation coming in in terms of the relationship between officers and soldiers which I don't think is for the better of a unit where somebody has to give orders that hurt and officers have always got to be in the position where command means the responsibility of possibly making a

41:30 fatal decision for somebody, or themselves. I think it's an attempt to spread the responsibility without coming to any real conclusion by involving everybody in it therefore it must be less, it isn't at all. I think therefore the only thing we can do is say that I'm always impressed with my young soldiers and we hope to get them into the association as quick as possible.

Tape 12

00:30 **I might just get to quickly tell us the answer that you said one of your friends gave about the counselling?**

Oh that was during a lecture to a senior officers Course at Canungra at the Jungle Training Centre, or Land Warfare Centre as it was then. And we just gone through the battle of Kapyong in outline and it was question time and one of these fellows stood up at the back and said, "Could you tell us how you

01:00 were counselled after the battle". And we all looked round and the RSM was the obvious person to answer that and Dusty Ryan got to his feet and said, "I was given a fresh blanket and a bottle of beer and that was the counselling system in those days," and it worked quite well really.

How do you commemorate Anzac Day?

By being very cautious on Kapyong Day and keeping myself in good nick for Anzac Day. I march with

01:30 the 1st Battalion on Anzac Day, the day previous I go to a Kapyong Day Memorial service. On Anzac Day I leave the Brisbane contingent of my battalion on Anzac Day and have done for about the past ten years and hopefully do it for another couple of years before the legs give out. And it depends a bit how we go on from there, whether we go

02:00 out to Enoggera and have lunch or whether we go to another venue depends on what else has been set up during the day, and then we've got to get back here. I could go to South Port and do it all here but it wouldn't feel the same and Brisbane is a very receptive town to Anzac Day and I enjoy giving some reciprocity.

What are your thoughts on how it should be celebrated by the rest of the nation?

02:30 With some small reservations, you mean the actual march itself or other?

Oh either or?

Well I think the march itself is an institution which is a pretty good one, I can remember doing a march at Canungra where the main contingent were the Guides and Brownies and Cubs and Scouts. But they knew they were marching for a purpose

03:00 and I think that sort of idea is terrific because, I'm not trying to promote militarism in children or anything like that, that doesn't, not part of it at all. But part of Australianism is being true to one another I think, we tend to lose sight of it from time to time and Anzac Day is one of the days that actually seems to cut through those barriers. The wonderful thing about

03:30 Anzac Day in Brisbane to me is the amazing number of kids that are on the street waving flags and that gives me a bigger burn than anything else I can think of during that day, even drinking with the boys, just to see those kids out there thinking. I must tell you a story Dulce and I were giving a lecture to a school nearby, she'll tell us the name later but they were all kids around about eleven, twelve

04:00 and they'd been studying a project on comforts funds and what they'd provided to soldiers in World War I and they'd done a lot of research, they'd worked out what were in comforts packages and they'd put samples of these together in preparation of going down to the War Memorial as a class in July last year. And we had about one hundred kids there and the questions were great, they really were great and I showed them my medals and we showed

04:30 them photos and things like that, both of us spoke. And at the end of the lecture a young fellow came up to me, and I was dressed in my usual gear a pair of grey slacks and a blazer with brass buttons and shirt and tie. And this young fellow came up and said, "Do you know my grandfather?" and I said, "I might, do you know what unit he was in?" he said, "Oh I don't know what unit he was in

05:00 but he wears the same uniform you do". I thought that was great so we're stereotyped at the young mind already, next question where was I. Anzac Day so all those sort of things go together to make Anzac Day something special. I don't see it as a holy day or anything like that but I do see it as something that draws a lot of the population together that otherwise doesn't come together. I've even marched behind the Serbs on Anzac Day in Brisbane,

05:30 looking better dressed than our own soldiers with caracal hats and things like that. And I was speaking the other day to the president of the French Veterans Association, having lunch with him and he said, "We now have thirty five members left and of those most of them are from the French Foreign Legion" including three Australians and he said, "We're getting so small that soon I'm going to have to ask us to take us into your company

06:00 when we march on Anzac Day because we will always march on Anzac Day". So those sort of little things seem to make it quite clear that Anzac Day does hold a place somewhere in the hearts of the young and the old, maybe not those in between so much, but fortunately they'll be written out at some stage and the youngsters will take over, sorry about that love.

You just mentioned your medals,

06:30 **what do your medals or personal medals mean to you?**

They mean that I can either ruin a suit by wearing them for a long time or I'll get rheumatism in the left shoulder cause it's so heavy. That's a facetious answer. They're an indication as they are to all my colleagues regardless of rank, colour, creed or whatever, of where you've been and what you'd done and we recognise it

07:00 amongst ourselves. It's nothing more than that, we had a great antipathy for people who try and wear full representations because in their pure form we know exactly what they mean, we know whether there for eighteen years of undiscovered crime or they actually mean that you served in warfare and if you carry a couple of little embellishments like an infantry Combat

07:30 Badge you know that you've actually been shot at several times. So they do have a symbolic meaning to serviceman and to those that are close to serviceman. Apart from that there's nothing like a neck decoration to get the girls around, would you like me to get mine.

Oh maybe once the tape stops. Having served

08:00 **essentially in three wars, if you consider Beecroft and then Korea and then Vietnam there's been a lot said about Korea being the forgotten war and to some extent Vietnam veterans feeling like that as well because of the way they were treated when they got back. How do you see yourself in that mix?**

Now

08:30 I've got to say that I don't feel, I know that the feeling about Korea is very deep with Korean veterans and to some extent that is justified because following so closely on World War II I don't think it was recognised that we had a very tough war, very tough war. And there weren't that many people involved,

some seventeen thousand and therefore it's a drop in the bucket compared with half a million

- 09:00 or more serving in the army during the Second World War and three hundred and forty five thousand during the First World War. But it's still significant to those people and they feel as though they were forgotten for some time. Every now and then something flushes up and you get, like tomorrow in Bulletin we'll get the battle of Hamel [France, World War I] and then the battle of the Commando on Thursday and last year they did Kapyong. They do it every year cause Ross Eastgates whose
- 09:30 one of the sub editors is an ex reservist, ex army officer actually and so we get that sort of cover. Charlton does the same in the Courier Mail but that's simply a fact of life that we were a small company and therefore we rely on one another much more heavily than Second World War people. Except when you get down to unit level and the units in the
- 10:00 2nd AIF are just as close, even though their quite decimated now and very few people in each unit Association, there very close to one another and regard themselves as holding some treasure in terms of national honour as part of their own unit. We do the same and were fortunate in that the same units have fought since the war, through these other engagements, as units, so
- 10:30 we've got a long history of warfare now for Australian units for the first time really. And we regard ourselves as inheriting the honours and awards of our predecessors in the 1st and 2nd AIF and keeping those alive. And that's why the army, I think is very much engaged in Anzac Day these days, far more than it has been in the past years. They get troops marching on Anzac Day in every city,
- 11:00 that has troops nearby, we didn't have that once. And so Anzac Day is being perpetuated in the service even though it might start to fall off in other ways because of multi culturalism and things like that. But it's astonishing the number of people of different colours and creeds that are there on the street waving flags.

Have you had any descendants that have gone on and are enlisted for military service?

- 11:30 Descendants?

Hmm do you have children or grandchildren, nieces or nephews?

Not into the services, I have two children my daughter is Lady Edwards from Brisbane and my son, David is with the Australian Point Casting Authority and he came to prime selling Spectrum and actually selling something, what was it, two point something billion

- 12:00 dollars worth of Spectrum and the Treasury suddenly found out they had a bonus on their hands. And Jane does very well she runs her own business, she's married to Lou Edwards and runs her own business in Brisbane. But no, no issue we are grandfather less, less, less, we aren't grandparents were de-facto grandparents for other kids.
- 12:30 **If some of those de-facto grandchildren came to you and said that they wanted a career in the military would you encourage them?**
- If that's what they wanted, I didn't have a bar put in front of me I don't see why I should put a bar in front of anybody else. I always considered it an honour to serve the country I really did, I really did throughout my career feel it, it was something I was doing for the nation really,
- 13:00 I was a baggy, I was an Australian soldier and that was something to me. Both my father and various relatives and the way that I'd been bought up. I do have friends that come to me and say, "Do you think Billy would be alright if he went to ADFA?" and I say, "Let him try and see how he goes, see if he can get, does he want to go?", "Yes he
- 13:30 wants to go but I'm not too sure about it". I have one friend who was an air force officer and wanted his son to join the air force and his son said, "I want to be a helicopter pilot in the army", so he's going to be a helicopter pilot in the army, but he's still flying. So therefore the answer to your question is I can't give any direct answer. But I wouldn't put a bar in anybody's way who wanted to progress in that fashion into the
- 14:00 services, male or female.

When you look back over your actions in your military service, especially when you were in active service, to an onlooker like myself I could only say that you were brave, do you consider yourself to be brave?

No, not at all no. Lot of people are doing this at the same time, those that are particularly brave stand out remarkably, they are

- 14:30 recognised with soldiers as being remarkably brave. Maybe because their utterly mad or utterly fearless or utterly incompetent or just plain gutsy, sometimes there's a lot of sacrifice involved in being brave and those people have my special regard. You don't have to get a decoration to be brave,
- 15:00 my stretcher bearers, and my medics who used to look after the wounded, in booby trap areas without a thought for themselves were among the bravest people you could find. The helicopter pilots who came

in to pull out my wounded were brave. The artillery forward observers who brought fire down on their own troops to solve a situation

15:30 were brave, they had confidence in their own ability and the ability of the people around them to take what punishment was being offered. So lots of ways of showing bravery and leadership is only an element of bravery and I just feel lucky that if I was capable of exercising some form of leadership and successfully then that was gift enough, a great gift. And the reward is there, I talk to my blokes

16:00 and they talk to me and I find that very very satisfying.

Over the years did you find that you became like a surrogate father in a way?

I'm still the boss, I mean I discourage them from calling me brigadier or whatever but when the chips are down I'm always sir, I might be Lou for a while but suddenly I'm always sir and that's just a mark of respect, they know

16:30 I think where they stand all the time and they know they stand high in my estimation, that's the main thing. And they get away with murder some of them, some don't. A phone call we just had Peter Petty real rogue but a lovable rogue so he's forgiven a lot, he works like steam for his people too.

One common theme that

17:00 **comes up in all the interview that we've done is how when you're serving so closely with these people you become like family, and you know the sharing of all problems whether they be personal or professional. Being a senior ranking officer do people come to you with personal problems as well?**

Yes that happens but not as frequently as it does at unit level. If somebody comes to you when you're a senior staff officer then it's usually

17:30 some sort of gripe that you don't want to hear anyhow but you've got to hear. Whereas if you're dealing in a unit with a family problem than you can do it in a number of ways, lets take an example in Vietnam if I had a number of people who I awarded punishment to for a prevalent offence of being absent without leave, in other words creating a gap in the

18:00 unit when we were possibly going on operations was a serious thing really. But if I hit the soldier with twenty eight days field punishment, which is the biggest punishment I could give, plus twenty eight days loss of pay I really wasn't touching him at all, he was still going to be fed, looked after, clothes, but mum and the kids lost their pay. So I didn't do that, I usually gave the twenty eight days field punishment and they dug the ditches and did whatever we did for field

18:30 punishment and I told them the pay was lost but we didn't revoke that, when the charge came through I'd write that out. But you still get some humorous times in disciplinary areas. We had one fellow who was marched in, he was about five foot two, five foot three, shortest man in the battalion, fairly broad. And he was accused of assaulting his corporal, now this fellow, this short fellow had bruises all over his face

19:00 his arms were bruised, he had plaster all over one ear and his corporal was built like the side of the door and not a scratch on him. And he said, "Yes sir I did I assaulted Corporal Robinson and I'm sorry I did it," I said, "Oh right, 14 days CP", march out and the RSM said, "Cassis Cloud escort turn left" it was Cassis Cloud in those days, Cassis came and escorted,

19:30 marched off, got him outside and said, "You silly bugger don't you ever do that again". So discipline was very very seldom used in the battalion but when it was an occasion to watch. I remember one fellow coming in and my wife used to run a Wife's Association in Sydney for my soldiers' wives and girlfriends and we had dreadful things, we had people with girls living in rented quarters,

20:00 rented houses with, or part of a house with earth closets instead of a toilet and no running water and things like this, till we found out about it and we could look after those, the girls looked after those and got them sorted out. But this fellow had been AWL and therefore the punishment had to be severe and I just got a letter from my wife saying that his twins were absolutely wonderful, just arrived and they looked gorgeous so I said, "Right"

20:30 he was a corporal to and I said, "How are the twins going?" and you could see his eyes light up I'm out of this I'm right, he said, "Oh they're doing extremely well sir, extremely well and Mrs Brumfield said that they look very nice in her last letter, Dulcy said that she visited and saw them" I said, "Yes, yes absolutely great isn't it and what about this?" and he said, "Oh yes I did that sir, I'm sorry about that," I said, "Okay reduced to the ranks, seven days CB [confined to barracks] march out" he said, "God I thought I'd

21:00 got away with that," so got to keep a sense of humour.

When we were talking to you very early on today about whether or not you'd ever considered a life in show business like your father had done you mentioned the part of the reason you weren't interested in that was the instability?

Yeh.

Did you find that in the army, the stability?

Oh yes, yes particularly, once again this has been mentioned before

21:30 we were very fortunate in the timings we had, a small army, very family like, there was a great deal of stability, that wasn't to say that there wasn't a great deal of moaning about things, but moaning different from bitching. And it was a much different life to the life I'd lead before, there was stability and there was continuity and there were goals to be reached

22:00 and passed, and that makes a terrible different, very big difference to somebody who has been sort of going from pillar to post for some years.

What about the separations though?

From my wife you mean? Well most of the time we had thirty seven odd moves I think and the time we were in service, that's unusual but we did live together most of the time, the only time we were

22:30 away from one another was when I was on exercises in Australia, conferences in Australia, courses in Australia or on active service, the rest of the time we were together. So a great deal of the time we were together and I was fortunate that she wasn't working at the time and I can see the strains that are put on family life with serviceman who have partners who are working, or partners in the army and they work. I've had situations where one of my

23:00 captains was a girl and her husband was a corporal, and there are other things like that I think to Dulce, where one eats in the officers mess and the other eats in the other mess, but home it's quite different. It's a different sort of scene to what we had, we were lucky that we didn't have these pressures that these kids have.

Do you have any final thoughts

23:30 **or messages for the archive?**

I think I've just about run out to be honest. No I think I summed up my thoughts on the service earlier. And I think that I'd be very happy to see some old habits come back in because they are stabilising factors for families as well as the serviceman themselves

24:00 and their families. I have a feeling that the pressures on service life are doubled by pressures on the families themselves and that doesn't help when you do have emergency situations. But I think that's probably enough from me.

Thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS