Australians at War Film Archive

Raymond Burnard (Ray) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:58 **Ray, thanks very much for your time today. Could**

01:00 **I begin by asking for you to share an overview of your life for about ten from where you were born to where you are now?**

Okay, well let's start off in the U.K. [United Kingdom] I was born in Sussex just south of London but spent most of my first eighteen years in the western part of London, West Drayton, Heston, where London airport is now basically. I went to school in Hammersmith which is one of the

01:30 inner western suburbs of London and of course lived in London throughout the war, the Battle of Britain the Blitz the V1s and V2s [rocket-powered unguided missiles] so it was a pretty interesting time for a young teenage boy. We came out to Australia as a family in 1948. We flew out to Australia which was pretty unusual in those days. Took seven days to fly out here and was quite a trip but arrived here on the 7th of

02:00 January and I found myself in Duntroon [Royal Military College] three weeks later because I had applied at Australia House in London and the fact that I was about to go to Sandhurst [Military Academy UK] got me a pretty quick entry into Duntroon. And then four years of Duntroon of course which for a young Pom [Englishman] was quite an interesting experience and graduation. A year in Australia before I went to Korea and then a year in Korea, four months of which I spent

02:30 in hospital when I got bowled over. On return from Korean my first service with CMF [Citizens Military Forces] as it was then called now the Army Reserve when I was an adjutant of a battalion. A very interesting time I enjoyed that. And then when the special air force was formed, SAS [Special Air Service] was formed in Perth, I went in as its 2IC, second in command. So that took part in the '50's. After SAS I became a company commander

03:00 in the 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment in Brisbane and I was only there six or eight months before they sent me off to Pakistan to Staff College in Quetta, another very interesting year which my family enjoyed. Some more than others, the kids going to a Pakistani school didn't like it very much but a good year, an interesting year. From there I returned to Canberra where I was a staff office in the Directorate of Military Operations and

03:30 Plans which was a very active little organisation. I say little compared to the huge planning organisations in Department of Defence it was a very small organisation and a lot going on. The first commitment to Vietnam and all that sort of thing and the elimination of the Dutch from West Irian that took place in that time. From there an instructor at the Royal Military College at Duntroon for a

04:00 couple of years. As I was told I got a posting across the water and I thought it was an overseas posting but it wasn't it was across the lake, from one side of the lake to the other. So after Duntroon back to army headquarters as the military assistant to first Sir John Wilton who was CGS [Chief of the General Staff] and then Sir Thomas Daley as his MA [Military Assistant] and after that commander of the training team in Vietnam from '68 to '69. And

04:30 returning from that I was the senior operations staff officer in the 1st Division and the job of the 1st Division was to train battalions going to Vietnam on different rotations. So, Vietnam was very much once again in my mind at training those battalions. From there chief instructor at the infantry school and then back to

05:00 the language school for a year learning Vietnamese before they sent me back as the Defence Attaché in Saigon right at the end of the war from '73 to '75. Returning from Vietnam back to the CMF again as chief of staff of the 2nd Division here in Sydney. I must've done fairly well in that because then they made me deputy chief of Reserves at, and promoted to brigadier so that was

05:30 an interesting. But that was in Canberra and I used to commute every week between Sydney and Canberra which was pretty hard. That was followed by command of the 3 Brigade in Townsville and my

final appointment was as commandant of this command and Staff College in Queenscliff in Victoria and I retired in 1982 and I've enjoyed retirement every since.

What have you been doing since then in retirement?

Well, I'm not one of those

06:00 that particularly wanted to go back to work. I enjoyed retirement and we're comfortably off so I took up my golf and my bowls and all that sort of thing. I got involved in a few little projects around the place but basically fully retired.

Excellent, and your family side could you tell me a bit about that?

Yes, well the reason we came to Australia is my father was brought out here by David Jones. He set up the first food hall in

06:30 Market Street in 1948 and so he went on to become a director of David Jones and all that sort of thing. And then my two brothers they started off on the land. My father bought a property up on the north coast but my middle brother went into information technology in its very early days. He was the manager of National Cash Register, the computer organisation is South East Asia so he spent about eight years in Singapore.

07:00 And then went on to work for Wang and that sort of thing and my other brother remained on the land up on the north coast.

And you were married and kids?

Yes, got married just after graduation, got engaged on graduation night and six months later got married and so that was August of 1952 and yes I've been married fifty-two years.

And children?

Yes, three children, yeah

07:30 and I think the gypsy life, which it was a gypsy life moving around a lot it gets in the blood because my eldest son and my daughter both work in foreign affairs. In fact my son is on posting next week off to Washington for three years but he's been all over the place London, Washington, Bangkok, Jakarta posting everywhere. In fact he got married in Bangkok, not to a Thai lady but to a girl from the British Embassy, that sort of thing

08:00 happens. My daughter similarly, she works in foreign affairs and she was married in Jakarta not to an Indonesian but to another Australian in the Embassy but you can see how the army life has affected them that gypsy life got into their blood. And my younger son nothing to do, he didn't want to be a public service he's a business man here in Sydney.

Excellent, thank you so much for sharing that. Now just to come back to the very beginning for you,

08:30 **what are you first memories of childhood growing up?**

First memories of childhood? Oh… You have some very strange memories. I have a memory of when I nearly drowned probably at the age of two or three. One of the early houses we had then in West Drayton had a little river at the back where people used to go punting along

09:00 and I remember being under water looking at my cousin who would've been a teenager sort of thing who got into the water to get me out but seeing her from the bottom of this water. That's my earliest memory in life I think I must've been two or something like that at the time, quite strange. Otherwise, the memories are just of schooling and school friends and that sort of thing until the war started and…

And so in respect of this memory of seeing your cousins through the water…

I've never liked water.

09:30 I've never liked swimming particularly. I can swim and do all those things that you have to do but yeah I think that horror of, yes I can always remember that.

Do you know who plucked you out?

She did, yes my cousin Barbara. Yes.

Do you know how you got in there in the first place?

No idea at all.

Your parents what can you tell me about them?

Yes my mother was pure Welsh. All her father came from the Rhonda Valley,

10:00 all mainly the coal mining area and most of her family had worked in the mines. She had I think six

brothers and one sister. Yes, they weren't poor, but they weren't well off either that they were very much a working class family. The same as my family he came from a very poor background living, he was a real Londoner, from St. Pancras, Camden Town

10:30 that sort of thing in London. So he was almost a Cockney but so he worked his way up through the food trade, the grocery trade. He started off with a firm called Sainsbury's which is like the great big English firm that, a bit like Coles here I think and did his apprenticeship through them and specialised in the food side of things. Then went to United Dairies which is another big organisation in

11:00 the U.K. a bit like Peters and Farmers here and worked with them for awhile. During the war he got plucked off to go and run an aircraft factory. A factory that was making Jettison fuel tanks for particular types of aircraft but he was just directed by the Ministry of Aircraft production, "go and work there," which he did and he ran the factory for a couple of years and then went back into the food business after the war. And that's when

11:30 David Jones got to hear of him and flew us all out here.

Excellent, just with your family, were you close to you mum and dad ?

Oh, yeah pretty close, yes, yeah, but yep. Except in teenage years you tend to drift away more but and being the eldest in the family but yeah we were close as a family.

Do you remember things that you used to do together?

Yes, we'd go on holidays,

12:00 caravan holidays as they were we always used to do a trip in a caravan somewhere during that Easter, not Easter, the August holidays that everyone used to have all travelling at the same time. So yes and there were always to somewhere on the east coast of England. East coast or south coast and the memories of those pebble beaches which Australians would find very hard to call a beach even.

12:30 **World War I, did you know anyone that had served in World War I back in England?**

My grandfather had served in World War I yes, he was, he must've been a professional soldier before the war he was in the Royal Horse Artillery and got injured in a horse accident and was transferred to the Medical Corps. And I've got a photo of him as a RO1, a Regimental Sergeant Major in the Medical Corps but he just served in the U.K. during the Second World War because of this injury he had

13:00 from this horse accident. Yes, so he served in the war but not in the overseas part.

Your dad, did he want to join in World War II?

No, he was medically exempted in any case. He had an eyesight problem so he wouldn't have been allowed in any case on medical grounds. But no he thought he was doing his bit working with administrative aircraft production and all that sort of thing, yeah.

13:30 **Do you remember where you were when the Second World War was declared?**

Vividly, yes, in fact we were, it was a Sunday morning, eleven o'clock when Chamberlain, the Prime Minster came on radio and Mr and Mrs Banks the next door neighbour, my mother and father and my two broth…, my one brother and that stage, the other one hadn't been born gathered around the radio and I always remember the words of Chamberlain

14:00 saying, "That a state of war now exists." And within five minutes the air raid sirens went off. It was a false alarm but it grabbed everyone's attention. But the drama of that eleven o'clock on a Sunday morning I always remember quite vividly. I was nearly ten years of age then so quite able to remember things.

So how did things change when war was declared initially?

Oh yes, in fact they started to change before war was declared that the

14:30 air raid shelters were being erected, sandbags were going up, we were already practising air raid drills at school and that sort of thing. So, and for that quiet period from September '39 until May '40 when the real war started it was a phoney sort of war but you wouldn't know there was a war on really except you had to carry your gas mask with you wherever you went and all that sort of thing. But it was only when the Battle of Britain started in

15:00 September 1940 that things really livened up and you knew that there was a war on.

Do you remember the first air raid and what actually happened?

Yeah it was, well, when you say air raids the first real recollection of air attacks and fighting in the air and all that was September 1940. There had been a few false alarms and a few German reconnaissance plane would go over

15:30 and that sort of thing but the Battle of Britain in September of 1940 which we could see in the skies above us. And about November of 1940 was when the Blitz started and that's yes we remember that.

Interestingly, every house had an air raid shelter of one type or another. There were two types, the Anderson shelter was the underground shelter, corrugated iron thing which you put it in the

16:00 back garden and covered it over with dirt and sandbags and the Morrison shelter was the indoor shelter which was a great metal cage, a big steel sheet on top and wire all the way around it. And would be about seven foot long by about four foot, four-foot-six wide and that went in the lounge room during the Blitz all the family would sleep in there all together

16:30 and that was quite common.

Which was the more popular out of the two shelters?

Most people went for the Anderson shelter that I think there were about sixty to forty or something like that from my memory.

What are some of your lasting memories of the Battle of Britain?

The Battle of Britain was just the occasional dog fights you would see in the air and some of them were just the vapour trails if they were pretty high

17:00 so it wasn't so much the Battle of Britain but the Blitz when that started were the great memories. Except it was when the Battle of Britain was on that we all started to collect, you know boys collect anything and the big thing to start collecting was shrapnel, and nose cones and bits of bombs particularly when the Blitz started. And there'd be a great trade, you know I'll swap you this nose cone for those bits of, particularly bits of

17:30 shrapnel things with markings on them that they were always very collectible as items. Oh, and when my youngest brother was born in the height of the Battle of Britain, September the 19th 1940 and when they hung his nappies on the line to dry we use dot have to shake them very hard afterwards because all these tiny little bits of shrapnel would get stuck in the numbers. Normally you would think of shrapnel as bigger pieces like that but of course there's some

18:00 very, very tiny pieces of shrapnel you know pin head size and they'd come down and catch in the nappies and got to shake all the shrapnel out.

What boyhood heroes did you have during the war?

I used to follow the war pretty closely as any teenage boy would so whoever was the general of the time you know General Wavell you know when the first battles in North Africa were going on he was probably the

18:30 most, the best known general. And then of course later on Montgomery and those sort of things. Yeah, I think people like that and then of course they publicised when the first Victoria Crosses were being won they'd get a lot of publicity in the paper. So you'd hunt for that and such and such would be your hero of the week sort of thing but…

What about some of the pilots like Douglas Bader

19:00 **and those sort of fellas?**

Yes, yes, but I wasn't so much into air force I was into army more but yes people like Bader and Guy Gibson, the dam buster. And all those sort of people certainly when they got their publicity they were very well recognised became heroes.

What memories do you have of Winston Churchill's radio speeches?

Yes, nine o'clock on a Sunday night of stirry stuff the whole family

19:30 the whole nation would be, would stop on at nine o'clock on a Sunday night for Churchill's speeches and of course the speeches in June, July of 1940. You know the blood sweat and tears speeches they were real stirring stuff but yes everyone would've walked out with a broom handle and fought a German.

And Dad's Army do you have a memories of them?

Oh yes, the local home guard on the green, the village green, Norwood Green

20:00 they would be out there parading and but they were very highly respected. A lot of them were ex- First World War soldiers of course so yeah a great respect for the home guard. And they were pretty visible around the place too, the pill boxes. We lived next to Heston airport which is now part of the London airport but and Heston airport which I discovered, we used to see these strange planes flying off,

20:30 it was one of the main reconnaissance bases. I've just been reading a book with an Australian involved in it with these strange blue, bright blue Spitfires because they used to use the Spitfires at a very high altitudes with cameras in where they couldn't be picked up by Germans and they used to fly out of Heston. So it was an operational airport and there were pill boxes all round the airport manned

21:00 mainly by the home guard but so, yeah.

Did you have any friends, school friends, family friends killed?

Yes, I had one school friend in the, that was right at the end of the war in when the V2s started in September, October 1944 and a chap called Carslake who was a friend of mine in the same school cadet section he was my lance corporal at the time, yeah he was

21:30 killed.

Tell me about the V2s and stuff I mean they were pretty horrifying?

Yeah, they were, well I'll mention the Blitz first, once we'd lived through the twelve, eighteen months of the Blitz Londoners thought they could take anything sort of thing. And we got into a routine of you know in the air raid shelter nearly every night that sort of thing and people learnt how to cope with the bombing. And we had one close shave there, we had

22:00 one house about fifty metres away was totally destroyed. It was one of those strange things the bombs come in different types well this was one of those delayed fused ones when it penetrated into the ground before it blew up. And it made a hell of a crater about thirty feet deep, destroyed the house totally and utterly and the people in their Anderson shelter down in the back garden survived which was quite amazing but being fifty yards away

22:30 there was a lot of damage to our roof damaged tiles and that sort of thing. But strangely the, our windows didn't get blown out but this strange action was it sucked the curtains underneath the metal window frames, metal window frames like we have here that because, it just sucked the curtains under because it must have been a implosion caused by this deep penetration of the bomb, quite unusual. So yeah the Blitz, we learnt to live with

23:00 and there were other occasions. Another nasty feature were the unexploded bombs, deliberately. They dropped these unexploded bombs with delayed fuses of two, three, four, five days so they'd have to close off areas around us and that sort of thing. So to get to school you'd have to do a detour around a particular area and all that sort of thing. So, but we learnt to live with that and then by

23:30 '42 when the Blitz had finished things went all quiet until the invasion started in June of '44 when the V1s, that's the doodle bugs, came along and they, we could cope with those alright because you had an air raid warning that warned you they were coming. And we took the precautions and you knew that when the engine cut out they were coming down and we experienced quite a few

24:00 of those but no great worry because, as I said, always an air raid warning as there was during the Blitz you always had an air raid warning. But in September of '44 when the first of the V2s arrived Londoners didn't like that at all because no air raid warning the only warning you had was a sudden huge bang and then the second bang of the explosion. The first bang was when the V2 went through the sound barrier or it hit

24:30 the stratosphere or ionosphere whatever it is and the second bang of the explosion. And of course no air raid warnings at all and it could be any time day or night and Londoners didn't like that at all. We left London for about six weeks my mother of course was very upset with these bloody V2s. So we went and lived in a caravan at Denham on the outskirts of London for about six weeks until my father convinced her that we've got to go back home sort of thing. So

25:00 yes the V2s were by far the worst.

I mean, during the Blitz given the bombing and stuff, did you parents give any thought to send you to a school in the country?

No, well they might've given it thought but no like the majority of Londoners we'd stay, we'd stay as a family. I don't know of any of my friends that were evacuated to the country, no.

25:30 **During the Blitz, the morale of people, did they think that Germany would invade and lose the war?**

Oh yes, we expected the invasion yeah that's right, certainly in July, August all sorts of rumours. And then all the you know you could go all the defences going up, these pill boxes I mentioned around airfield all being built and all that sort of thing. Yeah, there was an expectation of invasion. And

26:00 as Churchill told us, fight on the beaches, fight them everywhere but Hitler decided otherwise, wisely I think that he wouldn't invade but yes certainly people were prepared. And certainly the morale of Londoners during the Blitz. I think the bombing just reinforced the morale. People got used to it and they were more determined than ever.

Did you ever come across anyone that had

26:30 **you know gone what is it, shell happy, the shock and constant bombardment and couldn't cope with it anymore?**

No, no. People you know were obviously uptight I suppose from sleepless nights and that sort of thing but no, not that I noticed as a youngster, no.

How important was the monarchy?

Oh, very important, yes the King as it was then, King George the sixth and yeah the monarchy always

27:00 has been important to Poms [English] very much so. Once of my earliest memories going back to being a very young child was going to the wedding of the Duke of Kent and Princess Marina. That would've been about 1936/37 and it was one of those big royal weddings the King and the Queen with the royal carriages, the Life Guards and everything. And we'd go to get a good seat on the kerb, we'd be there at

27:30 four o'clock in the morning for a procession that would be there about lunchtime sort of thing. And Londoners would be there in their thousands and thousands. And when King George the fifth died again 1936, '35, '36, I remember our family going up to the local railway station at Hanwell to see the funeral train go through. And thousands of people just standing on the station just to see the funeral train going through you know you couldn't imagine these days but that's

28:00 the sort of feeling that the Poms [British] had for the royalty which I think they probably still do many of the…

When Japan and America joined in on the war, how did that change things for you in…?

We suddenly had Americans in London. Yeah, I didn't know too much, I used to follow the war that was going on with the, in Europe and in Russia in North Africa and that sort of thing. And in my room

28:30 I'd, the newspapers used to produce maps to enable you to follow the war with little pins that you could stick in to you know follow the Battle of Tobruk and Alamein and all that sort of thing. And the same with the Russian campaigns and when the war broke out in the Middle East there were countries I'd never heard of that any rate. There wasn't a great deal of interest in the waging of the war in the Far East as it was

29:00 called as there was in the war in North Africa and in Russia. And naturally enough because it was a European war that they were more interested in. I remember VE Day [Victory in Europe] very clearly you know all. I was then fifteen and went up to London to join the crowd outside Buckingham Palace and then off to Piccadilly Circus and all that sort of thing we had a great time. But when it came to VJ Day [Victory over Japan] I don't think there was any, can't remember any celebrations in the U.K.

29:30 even though Brits were still fighting the Japanese but as far as most people in England the war was over when the war in Europe was over.

Did you ever come across Americans and or Australians fighting in England?

Not personally, I saw a number in fact mentioning this airfield next to us Heston airport. They billeted a large number of airmen around with families

30:00 that sort of thing. And across the road there were some Australians you could always pick them by their dark blue uniforms. Australians were billeted with families but that's the only time I saw Australians. And no Americans around our area at all around Heston.

What about young men, Englishmen that had gone away to fight and had died? Do you know any stories about family receiving news about their,

30:30 **their deaths?**

No, not… not that I can think of at the moment no. No.

Now you joined the cadets, the fusiliers?

Yes, yes.

What can you tell me about that?

I belonged to the school cadets. I went to Latimer Upper that had its own school cadet organisation and I'd already made my mind I was going to be a solider so that's all I was interested in and but I also joined a second cadet unit,

31:00 the Royal Fusilier Cadets. And so that was my main hobby with the two cadet units attending their different parades and things.

What can you tell me about the school cadets what were they doing training wise with you?

What school cadets normally do, they taught you the drill and we actually had real weapons in those days and they'd take you out to the rifle range at camps and you'd do all your shooting and that sort of thing.

31:30 And teach you a bit of field craft and the same with the Royal Fusilier Cadets but I also joined the band and became a tenor drummer and that sort of thing. And that was a great attraction because you used to get involved in all sorts of activities like the Lord Mayor Show, we'd be part of the Lord Mayor Show playing the band going through London. We also went off to Paris which was a great thing to perform at a number of functions there

32:00 as a military band. So as a young seventeen year old let loose in Paris that was quite something that so we had four or five days there, so yes that was very interesting. Oh, another performance that I remember that was very interesting that was through the school cadets in 1946 or 7, no ’46. There was an 8th Army reunion at the Royal Albert Hall and all the,

32:30 Montgomery and all the senior members of the 8th Army and all the veterans and Churchill and the King and all that were there. And one of the acts during this gathering was all the lights would go out and about a hundred and fifty school cadets would suddenly appear in the centre and we all had sticks with cellophane paper and a torch. And suddenly all these little camp fires would be lit up all around the centre part

33:00 of the Albert Hall and we led them in the singing of the old songs, Tipperary and the Home Fire is Burning and that sort of thing. And we did that for five or ten minutes and then off. So that was another interesting experience.

Singing would’ve been incredible.

It was yes, yeah but it wasn’t great singing but it was the old, all the old Second World War songs and yeah that was great.

So what year did you join the school cadets and…?

Oh, I would’ve

33:30 been, I think you had to be thirteen or fourteen I think to join the cadets yeah fourteen something like that. So it’d be ’43, ’44, ’43.

Was there any sort of expectation or even training looking towards you guys one day fighting in the war?

I don’t really know about that it was just the done thing but a bit like Knox, at Knox here everyone has to join the cadets or something but at school you had

34:00 to join the cadets or something but, yeah.

And when did you join the other group, the fusiliers?

That would’ve been shortly afterwards about ’44 that I joined the Royal Fusilier Cadets.

Did they take you away on camps?

Oh yes, the school cadets were attached to the Irish Guards. So we, we’d do our camps with the, an Irish Guard Battalion. They’d foster us for a camp and I remember one of the camps

34:30 was out at Lowestoft which is on the east coast of England but can’t remember where the other. Oh, another bit of training I did at Aldershot, they ran various courses for members of the cadets and I did a drill instructors course which was run by the guards at Pirbright. And I also got qualified

35:00 as a PT [Physical Training] instructor, you get your cross swords to wear on your arm as a PT instructor that but I’ve got a photo here that one of the, with the photo of the class with about a dozen of young lads of my age, sixteen or seventeen. And the army physical training corps instructor who happened to be the captain of England’s football right, he’s just died recently, last year I think but, yeah.

35:30 So you met all sorts of people.

Did, I mean did you know him well or was it just…?

No, just another instructor but he happened to be the captain of England no where near the publicity that Beckham gets these days.

Did sport continue you on in respect to the top soccer leagues premier football?

Yes, well, yes, there wasn’t a premier league in those days it was the first

36:00 division but yes the football still went on. And I used to follow a team called Brentford which is still playing in the third division somewhere but oh yes, all the sporting still went on.

Rationing, what can you tell me about rationing?

Oh yes, once again you got used to it. What you don’t know about you don’t worry about and I always remember that the

36:30 sweet ration was two ounces of sweets a week, chocolate and a two ounce bar is about that big like a Mars Bar is a two ounce. But my parents were very good they used to save it up for the boys so we’d get a bit more than our ration so we’d get a mother and father’s ration too. But yes, all the essentials were rationed sugar and eggs and milk and all that sort of stuff but you got used to it. So much so

37:00 that we’d never seen a steak in our lives at all until flying out to Australia one of our ports of call of course was New York. And we were staying in a hotel and my father said, “Well, we’ll all have a proper

steak," for the first time in our lives. And they produced this steak each and we'd never seen anything like it that huge American style steak on a plate and we just couldn't, we ate a bit of it but none of us could manage to eat a jolly steak.

37:30 It was just beyond our comprehension.

Rationing for clothes and those sorts of things?

Yeah, yeah, yeah they were all rationed and what clothes you could get were, there were no such thing as style in those days. The soldiers when they were coming home when they were demobbed [demobilised] were issued with a jolly suit and you could tell a demobbed soldier just by the look of his suite. They were dreadful things but yes, all the clothes were rationed.

38:00 **Could you describe for me this suit and why you could tell immediately he had been demobbed?**

Well, the material they used which was pretty yuk I thought and they all tend to be brown suits that they looked, I don't know they must've had a choice of colours or that sort of thing. But yeah they just had that look about them, yeah just pretty awful in their standard.

When did

38:30 **rationing actually start to come in for you and the family?**

It started right in 1940, '39 that and then it got progressively worse, but yes '39 is when the rationing started when the war started. And of course when we left the U.K. in '47, '48 rationing was still on quite amazing three years after the war and it was still pretty severe in some areas,

39:00 so…

Did people stock up early on in '39, '40 knowing that rationing would be coming on?

No, but there was a healthy black market around the place and my father being in the food industry we never went really short he always made sure that, God knows how, that we always had a little bit extra sort of thing.

We might stop there and change the

39:30 **tape.**

Yeah, good.

Tape 2

00:48 **Just kicking off again, coming back I guess to your cadet unit, camps**

01:00 **what things did you do on camps when you were in the cadets?**

Marching, arms drill, down on the oh, weapons training mainly on the rifle but also they'd introduced the Bren Gun [machine gun] at that stage and we were also taught on the Bren Gun and then the basics of field craft.

01:30 And that was about it, oh, map read, oh that's right might reading and compass work and all that sort of stuff that was all covered which was very useful and that was about it as far as I can remember.

Any accidents happen while you were using the weapons?

Not, no, no accidents using the weapons. I remember one cadet being drowned in an accident. It was just one of those

02:00 things where he went swimming in the local pool, or river, it was a river actually that he was swimming in and drowned.

What were the consequences of that?

None that I remember, we were all swimming in again next day it was just one of those things that he drowned or rather sad but no one you know took it greatly to heart.

How important

02:30 **was religion and the church during World War II, those war years?**

For some pretty important but we weren't a very religious family but I went to an Anglican School but religion wasn't greatly important no but certainly for us, some people it was, but not for us.

What are some of the sort of lasting memories you have of school and classroom studies?

I can’t say I greatly

03:00 enjoyed my school years. I remember when war started in 1939 at my primary school the headmaster and one of the male teachers or course were called up they’d been in the Reserve or something like that. And they were suddenly gone and we got, they were replaced by women. I still remember Miss Taylor who was the headmistress and Molly Morgan who was my teacher. Dragon

03:30 ladies, oh… that’s for a ten or eleven year old and then of course going on to Latimore Upper all the male teachers of service age had gone. And they dragged out of retirement some really decrepit old people and yes our history teacher, my God he was old, old, old, so yes, I have those memories. The quality of teaching was

04:00 not all that great but… During assemblies, once a week we used to have a visiting – a visitor to talk to us and normally it was something stimulating about the war and one of the talkers or the speakers was a naval or a merchant seaman captain I think he was that came along

04:30 and told them, told of us of the problems. And when the ships were sunk how they would survive at sea with great difficulty and all that sort of thing. And he was telling us how they’d have drink their own urine and we thought this was, you know bloody amazing stuff you know, that you would have to do that sort of thing and then stand up and own up that you’d done it yeah. So those sort of people would stir the interests of

05:00 young teenage boys and then they’d have all boys from the school come back who had served at different places overseas and tell of their war experiences all stirring stuff.

I can imagine some of the language being pretty coloured as well?

Oh yes, yes. And of course of the replacement teachers a lot of the teachers apart from those out of retirement were young women and some of them were pretty inexperienced as teachers,

05:30 however.

And as students did you get up to pranks and those sorts of things?

Well, I mentioned these young women teachers they used to get a very hard time from some of the boys different jokes that they’d play on them. I can’t remember the jokes now but I remember we used to give them a pretty hard time.

Discipline, what sort of things?

Oh yes, by God yes, I’ve had my share of the stick and all that sort of stuff very much so.

06:00 I wasn’t all that bad as a kid but things like running down the corridor if you were caught running, into the teachers room and ‘whack, whack, whack,’ four of the best and, but the stick was just common occurrence.

And what sort of drills did you have in respect to air attacks?

Oh yes, we were all well trained on that right from you know right from 1939 in primary school. Yes, all

06:30 the kids knew straight away how to get down and down to the air raid shelter. And then to keep the kids amused in an air raid shelter where you could sit there for hours sometimes that was a bit of a challenge for the teachers, so…

So what sort of things did they do to keep you amused?

Oh, they’d get us into singing and all that sort of thing and then they’d have little competitions you a bit like ‘I Spy’ and all that sort of stuff for the youngsters to keep them amused but yeah the hours spent in the air raid

07:00 shelters.

Just in the air raid shelters I mean was there food what was the sort of supplies that were there?

There was always water and that sort of thing I can’t remember having meals down there, I can’t really remember that, no.

When did you first realise that you wanted to go to military college?

Oh right from very early age it,

07:30 I’d just always wanted to be a solider.

What requirements did Sandhurst require from you?

You had to matriculate, or your pass matriculation basically and I passed that and then you had to pass the war office selection board. And I was about to go up for the war office selection board but that is a

three day thing and I'd passed the initial interview.

08:00 So I'd done my exams, passed the initial interview and I was about to 'wasby' [?] as they call it when my father said, "We're going to Australia." And I said, "I'm going to Sandhurst." He said, "No, why don't you apply for the Australian Military College," which I knew nothing about. So I went to Australia House in London and told them my case and they said, "Yes, we're looking to expand Duntroon at the moment so why don't you apply?" Which I did and then they said,

08:30 "Oh, it's a three year course." And Sandhurst was only eighteen months and I thought of this is pretty bad news and it was only when I arrived at Duntroon they told me it's four years not three. So I felt I had been duded [cheated].

So you father's news I mean that the family was going to Australia must've nearly devastated you?

It was a shock, yes, mmm, yep.

And no consideration was given that you could remain in England?

Well, I was almost

09:00 eighteen at that stage I thought of it but, yeah, I didn't mind actually as long as I joined the army. I didn't mind going to Australia really but...

What did you know about Australia before you left?

It's amazing, very, very, very little because as I said my father didn't know he'd got this job until about November of 1947 and we left on New Year's Eve.

09:30 30th of December we were on a plane, you know it was all done in six weeks or so…And yes, my knowledge of Australia was abysmal but I had a very high learning curve when I arrived but.

Leaving England was a sort of send off given for the family?

No, it was the middle of a very bad winter and apart from visiting s

10:00 some relatives there was no big party or anything like that no but we said goodbye to some relatives and friends but no it was all done, as I said pretty quickly.

You mentioned flying out with a few stops on the way what can you tell me about the trip?

Yes, well it was a seven day trip and I can remember quite clearly the sort of route we took. And it was flying in one of those Pan Am [Pan American World Airways] Constellation I think it was a big four engine job. So we,

10:30 we were delayed in take off, we were supposed to take off on New Year 's Eve but because of this dreadful storm in London we actually took off in the middle of the night on New Year 's Eve which was about twenty-four hours late to when we should've been going. So off in this dreadful storm off heading to Shannon in Ireland and then to Ganda in Newfoundland, and then down to New York. And we had a stay there for one day but

11:00 the weather was still very, very bad that's why we stayed there one day. We couldn't take off so we went by train down to Philadelphia I think it was and then we flew off to Omaha in Nebraska, the capital of California which begins with 'S', I've forgotten it now, Sacramento, went to Sacramento then to San Francisco then Hawaii,

11:30 and Fiji and then Sydney. Seven days, a long, long trip.

You mentioned the steaks you had in New York...

Yes.

... what other memories do you have of things like that?

I said, it was a very rough trip that we were on this storm that was raging in the Atlantic that's

12:00 why we were delayed and then we got stuck in New York and that sort of thing. But during this trip the, it got so rough I wanted a sick bag and I was sitting beside a young French lad and he didn't speak any English and I didn't speak much French. And there was only the one bag and we were sharing it between us, not a very nice experience. So I remember that but yeah a number of stopovers

12:30 but it was just a very slow tedious trip.

Were there meals served on board?

Oh yes, yeah, I can't remember much about the meals. I remember my mother wearing her fur coat because we left in the middle of a very bad English winter and arriving in Sydney getting off the plane. And rather than wearing it she wore her fur coat on a very hot 7th of

13:00 January Sydney day. Crazy.

And onboard the aircraft, toilet facilities?

Oh yes, there was, the Constellation was a very well equipped plane.

So you arrived in Sydney in very hot weather, where did you go to from the airport?

Yes, we, some accommodation had been teed up for my father at Earlwood I think it was so we stayed

13:30 there. I had, as soon as I arrived here I had to report into Victoria Barracks who arranged for me to catch a train from Sydney to Canberra to go and have an interview at Duntroon. And I was there and back in one day, did that and was told within three or four days that yes I had been accepted to be there at the end of the month, gave me a date. And so yes I just,

14:00 I can't remember much about that three weeks in Sydney before I went to Duntroon but it was just all so jolly new to me, yeah.

Did you have a fall back plan if you weren't accepted into Duntroon?

No, I didn't actually but I hadn't even thought about that, I was just so confident I'm going into the army. I might've gone back to the U.K. I don't know.

You mentioned

14:30 **the heat when you arrived, what were some of your other impressions of Sydney?**

Oh, massive impressions… it was so different to London it really was. The trams, which was something I'd never seen before but London had trolley buses but I can't

15:00 remember any trams around London. Policemen wore funny brown uniforms and that sort of thing but they turned out to be the parking police I think but none of those were policemen that I thought were soldiers but no they were police. But it was the heat I think, that was one of the big impressions that to start with particularly arriving

15:30 in the middle of a summer right out of a cold, cold winter.

What about the accent, did you have any problems understanding Australians?

Not particularly no. Going to Duntroon some of my friends from outback Queensland or the Mallee in Victoria, some of those were a bit broad but no I soon latched on. As I said, I had a very high learning curve when I went to Duntroon but, learning about Australia and all that sort of thing.

16:00 **So let's discuss a little bit about Duntroon, you arrived do you remember your first day upon arriving?**

No, I can't, it's amazing…

What's your first memory?

It's an amazing how little I remember of Duntroon actually. Perhaps that shock of that first year, oh don't know about the first memory, you have memories of the four class training which was pretty bloody rigorous in those days. You know standing under the

16:30 shower, cold shower, singing God Save the King and all that sort of stuff and sweeping the corridor with a toothbrush. And all that crazy stuff they did that, but you have memories of that but it didn't do us any harm. And I think and none of my contemporise wanted to drop out or anything like that because of the hazing that went on but it just, it achieved its purpose of unifying our particular

17:00 cohort or the class as we call it. They're still a very strong group we still stick together very closely and that was the aim of this hazing thing.

Sometimes, this hazing thing can go too far, I mean what were some of the more extreme things that …?

Well, I'm just saying those silly things of you know sweeping the bloody corridor with the toothbrush and but there was nothing sadistic in any of the stuff that we

17:30 had that, whereas occasionally it does get out of hand it's sadism that comes into it. A bit like what you're seeing in Iraq at the moment with this silly stuff that goes on there, but no there as nothing sadistic. And then of course you had to do all the, learn all the things that you have to do as fourth class you know the history of Duntroon and General Bridges and recite the

18:00 thing on General Bridges' grave. I can't remember it now but you had to be able to recite that at lunchtime before you could eat all that sort of stuff. But it was a way of making sure people quickly got to learn what they had to learn about Duntroon and the army.

What were the consequences if you couldn't recite…?

Well, at lunchtime you didn't eat until you recite you're, the eulogy of whatever it was on General Bridges' grave

18:30 but that sort of thing, but no one ever went hungry or anything.

Just on this whole issue, I mean in later years what other things were done to first year students?

Oh well they also had the thing called the indoctrination night where you would all, well really

19:00 put through the rigmarole in the gym. You were stripped naked and blindfolded, a bit like what's going on in Iraq at the moment and you finished up on a slippery dip into a cesspit of old kitchen waste sitting on an iceblock. And they'd put a charge of electricity you know sitting on an iceblock and you'd go down 'shzoom' you'd go down this and be immersed in this bloody…but then you were congratulated this was on forty day I think it is. After you'd been there forty

19:30 days they'd have this ceremony where the senior class would congratulate you, you are now fully fledged staff cadet. But if you look at it in the cold light of day you think, 'oh that's monstrous' but no it was all treated as a joke and it never worked us.

And your first memories of those four weeks of being broken in, what do you have of…?

Oh, oh one horrifying thing was you weren't allowed to smoke and I'd been

20:00 smoking for a couple of years at that stage. It was a law that was introduced in 1948 for the first time, no smoking, and I got caught. Someone found a butt outside on the veranda outside my room so I got charged and got fourteen day CB [Confined to Barracks] and all that sort of bloody rigmarole so I do remember that.

You were dobbed in or you were caught actually in the act?

No, my

20:30 section commander, David Butler, accused me and you had to own up if you were accused on something, the Code of Honour so, yeah. And it was law they only had for one year 1948 you weren't allowed to smoke only for fourth class, all the other cadets could smoke and they revoked it the following year but bloody ridiculous.

What other strange laws did they have just in respect of being in Duntroon?

Oh, it was a very monastic

21:00 sort of life that we had. We could only go out on leave on a Saturday night and of course no drinking. No grog of any sort and that was for all the classes which was ridiculous because you had some of the older cadets you know in their twenties still not allowed to drink, this is going back to 1948, it's all changed now but quite different. So the fact that you weren't allowed to drink

21:30 made it all the more exciting to be able to get a grog so on Saturday afternoon. If you weren't playing a team sport you'd go on a cross country run over the hill to the Ainsley Hotel and then quickly race into the bar there and buy a little bottle of rum, a half bottle of run and race back with that to share with your mates on a Saturday night but that surreptitious drinking that went on. And of course when you did go on leave and you were only on

22:00 leave twice a year, three times a year, yeah, two breaks during the year and a long break at the end of the year that's when you would get stuck into the grog that sort of thing. It was work hard, play hard. There were a lot of sports, sport galore and then a very regimented regime. Like you studied each night

22:30 from seven-thirty to nine-thirty. No one was to leave their room you had to study and you couldn't go down and chat with your mate in another room. And then nine-thirty, ten o'clock is what's called supper time you know go and have a cup of coffee and a bun and then lights out at ten-fifteen. That was a very rigorous - and you weren't allowed to study after lights out of course.

23:00 And the people that were very, very keen worked out systems of blankets and hidden lights and all that sort of thing so they could swat up before exams but I never got into that.

Could you describe for me just an average day from waking up in the morning to going to bed?

Yes, reveille I think was about six o'clock in the morning, ah but there were two lots of defaulters drill

23:30 if you were on defaulters you had to be up and defaulters started at reveille. So that's reveille at six o'clock in the morning or six fifteen or whatever it was and the defaulters parade would start at the same time and defaulters parade meant being dressed in full kit with clean weapon and on the parade ground ready to be drilled by the duty sergeant. But, and that was at six o'clock in the morning and again at four o'clock in the after or four-thirty in the afternoon

24:00 for afternoon defaulters. For those not on defaulters, get up and have your shower, shave and then

parade before breakfast I think a seven-thirty parade, seven o'clock, seven-fifteen. I can't remember but yeah whole parade before the meal and then into the meal out and on parade for the start of the day. Always on parade at eight o'clock and then all march off

24:30 on your different, to your different studies. And it wasn't just military studies of course we were doing arts degrees and engineering degrees and all that sort of thing. And a break for lunch and another parade at lunch time so lots of parades and then studies until four o'clock in the afternoon. And then sport until five-thirty and then parade again at six o'clock for the evening meal and

25:00 then studies from seven-thirty to nine-thirty at night, lights out at ten-fifteen.

Defaulters parade, what do you mean by defaulters?

Defaulters, people that had been awarded extra drills or confined to barracks you have to do some many extra drills. And that could be for having a button undone or anything but and yeah and

25:30 anyway in a senior class can award extra drills too. It was, yes so everyone had to go through some form of extra drills there. No one ever went through Duntroon without doing extra drills of some form.

Your father…

I'm going to have to stop there and blow my nose I think, if you don't mind.

Sure. Just going back again to Duntroon your father, not your real father but your father

26:00 **at Duntroon…**

Oh yes…

Could you explain the system and who it was?

Yes, well when you go to Duntroon you're allocated a number, not your army number but a Duntroon number mine was one 203 and the person with a number a hundred below you become your father. And two hundred below you is your grandfather and a chap called Ollie Larson was my father a hundred below me. He was in first class when I was in fourth class.

26:30 And yeah, so Ollie a very nice chap but he went off to the Korean War and was killed in the war so I didn't have me father after that.

What's the role of having a father? What's the purpose of that?

Oh, just a mentor it wasn't – you also had what's called your lord and master that's appointed every cadet when you arrive, there is someone a class ahead of you who becomes your lord and master. And his responsibility is to make sure you

27:00 learn the routine of Duntroon as soon as possible and you fit in and the father is just a sort of a mentor above that just someone you can talk to if you've got a problem and all that sort of thing. When - see lord and master and he was called, who's the chap responsible for you towing the line.

So what of things did you talk to in this case your father with?

I can't remember anything in particular

27:30 at all. Occasionally he would just have a chat with me but no, it was nothing, it wasn't a close relationship or anything like that but…

And did you have someone that you sort of oversaw father wise?

Yeah, I became a lord and master in my time but I can't remember ho the cadet was even. No, I didn't take it too seriously.

And what was some of the studies that you enjoyed at Duntroon?

Oh,

28:00 well the military studies I enjoyed most and that applied to the majority of the cadets there who enjoyed the military studies but of course doing their arts degree. I was doing arts ,some were doing their science degree and engineering. Oh, we put up with the academic side of things but it really wasn't my great desire in life but so I specialised in

28:30 concentrating on the military side rather than the academic side. I still did pretty well in the exams.

And sport, what sort of sports did you get involved in?

Well yes, being an ex Pom I had grown up with soccer but it was a bit of a surprise to me to find that soccer wasn't played at all in Duntroon in those days, it is now of course but so I had a go at all the sports.

29:00 I played a season of rugby, two seasons of hockey which was the closest to soccer but and a season of

Australian Rules. I enjoyed them all.

What was the dominant sport within Duntroon?

Oh, rugby union yes, by far, but yes.

Playing for the firsts there did that sort of endow you with any sort of special privileges?

Not

29:30 privileges but it's certainly a sort of status that yeah that, yeah. Football certainly was the, a very important thing for the college and if you were in the first fifteen, yes, it certainly gave you a status the rest of us didn't have.

What sort of practical training was Duntroon giving you?

In the, in the military side of things very, very good actually.

30:00 In those days we learnt the basics of every arm of the service. Now for example, I'm an infantryman but apart from learning all the infantry things, the mortars, machine guns all that sort of thing, flame throwers we also, everyone in the class had to do the artillery things. So you learnt how to be a member of the artillery gun crew and went through all the thing and actually fired the guns. Engineering, we learnt how to build Bailey

30:30 bridges and do all the things, mine fields, lay them and clear them. And so for transport we're all qualified with licences and I had a bloody licence to drive a semi trailer which I - but yeah we learnt to drive three tonne trucks, the old blitz wagons with the, double the clutch and all that sort of thing. I've got a licence for a Harley Davidson motor bike which we all learnt to ride so

31:00 yeah, encompassing all the corps, we had a very good grounding indeed but… it was very useful.

Excellent, accidents that may have occurred during your time there?

No, went through our class with no problems at all, no accidents, yeah.

What about some of the personalities in your class, who were they?

Oh, in my

31:30 particular class, of yes, people who have gone on to bigger and better things well a number of them became generals there's digger [Australian soldier] James who's an ex-president of the RSL [Returned Services League]. He's the chap who lost a leg and a foot in Korea. Digger graduated bottom of our class, the last cadet to graduate and yet when he lost his legs in Korea the army said, he wanted to stay on in

32:00 the army. And the army said, "Okay." They posted him down to the Army Corps, he was an infantry soldier like me, and really he didn't like the tanks. So they said, "Why don't you go and do, get a degree in medicine. So he took him off, took himself off for six years and got himself a degree in medicine and this is a for a chap in our class that came bottom of the class at academic studies managed to get his degree in medicine and became a doctor.

32:30 He was in Vietnam the same time as me as a major, running the field hospital and he finished up Director General of Medical Services in the army, a major-general. A great success story with all the disabilities he suffered and then went, hit the top in the army and then the RSL, National President of the RSL.

33:00 That's one character.

You were close to him?

Oh yes, yes, as I said it's a very close class. So we were all pretty close. So there's him, Ron Grey another chap who became major general. He was about to take over Chief of the Army when Malcolm Fraser was Prime Minister. He was having problems with the Federal Police and he got, talked Ron Grey into becoming the

33:30 Federal Police Commissioner for five years to sort out the problems in the Federal Police and Ron did that and did it very successfully, that's another character. And you know, go on, and of course the greatest personality from Duntroon was Fango Watson the Regimental Sergeant Major that. And Fango was quite an amazing chap but put the fear of God into everyone but a tremendous

34:00 leader and regimental sergeant major. Had a wonderful time on a Anzac Day about fifteen years ago, when I was invited by Sir Ninian Stephen at the time was governor general, he invited a number of veterans back to Government House for an Anzac Day dinner and there were serving generals at the time. And

34:30 General Grace and General Bennett and all the members of the military board and plus a number of ex-people like me. And he invited two ex-warrant officers when of whom was Fango Watson and after dinner that night we were standing in the lounge room and Fango said, "This is the proudest night of my

life." and we said, "Why's that?" he said, "Well, in this room tonight there' all my boys." He said, "Every general serving in the army," including Digger James,

35:00 the medical general, he said, "Every general serving in the army was one of my cadets." Yeah, so I always remember that but great character.

What stories do you have of Fango Watson when you were actually at Duntroon?

Oh Christ, there were innumerable stories you know put the fear of God into everyone. Well, he put the fear of God into me. When I arrived there as I said I was a young Pom, snow white, and everyone had their sleeves rolled up

35:30 and no one told me about sunburn cream. Didn't know there was such a thing existed and my arms blew up like balloons and my face and I was in a bit of a mess so old Doc Nimo, the medical chap said you've got to have your arms – your sleeves rolled down and I was the only cadet on parade with his sleeves rolled down and Fango Watson, "What's the cadet doing with his sleeves rolled down on my parade?" So, but yeah I got on pretty well with him because I said I'd done

36:00 a drill at Pirbright with the guards and I could - learnt to do the stamp turns and all that sort of thing and it was the sort of drill that Fango liked so. And I could slow march properly which no other cadet had ever seen before so I was a bit of a favourite of Fango's when I came to drill.

You were a favourite of Fango's but…?

Only on that, only on the drill side.

But did you cop much attention from the other fellows who…?

Oh yes, well they'd recognised

36:30 that I'd learnt to march long before they had that.

They didn't give you a hard time about all this?

A bit of chiacking [playing around] yes, yep. But Fango also when he left the army he won the garden competition in Canberra three years in a row his house in Campbell, immaculate garden just like him. He and his wife had an immaculate garden three years in a row they won the garden competition until they weren't allowed to compete anymore but

37:00 great old character.

The fact that you were your know from Britain and English did that cop you much attention? I mean how did the fellows respond to that?

Oh yes, yes, well, my nickname when I first started there was Bunyip and with this fourth class training and all that sort of thing very early on they realised I knew nothing about Australia. So in my, the first week one of my projects was to go up on the slope

37:30 of Mount Pleasant, you know at nine-thirty at night after studies, "Go and find the Bunyip," and there's all sorts of descriptions of what a Bunyip looks like and all that sort of thing. So I'd go up there and couldn't find this bloody Bunyip and… So I was nicknamed Bunyip for awhile.

When did you realise that some of them were playing games with you with the Australian culture?

Oh yes, well it took me awhile to sort out what was you know having me on and what wasn't but yeah, as I said I had a high learning curve.

38:00 **Women and girls during the Duntroon years, social life?**

Yes, we were all full of testosterone but we didn't see much of girls, you are only allowed out on Saturday evenings and Sundays. And the, in fourth class to introduce you to some of the local beauties, they used to have the tennis party, the fourth class tennis party and that was a bit of a meat trade sort of thing but you'd meet girls for the first time.

38:30 They were very nice girls too but, and but yes eventually you got to know the nurses at Canberra hospital and all that sort of thing and you'd get involved with going out with them and all that sort of thing. And you'd get involved in yeah going out with them and all that sort of thing.

Just in respect to the tennis party, what's, you said, " it was a sort of a meat sort of thing" what sort of precautions did the officers give the cadets?

It was nothing, it was I think from two o'clock to five

39:00 o'clock on a Sundays and you weren't allowed to go home with them or anything like that but it was the introduction so you could be invited by their parents to have a Sunday lunch or something like that.

Were you ever invited off to…?

Oh yes, I went yeah to a number of people yeah in Canberra, they were very hospitable. Canberra was a very small place in 1948, twelve thousand people and there was just Civic, and Kingston, Manuka but no Lake or

39:30 anything like that but. So yeah, and Canberra people in those days took us pretty well to heart. The ANU [Australian National University] was only just starting up and there were virtually no undergraduates it was a research institute of the ANU at that time. And quite different now to - a bit of animosity between the university students and cadets of RMC [Royal Military College] but in those days, no.

So, I mean what was where

40:00 **Lake Burleigh-Griffin is?**

There was a river, the Molonglo River and we used to cross it at what's called Scotts Crossing. There was a ford and you could ride your bikes down to Manuka and Kingston and you'd go across the ford unless it was in flood. And that's the only way, or otherwise you'd drive into town along the – around the other way, yeah.

We'll just stop there and…

Right.

Tape 3

01:18 **Alright Ray, during your time at Duntroon the Korean War broke out, how did that influence your studies at the military college?**

01:30 It didn't influence our studies so much as influenced us….

What influence did Korea have on you while you were at Duntroon?

Yes, when the war broke out it had quite an influence in our class. As that stage we'd put in our selections in which corps we would like to go to and sixteen of us said we wanted to go to infantry.

02:00 But with the war starting there the army had different ideas and said we need thirty five of the class, the majority of the class to go to infantry because in Korea of course we just had the couple of battalions deployed and we had no artillery or tanks or anything like that. So, a lot of people in the class had to then realised that they were going to be infantry soldiers for the next two years

02:30 so for them it came as quite a shock. But the training we were doing they just went on as already planned.

Just to bring me up to speed, what year did you graduate from Duntroon?

1951.

'51.

Mmm.

So during that last year, while the war was on, or year and a half, was there any people who'd been to Korea that spoke to you or news about the war in Korea or?

03:00 Not at that stage, no. I can't remember anyone coming to talk to us who had been involved in the Korean war, no.

How did you personally feel about the prospect of going to war?

Oh, I think as any young officer feels that, excited or even thrilled by the idea. There's nothing worse than peacetime soldiering to have a war on is a very useful thing, gets people

03:30 motivated. So yes, we were actually looking forward to going to the Korean War.

Why did you choose infantry when it came to selecting your corps?

Once again it's… something in the genes I think that says that you're infantry. I couldn't imagine myself being a gunner, or a tankie or the Ordinance Corps or anything like that. So it was just something

04:00 I always wanted to be but and an infantry soldier.

What can you tell me about your graduation and the ceremony that was held there?

Oh it's a great old twenty-four hours apart from the parade itself which is a memorable parade. But these, those days we didn't throw our hats in the air, we've gone so Americanised these days that on all these graduation parades they

04:30 throw their hats in the air at the end. That's not very dignified, don't like hat. However, the parade and of course the ball at night time and the, or the dinner then the ball and that's always quite, well it is a very memorable occasion. And, of course my wife was there we got engaged that night and yep, very memorable.

Any memorable stories surrounding your graduation parade or the ball afterwards?

05:00 No, it was just one of those a great night and a great day.

Who came on your behalf, did you, you mentioned your wife was it, you weren't married at that stage…?

Oh, for the graduation yes and my parents came down too, my mother and father were there for the, and my wife for the parade and ball and all that sort of thing.

Had you been married at this stage or?

05:30 No, no, no, no, in fact no married cadets in Duntroon then. If you got married you were out of Duntroon and of course no females as they have now at Duntroon.

Had you been seeing your wife for awhile though at that stage?

Yes, I met her the year before in, yes in a blind date in Sydney but Geoff Smith one of my class mates and I,

06:00 as you know I knew no one in Sydney having you know arrived from the U.K. so I was looking for female company in Sydney. And Geoff had this friend who knew a lady in Sydney and my wife was that young friend. She used to work for 2UW which was a radio station. So Geoff and I went along to 2UW and met her as a blind date. We tossed a coin, Geoff took her out first night and I took her out the second night and we've been going together ever since, fifty

06:30 odd years ago.

Where were you posted after your graduation?

Yes, after graduation I went to recruit training battalion at Kapooka for about four months until May of that year. And there were two recruit training battalions then because with the Korean War on and all the K-Force [Korea Force] people coming in there was a need for a lot of recruits.

07:00 So yeah that was a busy time there and then I was plucked out to go to Sydney to South Head to set up a school called the Eastern Command Basic Instructors School. With the expansion of the army for the Korean War and the casualties we'd been having over there, there was a shortage of NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers], of corporals. So I had the job of starting up this school

07:30 to produce corporals and it was done at South Head in the old school of artillery there or artillery emplacements just below HMAS Watson and the courses were eight weeks from memory. And I had, there was myself the only officer, and I had a warrant officer and ten sergeants to run this course for about

08:00 sixty potential NCOs. And they were churned through every eight weeks. A course would finish on the Friday and the next one, a course would start on the Monday and during those courses on the 18th of August I managed to get married on a Saturday and I was back at work on the Monday so there was no time for a honeymoon or anything like that. Yes, so I did that for, until the end of the year.

08:30 Got to know a lot of junior NCOs who later on became warrant officers in the army and yeah became well known. And then at the end of the year went on leave and then off to Korea at the end of January.

Just a couple of questions about those training jobs, who were the blokes that were coming through to become corporals in the army at that stage?

They were all corps because I mentioned some of our class

09:00 who were transferred to infantry for two years just to become a platoon commander in Korea they were doing the same with the soldiers too. A lot of the gunners would be transferred to infantry for a couple of years and then go back to being gunners afterwards. So they came from all corps not just infantry to become these NCOs. Oh, and also we had the National Service Programme going which was very

09:30 demanding of NCOs, these were the ninety day national servicemen. So we had the National Service Battalions to man as well as the Korean War. So that's why we were so short of NCOs.

Were there K-Force men coming into that school as well?

Not no, none of those were K-Force. K-Force just went through, a quick visit to Kapooka and they were off to Korea almost straightaway.

What can you tell us about them from your time at Kapooka?

10:00 They were just very experienced soldiers that… I can't even remember what they did at Kapooka, I

think they virtually transited almost straight through but. Because they were experienced soldiers for the Second World War and they just needed a bit of updating on weapons and that sort of thing and they were back in business.

Was that a difficult first posting for a young officer to be essentially in command of blokes with more

10:30 **experience of actual…?**

What the Kapooka one? No, Kapooka was very straight forward but no, I had no, no problems at all. No, I think we were well prepared for those sort of jobs.

When did you first know for sure that you would be going to Korea?

I knew for sure from the day of graduation. It was just a matter of when but to being diverted out to this South Head to run these instructors courses, I did about four or

11:00 five of them and I was very pleased that eventually, because most of my contempories were already over there when my turn came in January but so yes I'd known right from graduation.

Was there a posting at the end of that to a battalion, what happened?

What, to Korea? No, you just… I didn't know what battalion I was going to until I arrived in Japan I think

11:30 yeah, yes I would've been just posted to reinforcement holding unit and then you get posted on to 3RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] or 1RAR or whatever it is.

How did you feel about, obviously as you've just mentioned it's a prime concern of a young officer to get some war time experience…

Oh yes, mmm.

How did getting married affect your views in that department about having to go to war?

It didn't make the slightest difference.

12:00 You might ask my wife, but no she knew full well when she married me that I was off to Korea so that was no surprise there or anything like that but, and it was a matter of choice, you got married before you go or after you go.

And what were the arguments in favour of before?

Well, married before mean that in those days people didn't live together. So at least you could live together then and also you got marriage

12:30 allowance which you don't get if you're not married. And so that there was those sort of things in favour of getting married.

What discussion was there in between you and your wife or fiancée about your, the dangers of what you were doing and the possibility that you might not come back?

Never, never discussed at all I don't think but well I can't remember it ever being discussed, we might have but I don't think so, no.

Can you explain the thinking of a young man in your position

13:00 **in that regard, I mean obviously it was a dangerous thing to be posted to Korean as platoon commander?**

Yes, but it was, I don't think you think of the dangers but it was just the peak of professionalism something you had been training for a bit like a footballer training for a football match. You know if you can train all you like and then suddenly if you don't play the football match so it's something you've been working for, for a long time.

13:30 **You were invincible?**

Oh no, wouldn't say invincible but no you were certainly confidant, yeah there was no shortage of confidence because we had that feeling that we were well trained. In fact it was reinforced when I saw some of my contemporaries in the British system who weren't well trained but we were streets ahead.

Korea was a very specific kind of warfare by that stage…

14:00 Yes it was.

… patrolling and, how much training had you had on that specific sort of…?

Yes, quite a lot of training I think, yeah but I don't think any more could've been covered in the training that we had. But there's no doubt Australian troops were better trained I think than any other troops there.

Can you tell us about leaving and the trip to Japan?

14:30 Yeah, go to war by Qantas as everyone does these days but yes we flew out overnight in Manila and then landed in Iwakuni and then you're there. I can't remember much about the trip there was a draught of about thirty or forty soldiers that I had, all went well.

What were you in Japan for, how long and what did you do?

Only for a couple of days because

15:00 3RAR had just lost a couple of subalterns, in fact this friend of mine Geoff Smith, the one I went to meet my wife with, he was the chap that was killed at the end of January. He and his platoon got wiped out and so I went in to replace him. Almost immediately so that was going from an Australian summer to a Korean winter that was a bit of a shock.

How were you

15:30 **kitted out and prepared for that winter?**

Oh right, by then this is, we're talking of 1953, very well equipped all the winter clothing we needed and parkers and thermal liners and all that sort of stuff, no problem at all.

And that was all issued to you in Japan? How does it work?

Yes, all in Japan.

What other gear did you have in terms of weaponry or anything else at that stage?

It was just this

16:00 Korean winter weather gear that, you pick up your weapon when you arrived in your battalion. I don't think I took a weapon from Japan. I had my pistol issue somewhere I can't remember where but, mmm.

You flew to where Kimpo, where did you arrive in Korea?

My goodness I can't even remember, it must've been Kimpo which is the Seoul

16:30 airfield but then go up by jeep from there but I can't even remember, no.

Were there any first impressions at all arriving in Korea?

No, cold, cold, cold but it was the middle of winter but no just the change in climate to start and then going up to - they were just coming out of 355 when I arrived there,

17:00 and then going back to Camp Casey which was the reserve position. When we were at Camp Casey of course we were accommodated in tents which was much better than being up in the hutchies of and bunkers of three, five, five. And yeah the first or the next six week that I had there was a lot of training that went on all the different

17:30 exercises and that's when I got to see some of these other battalions from the British Army, Canadian Army. When we were umpires, you'd go out on an exercise, you'd either be exercise yourself and a Brit or a Canadian would come in to be an umpire and write a report on you or you'd go and umpire them and I remember umpiring one of the British battalions and the British had mainly national service soldiers, very few regulars. And

18:00 I remember watching this British subaltern [lower rank] with a stick in his hand beating these soldiers up this jolly hill that they were supposed to be attacking and these national servicemen were taking it very slowly. And I thought imagine what would happen in you tried to hit Australian soldiers like that, they'd lynch you so that was a comparison very interesting for me to see between the Brits and the Australians. But we were an all volunteer army but theirs weren't, they were conscripts

18:30 and quite different.

I'll just come back to Camp Casey in a moment, I just want to expand on what you mentioned was cold, cold, cold being one of your first impressions, to someone who doesn't know anything about it can you explain how severe the winter was in Korea?

Oh, very severe when metal for example if you touched, right in the height of winter but it's minus twenty or minus thirty that sort thing you could you know blister your fingers and that sort of thing, if you weren't wearing

19:00 gloves. A problem if you were out on an ambush patrol you couldn't lay up for too long even though you had all this thermal clothing on it was still pretty bloody uncomfortable but, if you stayed out too long lying in the snow but and of course there's a thing called the wind-chill factor. You can be cold but when that wind blows it makes it so much worse that… so yes,

19:30 the cold could be really painful.

At the Camp Casey position you were in tents can you explain how you were accommodated given the weather conditions?

Yes, in tents but all the tents had what we called triflers. They were little metal stoves with a flue that went through the rough and fuelled by diesel I think. Anyway, they were fuel stoves diesel

20:00 or gasoline or something like that, not gasoline, diesel and they would you know heat the tents up and they were quite comfortable actually.

What about washing and toilet facilities, what were they like?

Pretty basic you know thunderboxes [toilets] and all that sort of thing for the toilets and washing facilities we had Korean houseboys which would do a lot of the washing work and all that sort of thing.

20:30 Yes, the Korean boys would be there to do the chores of that sort of thing which would help.

Food, the…?

Yes, back in Camp Casey we had a few fresh rations but mainly American rations up in 355 when you were up there nearly all were the American rations, sea rations, dreadful stuff, Spam [processed meat] and all that sort of stuff. However, you got used to it.

21:00 **Your first role on arrived what was that? What did you have to do?**

Platoon commander, yeah and as I said they were just coming back into this training area which was a good opportunity for me to get to know the platoon. So when we weren't taking part in exercises we were allowed then to go out on own exercises, we would go out and use live firing of weapons

21:30 very easily, there was a live firing range right next to us so yep training and getting to know my platoon. My, in fact it was interesting, my first platoon sergeant was a chap called Ray Simpson became a VC [Victoria Cross] winner again with me in Vietnam but Ray was on his second tour there and he's an ex-second World War Digger. And he's a pretty rough old customer Ray, and filling out my platoon

22:00 commander's notebook as one, every platoon commander has to do I said to Ray, I said, "How many of the platoon have got VD [Venereal Disease]?" And he said, "Oh, I reckon about thirty percent but the other buggers haven't been on leave yet." So yes, yes Ray Simpson was my first platoon sergeant but a very good one.

We'll talk a bit more about him in due course but just while you're explaining your arrival there and getting to know the troops, can you just for the archive

22:30 **explain how a platoon in Korea worked and what your role as a platoon commander was?**

Well, it works like any platoon you have your, your thirty odd soldiers in three sections. Your platoon sergeant is your right hand man and in fact he's your in many cases your guiding light and your mentor if you have any sense you stick very closely and follow up his remarks. And then the three sections with three section commanders,

23:00 each of them corporals and three lance corporals and their deputies and then the diggers and a mixture of people some Second World War with a lot of experience and then others very, very new and very young. I had quite a number of ex-Poms probably about eight of them were ex-Poms some with British army experience some not but that was quite common. A lot of the K-Force were Poms.

23:30 **Because they couldn't settle down in Australia, why do you think that was?**

Could be, it was, well it was a job, it paid well going to the Korean war you got tax free pay while you were there and that sort of thing and it was a chance to see another country so for those that. Poms that had come out to Australia it was probably another job for them.

Apart from the obvious one of age, what sort

24:00 **of perceivable differences were there on the ground in Korea between the K-Force blokes and the Regulars?**

No difference, I couldn't… it would be very hard to tell that a chap was K-Force. You'd by the look of him you know he was a chap in his thirties, he must be K-Force he must be K-Force that's the only thing you could say but, but no they just fitted in completely there was no difference.

It's always difficult for a

24:30 **reinforcement to come in to an established unit…**

Oh, yes it is.

What difficulties did you…?

Well, just that process of getting to know everyone it wasn't difficult but it was time consuming and 3RAR was the only battalion of course that did the individual rotation. 1 and 2RAR replaced each other as battalions and both have advantages and disadvantages I think but

25:00 at least with 3RAR you always had a level of highly experienced people in the place whereas 1RAR when they arrive in a country with a brand new team perhaps no one having been there before or very few, have a high learning curve. Where 3RAR had the same sort of consistent learning curve the whole time. And as newcomer you quickly fitted into that.

Who was the person that most

25:30 **helped you out at that stage, was it Ray Simpson or were there others?**

Oh, probably the Platoon Sergeant Ray Simpson that, yeah and Jim Norrie the company commander and mind you I only spent six weeks, six seven weeks, February March yeah by the middle of March one of the officers in another company in D Company had a problem.

26:00 I can mention his name, Charlie Atherpeddy it's well recorded, had a problem when he burnt his hutchie down but and it was suggested that he had another start in another company. I'd been the last to arrive in A Company so they decided to swap me with poor old Charlie Atherpeddy. So I then went up to D Company and took over a platoon there which once again had to be that learning curve but,

26:30 so you know I only had six, eight weeks with Ray Simpson in A Company and Jim Norrie. So I went to D Company with Bruce Trenerrie and that's when we went back in the line again. In fact I'd only be there what three or four days and they sent back into the line with the Durham Light Infantry. I spent ten days with the Durham Light Infantry. This was a way of platoon

27:00 commanders who hadn't been in the front line before to get a bit of experience. And also we were about to take over from them to go and see the minefields and all the things that were involved in a handover. So instead of spending two or three days I spent ten days with them which was very useful. So went back to them and then came back to this new platoon that I had to go to take them back into the line.

27:30 **So all the work you'd done getting to know you platoon was…?**

That first platoon yes, that's right, yes, yes but that goes on all the time chopping and changing, yes.

Maybe we'll come back to the D Company or was it…?

A Company I started with then to D Company.

We'll come back to that in a moment but how do you get to know your platoon, you mentioned you had a notebook, what do you do?

Well, you've just got to, whenever possible on free moments you sit down

28:00 and have a chat in the evenings. Go round and have a chat with people and get to know, where do you come from, married, how many kids and all that sort of thing the questions and you try and record all this yourself. So that it helps you keep a tabs on everyone and who they are things they like and dislike and…

How far did your responsibilities extend, I mean into areas of the welfare of your troops?

Oh yes, well very much so but yeah you've

28:30 got to know if there's family problems or anything like that. In those days we didn't have a family liaison organisation as they've got now but is now a very sophisticated system. If any soldier's got a problem they switch on the family liaison organisation to it straightaway but the army looked after its own if a soldier got a problem with his family. They get a padre or

29:00 someone like that you know to get something done about it so yes we took all sorts of interests in a solider.

That was a reserve position that you first arrived in…

Yeah.

What was your first sort of indication that you were, that this was serious that you were at war? Do you have any, any moments where you…?

Nothing in particular, no, but you know you're very much at war but

29:30 the whole, the environment of Korea was just military. Hardly saw a civilian. You'd go out on these exercises, major exercises and you'd drive through Korean villages but all the Korean villages were off limits so you never spoke to a Korean.

Was there shelling when you first arrived at that position?

No, no, no, this was Camp Casey was outside the, it was way back about fifteen, twenty kilometres

30:00 from the front line.

So you first experience of the front line was with the Durham Light Infantry…?

With the Durham Light Infantry.

Can you tell us a bit more about that?

Yes, they were quite different from the Australian soldiers I mentioned they were mainly national servicemen and but of course very good NCOs the, the, my counterpart the English subaltern was a young national serviceman. I think by, he was

30:30 younger than I was any rate and I was only twenty-one, twenty-two but twenty-three then but very young and very inexperienced. I did two patrols with them just to get my orientation of the area and all that sort of thing. Fortunately, nothing happened on those two patrols so I would not have really wanted to be with them I think if they'd stuck big trouble but wouldn't have had the

31:00 confidence I would've had in an Australian patrol but yeah they were, the company commander very professional chap Second World War. And they spoke with the funny broad accent, the Geordies, even as a Pom they really are different. But yeah, I quite, I found it useful to have that ten days with them it was a good introduction to the front line

31:30 and of course first bit of mortaring and all that sort of stuff or shelling from the other side but and didn't seem to worry anyone.

How did you react under fire for the first time?

Didn't worry me very much at all. When you say under fire for the first time having lived in London during the war. I think that accustoms you to bangs and noises off screen and all that sort of stuff and it didn't really

32:00 deter me very much at all, no.

Can you explain the front line as it was at that time and the position you were taking…?

Oh, yes a very fixed front line. Well, the old Hill 355 which was a mountain three hundred and fifty five metres high with a trans systems across the top of it and in front of it minefields and barbed wire entanglements and through those a number of

32:30 gaps for patrols to go out and into no man's land. And across the other side of this rather large valley were another series of little mountains or small hills, large hills where the Chinese were and they were doing exactly the same as what we were their trench systems along the top and bunkers. And yeah the similarity on both sides with the no man's land in between.

33:00 **And what was the specific position that the, well the Durham Light Infantry held that you would be taking over with D Company?**

That the, for my company right on top, the top of 355 that our company would take.

And what was there and how were you housed and…?

All in, we lived in bunkers, bunkers tunnelled into the side

33:30 of the mountain and bunkers which, about the size of this room for which would sleep six or eight people. And there'd be a series of these throughout the company position and there'd be other bunkers where you could store munitions and all that sort of stuff. And also from the top there was a great big flying fox, a contraption because it was

34:00 so steep to get to the top and very difficult for getting supplies in and casualties out and all that sort of thing sometime before someone had built this very elaborate flying fox. A machine that would take, take you down or bring supplies up from the bottom of the valley on the other side.

I haven't heard about this machine before, can you describe it for us, how it worked?

Yes, well I don't know, just a normal flying fox that

34:30 I don't know how it was controlled by a motor of some sort, petrol driven motor that carried this cage up and down.

A bit like a cable car?

A cable car, yes, yes, that sort of thing.

And how big was the cage?

Oh, not very big, you could get a stretcher on it and probably

35:00 a hundred weight of store something like that.

It was run by a motor, it was not hand pulleyed?

No, it wasn't hand pulleyed, it was run by a motor but yep.

How was, obviously that you'd get up and down, everything up and down on that how was the

access to your position and what was it?

Well, the other way to as we all arrived there you walked in, you climbed the hill but we also

35:30 had assistance from Korean porter battalions. They had, these were Koreans that were just there to carry things like barbed wire entanglements and timber to built the bunkers and all that sort of thing. These poor blighters would be employed to carry these, all this material in.

What was in your bunker?

Rats and

36:00 the bunker yeah they'd have bunks on the side, about two high sometimes three high but the whole of the bloody position was infested with rats it was like cheddar cheese. And at night time these bloody rats would be appearing all over the place and we tried out best. DDT [Dichloro Diphenyl Trichloroethane – insecticide], we used galore to you know try and get rid of these things but rats really were an enormous pest there.

36:30 **How did you control them?**

We'd kill them in any way you can if you saw them but I don't know the medical, the hygiene section had the problem of putting down baits but they never seemed to do any good. So I really don't know but rats always remained a very big problem.

In general, what hygiene precautions were taken at, in those positions?

Well, they had the

37:00 hygiene section that, responsible for, we had the thunder box latrines. And the tubular pisser phones, they were just around the place and the hygiene section would come round and sanitise, burn off, they used to burn off the thunderbox area once every two or three days and spread lots of lime around and DDT and that was a cure all of, for

37:30 everything.

What facility was there to wash or shower at the front line?

There were no showers or washing because all the water had to be carried up by gerryxx cans. While we were up there we just used to have our mess tin of water to wash in and that was it. We weren't very clean while you were up on 355.

And the heating?

38:00 No, there was no heating, we didn't have chuffers up there that I can remember. Or did we? Yes, we must have had the chuffers [water heater], I can't remember the chuffer in there, the bunker, yes. I really can't remember but there must've been in the middle of winter we couldn't have got by without it. It would've been the same chuffers that we'd had back at Camp Casey, the little dieseline operated things.

Just to flush out that description of the position a bit more,

38:30 **you had the bunkers, you also had weapons pits where was the…?**

Yes, the bunkers would be, the weapons pits would shoot off from the long trench communication trench, weapons pits would go on to the enemy side and the bunkers tended to be on the reverse slope tunnelled into the hill. So it would be very hard for shells or mortars to hit them.

And where, where did you look out on to the enemy

39:00 **from?**

From the forward pits, the pits overlooking the no man's land we could see quite clearly the enemy positions on the other side.

Were there any guns and or artillery set up around you?

No, there were mortar positions but they weren't near us, the battalion mortar platoon that was down to our bottom left probably three or four hundred metres away. So, and we had no tanks

39:30 up with us so no it was just out own small arms weapons and machine guns and rifles.

The company headquarters where was that?

That was right in the centre of the, almost under the when you see a picture of 355 and a flag flying, it was almost under the flag.

How far from your bunkers was it?

Oh, only a matter of a hundred metres.

40:00 **Is that the end of the tape?**

Tape 4

00:41 **… from where we were. You were just explaining your position on Hill 355, what could you see immediately in front of you when you looked out from that position?**

You could see most of the valley, it was undulating so you couldn't see at all and then you could see all the

01:00 forward slopes and then positions occupied by the Chinese on the far side of the valley about five, six, hundred metres away, all that sort of thing. Probably more up to a kilometre away in places.

What did they look like, could you…?

You couldn't anything, if you did some something you'd call the artillery to fire on it so they were like we were they kept themselves well hidden by day.

01:30 But you knew you could see the line of their diggings along the top from the exposed soil and that sort of thing but you couldn't see much of their positions, no.

What was the daily routine with respect to shelling, did you get shelled often?

Yeah, but any time of twenty-four hours a day. I had one very nasty that as about the beginning of May about ten days after we'd got into the

02:00 position where we had a mortar bomb and land in a pit with two soldiers in it and killed them instantly. But I was outside the pit having an O [Officers] group sitting on top of my bunker, this is on the reverse slope where they couldn't see me or anything like that but just by chance I was having an orders group with my section commanders and the mortar landed in the pit

02:30 about oh… ten metres away and the shrapnel wounded all three of my section commanders. So I lost two soldiers killed and three section commanders wounded. And there's a rather dramatic photo which the war memorial have which I have a copy of here of the evacuation of the casualties on the flying fox goes down on that particular day. But yes, that's just the one mortar round and

03:00 the havoc that it can cause it really caused a great consternation on that particular one but that sort of thing was going on all the time. The, just the odd mortar rounds coming in it was just by luck that it landed right on a pit that was being occupied, worked on.

I'll just ask you a few more questions about that now what happened immediately after the explosion?

The,

03:30 fixing up those chaps that were wounded fortunately the three section commander weren't badly wounded and then two chaps were obviously dead the two that were hit by the, right next to the mortar. And then the evacuation of the casualties, getting the stretchers along through the communication trenches a bit of a bugger you know, keep your heads down

04:00 below the parapet and all that sort of thing, so, yeah. The evacuation of the casualties to the flying fox and then getting them down out to the regimental aid post down below.

Obviously that hadn't happened to you before, was it an ordered situation or was it a bit chaotic? How do you describe it?

It wasn't chaos, it was, everyone knew what they had to be doing

04:30 helping to evacuate the casualties it was a shocking situation but no I wouldn't say there was any chaos or, mmm.

What were your responsibilities as platoon commander with regard to the men who had been killed?

You have to write, well you write a letter to the next of kin and then of course

05:00 you've got to get all their personal gear and effects which is sent back down by the system, eventually sent home to them sort of thing. So you've got to go through their personal effects to make sure that there's nothing nasty that, like any dirty pictures or anything like that in there that the family you know wouldn't want to see. So you go through their personal effects and in due course write a letter home to those next of kin. But unfortunately I never got around to writing a letter to

05:30 them because I got bowled over myself a few days later cause you normally do the letter writing when you get out of the line, so yep.

This incident with the mortar bomb, how long after you arrived on the hill was that?

That would've been a week ten days it was early May, yes.

What, first of all we'll just go back a little bit back to the first time you were on the position with the Durham Light Infantry, can you just take us into a bit more detail?

Yes, as I said I did a couple of patrols with them and just watching their routine and making myself fully au fait with where there minefields were and all that sort of thing. Where the gaps were and making notes and all that sort of thing in my note book. Looking at their routine and seeing how

06:00 we could improve on things and it was a pretty standard routine wherever you were you know the stand too before first light in the morning. And then checking the soldiers weapons to make sure they're always clean and that sort of thing. Because so many people were out on patrols on night time a lot of the sleeping was done during the morning after stand too and the breakfast and clean weapons. That's when the diggers would have a chance to

06:30 stand – to have a rest, to sleep before they'd either get ready for rehearsals for patrols for the next night or doing repairs to their, or improving their defences, doing sandbagging and all that sort of thing. But the officers never seemed to get anytime to have any sleep but tiredness was one of things that really was one of my lasting memories of being in the line

07:30 but yeah there was very little time for sleep the body sort of got used to it but my body never really did.

What effects did it have on you just sheer tiredness?

Nothing physically I don't think, I was still fit and all that sort of thing, I can't think of any effects. I don't think I was short tempered or anything like that, no. Seemed to cope with

08:00 that.

I'll have to ask some of your men about that.

Oh yes, that's right.

You mentioned that the Durham Infantry wasn't as well up to scratch by Australian standards or?

That's right by Australian standards.

What specific differences or things did you, weaknesses did you observe?

Well, just things like cleanliness, the hygiene around the place you know talking about rats and what was

08:30 drilled in to us you never have rubbish, left over food lying around and that sort of thing whereas the Durham Light Infantry had open cans of beans left around. And you know had tied up their positions like the Australians would you know that's one example of the sort of thing. They just weren't as well trained but.

Where did you patrol with them, was it a…?

09:00 I did a minefield thing that was just a straight in and out circuit of the minefield area and then we did one fighting patrol but didn't encounter anything. It was going out in the valley at night time and came back in at another position and fortunately nothing encountered.

How did you find their training and behaviour on patrol?

As I said, I'm pleased I didn't go out on patrol,

09:30 well, that we didn't strike anything while I was out with them. I wouldn't have had the confidence I would – when the Australians went out on patrol they were always well rehearsed. We used to do our rehearsals in the afternoon depending what shape of patrol we would have an "L" shape or a diamond shape. People knew exactly what to do in a particular situation whereas it was not all that clear with the DLI [Durham Light Infantry], I never felt

10:00 that confident with the DLIs.

What was your role in, on patrol with them?

I was just a supernumerary, I had no responsibility with them at all but were just behind the patrol command, the platoon commander and just listening in.

When your own platoon came up, can you take us

10:30 **through what your daily routine was? You mentioned a few things you did could you just take us through what you…?**

Yes, it was just a standard thing the day would start off with stand too in the morning everyone before

first light would be there for that half an hour standing in your weapon pits. And then would be the routine of clean weapons, inspect weapons, you check all the weapons of the platoon and then the breakfast. And then, as I said, morning

11:00 time would tend to be a relaxed time for the soldiers who had been out on patrol of whatever it is so they could catch up with some sleep. And then after lunch would be work time again that and then… there always seemed to be rehearsals of some sort going on for a patrol that every second or third night you'd be involved in a patrol of some sort but,

11:30 yeah.

How and where did you undertake to rehearse patrolling?

They were done on the reverse slopes of 355 and oh weapons check where you could blaze away. That was an area that was free firing you could check all your weapons to make sure they were right and that sort of thing. And then you would have your briefing before hand of your section commanders and then the full patrol of

12:00 what you're going to do. What formations you'd adopt and what to do if you were fired on from that direction and all that. All the immediate actions that you would have and go thoroughly through the route of what you're going to take.

Can you explain about, a bit more about the overall chain of command in Korea and what information was coming to you and how?

Yes, well, it was part of the UN Force [United Nations]and the Commonwealth Division

12:30 was part of that UN Force and our battalion would put a daily situation report, SitRep [situation report], which would describe what has gone on in the previous twenty-four hours and that would be like your newspaper for the day. And you'd pass that on to the troops that B Company had a patrol contact, you could hear firing during the night and that would be the result of B Company had a patrol contact and two enemy were killed and one taken prison, whatever it was. So that

13:00 became the daily newspaper and that was the only news that we had. We had radios to listen to the armed forces network but not, there weren't all that many radios around because this is before transistors but I always remember that yeah. There was someone in the company had a radio must've been company headquarters where they'd hear the news, international news and the cricket scores and things like that but

13:30 yeah. That was the battalion sit rep [situation report], was the only way of getting information of what was going on. We heard very little of the major, overall war in Korea.

How were your orders delivered and where did they come down from?

Orders from the company commander that he'd tell you you know what patrols were needed and that sort of thing or when you were on patrol or your

14:00 people so just from them. Occasionally, for any special patrol a platoon commander might be invited up to battalion headquarters to be briefed by the IO, intelligence officer, but no, on the patrols I did, no but just by the company commander.

Where was battalion headquarters for you?

Down bottom, at the bottom of this flying fox, right down the bottom of the valley the other side of 355 but,

14:30 they were down there.

So what communication did you keep up with your company commander? How often did you meet with him and…?

Oh all the time, we had a telephone apart from our radios we had a telephone in the bunker to talk to the company commander but he was only a hundred metres away and at least once or twice a day you'd be seeing the company commander just talking about routine things, routine things or being briefed for

15:00 whatever you had to do.

Tell us a little bit more about the company commander of D Company and what sort of a chap he was?

That was Bruce Trenery, Bruce a very quiet unassuming chap as opposed to Jim Norrie who was 'blood and guts' Norrie but a completely different type of chap. But Bruce was very quiet self effacing chap. Yeah, nice chap.

You talked us through

15:30 **a day in the basic outline, within that outline what were your specific duties as platoon commander?**

To make sure that everything was done that needed to be done. We were continually improving the positions you know you can never say a defensive position is finished there's always improvements to be made either replacing old sandbagging and that. When we'd taken over from the DLIs they'd taken over I think

16:00 from the Canadians before them and the Canadians were not very good there had been all sorts of problems with mine fences not being repaired and sandbags that had been damaged and not repaired and all that sort of thing. There was still a lot of work to be done and we just carried on doing that work.

What, I'm just interested in this chain of command again,

16:30 **down to company, you got yours from company command what happened then from you had did you give orders out?**

Like, when, when that mortar bomb fell I was giving my orders to my section commanders on top of my hutchie on the slopes of the hill. And that was almost a daily think you'd have a daily O group and that yes so everyday and if there was a patrol coming up there would be separate orders group for that but…

17:00 and then the section commanders would go back and then brief their soldiers. So that's how it all went down through the chain of command.

Did you have to keep an eye on each step in this process yourself or what was…?

Yeah, you've got to make sure the section commanders are doing their jobs. If you said such and such if there was a weapon pit that need, that you said there was a weapons pit that needed sandbagging or something like that. You'd go along and check later on that the word had gone

17:30 down to, through the section commanders that that job needed to be done but yep. So you were continually supervising.

You mentioned Ray Simpson before, but what was your platoon commander like in D Company, can you tell us a bit more about him?

I can't even remember his name now, 'boof', quite different to Ray Simpson and I can't remember

18:00 much about him, Feather, Featherstone, I can't even remember his name even.

Was he injured in the mortar attack?

No he wasn't, it was the three section commanders. He might've not even been at the O group I can't event remember now but he wasn't, no.

I imagine just the, whether or not it was handled in order it must've thrown the platoon into a fair bit of chaos losing your platoon commanders…

Yes.

What happened

18:30 **then?**

Well, that's when the lance corporals get their moment. When I say the three of them were injured only two of them were back on duty within twenty-four hours. I think there was a slightly injured the only one that was medivac [emergency evacuation from a combat area for medical treatment] was Cashan, Corporal Cashan. The other two were back within twenty-four hours but that's why you have lance corporals they become the section commanders.

What was the process of medivacing or

19:00 **getting reinforcements up?**

These ones went back on, went down on the flying fox down to the regimental aid post down below and from there they would've gone by ambulance only serious medivacs were helicoptered out but they were pretty rare.

And getting reinforcements how quickly could you get?

They wouldn't be all that quick they had to come through the system.

19:30 I'm not sure if they had a reinforcement holding platoon forward. Like in Vietnam we had a reinforcement holding unit we didn't have one in Korean so they had to come from Japan and you'd be at least a twenty-four, forty-eight hour delay. Yeah, the RHU [Reinforcement Holding Unit] was in Japan, yes.

Obviously, you had responsibilities to keep your men in order and the order of the position but your main job as platoon commander

20:00 **was to control, to command patrols more or less?**

Yep.

Can you tell us…?

Well, that was one of the jobs but the other is to make sure the position is properly defended.

Can you tell us about patrol and a little bit more about how it was done and…?

Well, there would be all the different type of patrols, fighting patrols, reconnaissance patrols, minefield checking patrols and all that sort of thing. And basically the battalion would put out each

20:30 night one, two, maybe three fighting patrols. They got to be careful of the patrols not too many out so they're going to clash one to another so that was one of the great dangers that you don't have patrols running into one another. So there'd be say two fighting patrols out from different companies of the battalion at night time. And then there would be standing patrols out at each of these entrances between the minefields always have a standing patrol

21:00 of two men at least maybe three on each of the entrances to those. Then there would be minefield checking parties maybe minefield work parties where the fence had been blown down by the artillery or that sort of thing they had to go, send people out to repair those. So that would be another group out and there would be the recce [reconnoitre] patrol which would

21:30 be a fighting patrol going out and if they wanted to like reconnoiter a particular part of the Chinese position. They would send a fighting patrol out who would set out a firm base who would send out a recce patrol of an officer and two men so up closer to the Chinese position to do it's reconnaissance so that's another type of patrol that…

What was most common that your men were used for?

Oh, standing patrols every night. There'd be, we'd have to put out some people

22:00 in standing patrols so that was the most common. Every… third or fourth night they would be out on a fighting patrol I would've thought, every third, yeah… fighting patrol. We never had any tasks of the recce patrols it was just straight fighting patrols. Work parties certainly we

22:30 had on one occasion when it was identified that a fence was down to send a wiring party out to repair that fence at night time so… yes, they're the main ones.

I've heard from others that there was some pressure from higher command to capture a prisoner…

Oh yes…

Can you tell us about that?

Well, that was one of the orders of course that, I mentioned that patrol of

23:00 Geoff Smith's that was decimated that was when the patrol went out with Warrant Officer Morrison, Jack Morison and two soldiers as the recce patrol to go from there to snatch a prisoner. It wasn't just a recce patrol but he had the job of snatching the prisoner and of course they got decimated and lost twenty men. But yes, it was one of those, I don't know where the order came from, how high up the chain of command but

23:30 it certainly within the Commonwealth Division this was this order had to get a prisoner. And whether it came up higher from United Nations or American command I don't know.

Was that an objective in any of the patrols you were given?

No, no.

What was the objective of a fighting patrol, just to go and pick and fight or what did you do?

Yes, the aim is to dominate no man's land.

24:00 It was yes, to pick a fight or to make sure there were no Chinese in that no man's land that night. But the Chinese, the Chinese were pretty astute soldiers too and they realised our fighting patrols were normally about fifteen men it was half a platoon that would send out up to twenty perhaps. I got the impression the Chinese when they really wanted to come to terms or have a battle with us would send out a lot

24:30 more men than the fifteen we had so when there was a clash it was usually on terms that weren't very good for us. They'd have a hundred men or so out in a company sort of thing and yeah so that was their answer to tactics of dominating no man's land. But they said, "Okay, when we do come out we'll come out heavy, in a big way."

Fifteen men, was that about standard

25:00 **for one of those patrols?**

Yeah, yes.

How did you move those men and how were they organised?

Well, it's up to the patrol commander to decide what formation he'd use and there were all different types of formation the diamond shape or the "T" shaped or the "L" shaped and that sort of thing. And you just decide on the day what sort of terrain you were going into whether it was flat across the paddy fields or going to go

25:30 undulating over the foot hills or whatever you decide on the formation. And then everyone would be allotted a particular position, the big thing was everyone had to know who was next to them all the time but one of the problems was trying to avoid these blue on blue [friendly fire] accidents the, and become so prevalent. In fact coming back from one of patrols we were fired upon by our own standing patrol. People got very nervous

26:00 and it was one of those but fortunately no one was hurt or anything like and apart from giving the chap that fired the weapon a bloody big blast nothing happened to him.

What measures were in place to avoid blue on blue situations?

Well, people tried to be as careful as possible but Jesus there were accidents. In fact I was one of them later on but yeah and there were

26:30 some nasty patrol clashes, you know two of our patrols one big…one in fact about a month after I got bowled it must've been June '53, a big patrol clash between two of our own patrols. And a number of people killed, one of those things.

What was the system of challenging if you came across something?

Well, yes… you're supposed to challenge, you

27:00 say, "Halt, who goes there?" And the passed, we all knew a password and that sort of thing but people get so toey, so gun happy but you're not going to yell out if you think there is a hoard of Chinese within ten metres of you, you know. You can hear people moving you don't want to reveal your position and people just fire. They're not supposed to but you know that's how it happens. That's how accidents

27:30 happen.

Obviously, the case in which you got injured was a bit different we'll come to that in a minute but were there any incidents like this that you were privy to or witnessed in Korea?

Oh being, yeah, I mentioned coming back on one patrol one night a standing patrol that fired.

Can you tell us what happened exactly at that moment, who shot first and what…?

They shot first, the standing patrol it just got so toey that… yeah,

28:00 and then they fired but…

What did you…?

I can't remember the blast.

What was going on I mean at the time did you know immediately that your standing patrol was there and they fired on you?

Yes, yes, we knew in fact we all went down to ground and fortunately it all went over our heads and no one got hurt at all and the, I can't remember what I said to the bloody chap involved but he admitted yes, that he should not have fired

28:30 but they just get so nerve… When you're out on a standing patrol and there's just two of you maybe three at the best but normally just two people and there's movement. You can hear a lot of people and there's probably been a patrol clash in the night somewhere and gun fire has been going off I can understand you know how, you've got to have very good self control to say, "Halt, who goes there?" and rather than, however one of those things.

How

29:00 **was that situation diffused?**

Well, the chap that fired how Owen gun at us, very sorry for himself afterwards, realised what a fool he'd made of himself and how he could've killed someone. He was very lucky.

How many times or if indeed it happened was their contact on a patrol that you were on?

Not, on the ones that I was on, none,

29:30 no. So the two I did with the DLI and the two I did with D Company apart from the third one when I got bowled over that's just the main field check, no. And the only shot fired was that bloody standing patrol when I came back in one night that so, and in fact of all the patrols that went out when you think how many patrols every night. There weren't patrol clashes every night, no, and it was

30:00 only later on just before the end of the war when the Chinese were really wanting to seize the Hook and 355 just before the armistice things really hotted up at night time.

Just a few more questions on the operational sort of organisational structure of patrol, if you were a patrol commander where would you sit within a formation like the ones you were describing to us?

Normally fairly close to the front and central.

30:30 You'd have probably two forward scouts out, depending what sort of formation you had but you need to be fairly close to the front and in the centre yeah that's about it. And that was you and your radio operator and the deputy patrol commander would be at the back be it a platoon sergeant or another corporal, so yeah that was it.

31:00 **Who would you be in contact with on that radio?**

You wouldn't use the radio unless you had to when you wanted to call out a DF, defensive fire or something like that, it would be radio silence. It would be up to you, no one would call you but you would only use it for, if you got into trouble. You wanted fire support or you wanted causality evacuation or something like that.

Could you describe that set for us? What you…

Oh, I can't remember, Jesus over the

31:30 years, I can't even remember. It was just a very simple, basic, what not a five one "o" set, five one "o" came in the fifties to replace that, can't even remember the number of the set. They all go by numbers, just small…

It was an earlier version or?

Yes, yep, a small little backpack, not one of these American walkie talkies no we didn't use those.

32:00 **In the patrol, how were commands or orders given while you were out in no man's land?**

Just by whisper, word of mouth.

Would they spread along the lines or?

Oh yes, yep, make sure that people pass it on but, yep.

Any hand signalling or?

No, no,

32:30 there'd be a touch on the shoulder or something like that because night time hand signals are pretty useless. If you could if there was a bright moonlight night but you'd be very careful on a bright moonlight being out on patrol but you could give hand signals but basically it was just a whisper.

And what was the visibility like on the patrols you went on?

They weren't bright moonlight nights,

33:00 no the ones that I remember just dark nights. And of course you had bloody fog and mist and all that sort of thing to make it worse. In fact that time of the year when I got bowled over it was a very foggy night and then the fog suddenly lifts. So yeah they were dark nights. And of course you have the problem of illumination that suddenly if you were out on patrol

33:30 and you'd get illuminating flares go off sent off by either their side or ours. That can be a bloody nuisance.

What's the drill in the case of that?

Freeze, don't move, don't – stop while the illumination it is better rather than fall to the ground to just freeze immediately because it's very hard to pick a person that is standing up as opposed that he might be a tree or something like that. As long as there

34:00 is no movement you can't identify it.

I assume in the case of a patrol silence is paramount?

Mmm.

How did you move silently?

Very carefully and slowly, yes, carefully. Sometimes it's difficult to do with a lot of undergrowth and that sort of thing and even with the best of intentions you still make a lot of noise if you've got fifteen people on the

34:30 move at night. But the slower you go the better but sometimes you had to go fairly quickly if you're on a

fair distance to cover and you had to be in by a certain time you can't go too slowly.

Was there any camouflage of attempt to sort of…?

No, not at night time we didn't worry about camouflage.

What did you wear all the gear you described before?

No, it was just

35:00 patrol order which was no haversacks or packs just ammunition pouches and your weapon.

What over weaponry was taken out apart from your own, rifle or Owen gun?

Well, we used a sniper scope on one occasion on one of the patrols. That was the infra red you know we – where you could see for a certain distance about a hundred and fifty metres something very new

35:30 in 1953 so we had a loan of one of those for one of our patrols and we thought it was the ants pants, didn't see anything but at least you could see for a hundred and fifty metres. And now every bloody diggers got night vision glasses so that was the only extra weapon I can remember us ever taking but.

What appeared on the sniper scope for a hundred and fifty metres what could you see?

You could see you know the terrain the shrubs the trees

36:00 and all that sort of thing, the paddy fields that orange, orangey look like you see on night vision devices today but for 1953 that really was technology at its best, quite amazing. But we only had one in the battalion it was on loan from the Americans and it was just shared around for different patrols.

What about grenades, were they carried on patrol?

Yes, but

36:30 they were carried but we only had these what the M36 grenade, fragmentation grenades, and they're a double edge weapon. And so were carried but very ever rarely used by the Australians but on patrols so yeah we carried them. Oh, the other ones we had the white phosphorous grenade but no one ever,

37:00 I don't think we ever carried them. They were bloody dangerous things, people didn't like them and but we never took them on control as far as I can remember.

What did they do?

The white phosphorous they were just a long, like a spray can the size of a spray can and but a dreadful grenade it threw that phosphorous everywhere. And it could come back on you as much as it went forward on the enemy that and it

37:30 was the phosphorous. You just, you know you just couldn't put out it just burnt right through the, your clothing and all that dreadful bloody weapon. So yes, we had those grenades but people never took them out on patrol as far as I know.

How long did the standard patrol last?

Oh, out as say nine o'clock, could be out for say six hours.

What problems did the cold

38:00 **cause during that time?**

While you were moving no great problem because your thermal boots and your underwear and all that but it's when you stopped and had a lay down. And you were out on an ambush patrol of some sort that's when it would be very difficult because you would sweat inside would start to go cold on you and all that sort of thing and be very uncomfortable.

As there were patterns for moving

38:30 **were there also patterns for stopping that you used or harbouring?**

No, just the same patrol – there's ambush yeah if you were going out to ambush position but you'd try and keep that ambush formation from the way you moved out. As soon as you went out the minefield entry point you'd take up that formation so you're already in it by the time that you got to the ambush site

39:00 so changing formations is bad news.

Coming back through your minefield is obviously…

Yes…

… dangerous spot how was that worked?

Well, you're supposed to be challenged by the standing patrol when you got to the entrance there and

then you'd filter back in through the gap yep, it was just a matter

39:30 of everyone being on the ball and you don't open fire unnecessarily.

Of the patrols that you were on, are there any other incidents that occurred of note apart from that blue on blue that you or…?

No, only that last patrol that I did that the minefield check that manned.

We'll talk about that in the moment, we've just got a minute or so left on this tape, could you just describe in a bit more detail a minefield check, what you need to do on a minefield check?

40:00 Yeah, well the minefields have wire fences, barbed wire fence, just like a cattle fence all the way around them and they've got little red triangles as the markers and that shows there's a live minefield in there. And of course with the shelling and all that sort of thing that happens occasional the wire gets cut and the fences come down and people don't know there's a minefield

40:30 there because the barbed wire fence has been knocked down, destroyed, broken. So you have to check regularly to make sure that the fence is kept in good order that the barbed wire is always up. As I mentioned the Canadians were very bad they never did minefield checks and that's where the rot started and the DLI. I know did some work on repairing fences and also the Americans were hopeless they'd put a minefield in and they couldn't careless

41:00 about looking after it. But, yeah, if you're going to put a minefield in you've got to look after it as our soldiers discovered in Vietnam but… when you don't look after it you've got big problems.

Right we'll stop there because we have to change over.

Tape 5

00:48 **If we could just start off again talking about the minefield could you explain for the archive why it's important to identify your minefield?**

Well, if you don't

01:00 you'll stumble into it. It's, as I said, it's got the red markers on one side but it let's the enemy know that there is a minefield you're certainly showing them where it is but it's decided that it's much safer to do that than not to have any markers at all. And that's when you don't have any markers that there are problems.

Just in respect of the enemy knowing where your minefield is, I mean

01:30 **what precautions if you're going to be under attack could you do to take away your markers and…?**

You don't you don't take away your markers ever you always leave them there. Well, it's a deterrent then for the enemy at least they know there's a minefield there. They've either got to run through it as the Chinese occasionally did and just to escape or they've got to do something about lifting the mines.

02:00 **So, I mean would the enemy try and walk around it?**

Or they'd blast their way, they'd have things called Bangalore torpedoes that's the way to get through a minefield. It's like a long tube of piping full of explosives and they'd push those in and then you've got a gap through the minefield but that's the technique that is used.

We'll just stop there. I'd like you to share the story what happened from the very beginning the day you actually got shot.

02:30 **What you were doing and the events that following?**

Yep, I was told that to go out on a minefield check at night time. I was told I couldn't go out until fairly late. I can't remember the actual time but it was a bit later than you would normally go out because there were other patrols out there and to make sure there were no clashes and that sort of thing. So it must've been after midnight when I went out

03:00 on the check and the routine is that you phone up let your company commander know you're going and my signaller and my sapper [military engineer], an engineer from the British Engineer Regiment, the three of us went out and the sapper is the expert on the minefields. And we went out and we were checking along the fence, we were walking fairly slowly checking the fencing all the way to make sure the strands were all there and then suddenly the sapper who was

03:30 leading said, "Stop" in a quiet voice, "Stop" I think we're in the minefield. And we stopped and he did and check and yes he realised we were in the minefield so he started prodding his way out. And he gets his prodding rod and prodding along so we just followed in his footsteps to get out of the minefield and

got to the far side and it was a night. That

04:00 was one of those dark nights and there was also a pretty thick fog. It was really foggy at the time. By this time must've been four-thirty coming up, first light would've been you know getting very close then we got to the far edge of the minefield. And then one of those strange things, the fog just suddenly lifts and then the dawn was arriving and

04:30 our position we were about eight hundred metres from A Company on our left, about eight hundred metres. And the next thing we know is this burst of Bren gun fire, that just one magazine he fired off but fortunately only one bullet hit anyone and it hit me. I was waring a flap jacket but it wasn't zipped right up but it went in the top of the zip and came out the far side of my, it went through my back and my lungs and that sort of thing.

05:00 So I got bowled over and I don't remember too much after that but my signaller called for, said we're being fired upon by our own side and happen to be A Company that opened fire on us and he said we need a medivac. So A Company organised a stretcher party to come out by this time it was broad

05:30 daylight and the stretcher party consisted of Warrant Officer Jack Morrison, famous old soldier and four other diggers that came out to carry me back on a stretcher. Jack Morrison said afterwards, he said, "He was well aware of a thousand pair of eyes were watching him go down the slopes of 355 but," he said, "half of those were bloody slit eyes." But the Chinese didn't

06:00 fire a shot or do anything but they were very honourable that way. They went out under a white flag as a stretcher party and they came and carried me back in and I was taken up to the A Company position and then I must've been taken down on this flying fox. I don't know how they got me down to the RAP [Regimental Aid Post] and then I was taken out on one of these medivac choppers which was a pretty rare event in those days.

06:30 It's just like the ones you see in MASH [television show/Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] with the pods on the side. I was put in one of those pods and taken to the Norwegian army surgical hospital the MASH as it's called. I remember waking up in the MASH and the first thing I saw in the bed opposite me was a Chinese and I thought, "Christ I've been put in the bag." Until I saw that there were European nurses around and that sort of thing and I realised I wasn't. So

07:00 I don't know who long I spent there must've been a couple of days where they did the first major operations on me and, yeah it must've been forty-eight hours. I've got no idea but then I was taken back to the 121 Evac [Evacuation] Hospital in Seoul. How I got back there I don't know but where I spent another couple of days, had another operation and then they attached this machine, a breathing machine to me, but suction

07:30 machine to clear my lungs and all that. And then evacuated on a Globemaster [C17 helicopter], a huge bloody aircraft with, I was on the bottom stretcher because I had this bloody machine with me. And the stretchers were five high in this Globemaster back to Tokyo. And I remember going from Tokyo airport to the Tokyo army hospital in a siren, in an ambulance

08:00 with the siren screaming. And that's only time I've been in an ambulance with the siren screaming. Yes, I remember that. So to the Tokyo Army Hospital, which was a bit unusual because most of casualties went to the Kure to the Commonwealth Hospital. But with the bloody machine I had I was the, it had to be an American hospital that could handle me so there I was where I spend four months in

08:30 Tokyo Army Hospital with a series of operations and fortunately successful. And being the only Commonwealth Officer, there were about twenty other Commonwealth soldiers, Canadians and British no other Australians, a New Zealander. We used to get an allowance of a dollar a day just

09:00 you know, oh and they tried to give me a purple heart and I said, "No thank you, we don't have those." But this allowance of a dollar a day was the only concession I had for being in an American hospital enabled me to buy a packet of cigarettes and all that sort of thing. Yeah, between operations I used to go to Ebisu which was the Commonwealth R & R [Rest and Recreation] centre in Tokyo and a lot of my mates were coming across for their five days

09:30 R & R. So I would be there supposedly recuperating between bloody operations and they'd come across wanting to have a big booze up and do all the nightclubs so I used to go back to hospital feeling the bit worse for wear actually. The doctors were not amused with my visits to Ebisu but it kept alive and kept me sane. So, and another funny occasion I must mention the Canadian Embassy, the

10:00 women there said that they wanted to do something to help the Commonwealth soldiers so they'd have an afternoon tea and event that turned out to be a visiting chamber quartet, chamber music quartet, from bloody Canada performing you know, violins and cellos that sort of thing. So I took these twenty soldiers, all with our American dressing gowns, these striped dressing gowns on and our pyjamas out to this after with the Canadian

10:30 Embassy. It was a disaster to say the least because these, that I'm going outside for a cigarette but the end of this painful bloody hour and half or whatever it was, I think I only had two soldiers left sitting with me that… it was a waste of time but oh the Canadian ladies were very good hearted. They had a nice afternoon tea for us

11:00 but yeah.

Just now, coming back because you've mentioned a great deal and we just want to find out I guess more particular emotions and other circumstances surrounding events, the walking into the minefield was that a result of the fog or signs had been moved?

No, the fact that there was a bloody hole in the fence that hadn't been repaired. That's what we were there to find but and yet we'd found the hole alright

11:30 but we hadn't picked up, that it was the hole, and we just walked into it.

What equipment had you actually taken with you to check on the fences?

Nothing, except the sapper had his prodder, metal rod that but yeah there was no equipment that you needed you just had to keep contact with that fence and then record where the gaps were so that a minefield party can come out and repair it. But it was

12:00 one of those things we had missed, that we were in the, that it was a broken fence.

Putting aside that you were shot, was having the fog there advantageous in respect of the enemy?

No, it was just a bloody nuisance. It, yeah I don't think it caused any problem one way or the other it was just a very dark night and you know pitch black

12:30 with the bloody fog probably darker than usual but.

As you started to come back the three of you where were you actually placed before you were fired on?

Oh, just oh probably within metres of the bloody fence we'd just started to come up the hill.

Were you leading were you in the middle where were you…?

I can't remember then, can't even remember. The sapper had been leading through the minefield check

13:00 so… he could well have still been leading I don't know. It might've been me leading that's why I was the one who copped the bullet in the front but I can't remember.

What emotions were running through you when you were in the minefield at the time?

A bloody nuisance and then I was starting to get worried that we were in, it was taking us twenty minutes or so to prod our way out we were doing it pretty slow, well you have to if you're going to prod out. You've got

13:30 to do it properly but you can't, either that or you can do a dash like my mate digger James who lost. I was talking about him before who lost his bloody leg and a foot in a minefield through doing a dash that so much better to prod you way out.

You had a time constraint I take it being dawn?

Oh yes, that's right yes, mmm and that was very worrying too

14:00 and yeah but you couldn't hasten the sapper up any more he was doing the best he could to get out as quickly as he could with safety.

Again, just say you didn't get out what would be sort of the protocol of coming back to your lines or remaining where you are if daylight had arrived?

Well you'd, if it was broad daylight you'd have to creep in

14:30 but you'd let them know, they knew we were out there that was the bloody annoying part but somewhere along the chain of command it hadn't got through to the Bren gunner but yeah so you would come in surreptitiously if necessary crawling back in but…

So what should have been the protocol of the gunner in respect to spotting you?

Well, he should've just checked.

15:00 But, as I said, people get very toey and you've got to check with his superiors platoon commander whoever it was as far as I know he hadn't checked. He just saw us… mind you there had been occasions where Chinese had been laying up outside our own lines from the night before in the hope of ambushing one of our patrols going out the next night. They'd left layout parties on our side of 355

15:30 our side of no man's land. So people were concerned that it could've been a Chinese layout party so you know he thought he'd caught a Chinese layout party but you know it wasn't.

When he fired upon you, I mean were you knocked to the ground? What actually happened to you physically when you were hit?

I got bowled over yeah, but I don't remember much. I know my sig [signaller] gave me some morphine and that knocked me out but yeah because I had a,

16:00 I couldn't speak. I had a big sucking wound to my back and he just gave me morphine and that's all I remember.

And the bullet, where did it actually pass through?

It went through the base of the throat just nicked the windpipe fortunately and then came out my back. Made a big hole in my back.

Now the first time that you actually woke up, was that hospital or beforehand?

I have memories of the RAP, strange one of those

16:30 out of body experiences almost of being in the RAP and someone saying, "I don't think the bastard's going to make it." But that's the only, just a memory that I had whether it, and that was at the RAP the Regimental Aid Post. And then those fleeting memories of the MASH, waking up in the MASH and then memory of the 121 Medivac. I didn't like that because I was intensive care but I had a

17:00 burns patient next to me and oh God almighty that was horrifying, the smell of him. But it's just those odd little fleeting memories that I have of the whole series of events.

So when did full consciousness come back that you…?

Oh, not until I was back in Tokyo I suppose. Well no, I would've been fully conscious in 121 Evac, I must've been but I don't have many memories.

17:30 I can remember being aboard the Globemaster and that sort of thing, really.

I mean the MASH and 121 the nurses and doctors…

Yep

… can you share anything about them?

No, I can't remember a thing about them not a thing. Not a single thing, no. I can remember of course the nurses and doctors in Tokyo but by then I was much better.

In these early days did you ponder

18:00 **you know life, what's next, is the military over?**

Ah… no, it was just a determination you know that I was going to get well. I never thought that my days were over in the army, I thought, no, I've got to get back. I think I was a pretty positive thinker but you know when you're young you only tend to think of the positive things.

18:30 **Again, coming back to when you got hit, some people describe getting shot the burn from the heat of the bullet?**

No, I can't remember any pain at all. No pain. No, none at all on that. The only pain I had was after various operations that you know I remember that in Tokyo that was quite different.

What were they trying to do for you

19:00 **operation wise in Tokyo?**

Oh, when I lost ribs and half my lung had been blown away and all that it was just patching it up and cleaning out all the muck that was in the lung and outside the lung. I had a drain for about oh a month, six weeks, a bloody drain thing all that sort of stuff.

Where was all this attached?

In the,

19:30 various tubes coming out of my body through my lungs and then I had a tracheotomy tube which I had for about six weeks or so a metal tube in my throat that to talk I had to put my finger over the thing. And to smoke I used to put my cigarette in the tracheotomy tube – crazy.

And so they allowed you to still smoke?

Oh yes, free, yeah, yep cigarettes, Lucky Strikes galore and that sort of thing

20:00 no worry about smoking in those days, no. Yes, and even with the lung wound yeah, no problem.

And food, the first time you remember eating is that again Tokyo?

Oh yes, yes, never got used to American pancakes for breakfast, no. But yes it was all American food in the Tokyo Army Hospital but so just one of those things you learn to live with. Turkey, I've gone right of

20:30 turkey ever since then I think cause turkey they had every second day of the week I think.

And the nurses and doctors there…

Yes, very good, yes, yes..

… can you just give me an idea of the set, explain the ward for me?

Yes, there was one doctor a Doctor Watson I think his name was he was the chap that did the series of operations on me and no, very competent doctor very good. And American nurses

21:00 as well as some Japanese nurses too. The Japanese nurses did the bed pan stuff and the American nurses were more the nursing sister type but no the service was very good indeed.

And just outline the ward that you were in and the patients around you?

Private room, the whole time it was very good. I don't know whether it was because I was an officer or my particular wound or what but it was a private room that. So yeah I missed the company of a ward but

21:30 got to know a few of the other patients around the place.

And when did they start to get you up and about?

Oh… I can't really remember it must've been a couple of weeks or so that I was you know started to move around. I remember the Queen's coronation, that was in June sometime of '53 they had a radio, I was going in for an operation and in that room that

22:00 you before the operations, before you have the anaesthetic they brought a radio in for me to listen to the ceremony going in Westminster Abbey before I had the operation. It was a, the concessions, one of the concessions the Americans made to a Commonwealth soldier "Oh, your Queen is being crowned today so you'd better listen to this." But no, the Americans were very good they looked after us.

22:30 **When did they fix up the sort of tracheotomy and…?**

When they take the tube out oh that would've been six weeks after I got wounded, about six weeks.

And when were you allowed your sort of first leave from the hospital?

Would've been after that six weeks, probably would've been May June yeah sometime in July about six or eight weeks after I was bowled over and then

23:00 yes cause I was pretty right by the end of August.

Where did you go, where did you start to go for leave?

No, all I was allowed to was out to Ebisu the R & R Centre. So I just stayed at Ebisu for four or five days each time and then come back to Tokyo Army Hospital. So I didn't get around at all to see anywhere else.

You mentioned though that some of your mates came over?

Oh yes, they all came across, yes they were coming across in their five days

23:30 R & R. Yes, they wanted to whoop it up and by then I knew a few restaurants and night clubs around the place and was able to take them and show them where to go and that sort of thing.

So, just to help me understand the social setting, where did you go, can you share one of these nights and what happened?

Oh, there were, the Ginza, the main entertainment area the Ginza strip. Well, from Ebisu, Ebisu was the Commonwealth R & R camp for

24:00 Tokyo was the also the Commonwealth Headquarters in Tokyo, quite a big, an ex-Japanese naval base and taken over by the Commonwealth Forces. And outside the camp there was a string of bars, probably fifty bars so that the Aussie digger or the 'Geordie' or the French Canadian as soon as they stepped out of the gate they were invited into these bars and all that sort of things. But that was more for the digger, for the officers if you wanted to go into town

24:30 to a more nightclub or restaurant you went into the Ginza that's where they were. And this is 1954, nine years after the war and you know the Ginza was flourishing.

One of the areas the archive is interested in is the social side. So brothels, what did you know about them?

They existed yeah, mmm, yep.

Can you paint me a bit of a picture of them?

25:00 Yeah, but as I said all these little bars, they also had the bar girls with the, to look after the diggers and yes there were brothels yeah no doubt about it. And it was openly accepted that there were brothels around. I don't think the British Military Police or our Red Caps [British Military Police] did anything about the brothels, they were quite open.

What was the

25:30 **army's attitude in respect of...?**

Close a blind eye. They weren't officially allowed but yeah, just accepted.

You mentioned earlier in the interview that Ray said, you asked about VD and Ray said you know, "Some thirty percent and more will have."

Oh yes, yes, yep, cause the, but that was one of the problems in Korea that yeah I didn't know - I think

26:00 most of the soldiers would've got their VD in Korea and that was just bad news over there but... yeah... I don't know if they had any control over any of the brothels in any way of any medical checks or anything like that but I've got no idea on that.

So in respect of VD how would that affect a man in the front line?

Not very much,

26:30 it was what they called the 'drip' it wasn't a serious syphilis or anything like that it was mainly the drip as they called it and give them penicillin shots and that was it. I don't know, I never had any of my diggers hospitalised for VD. I don't know of any of the battalion that was hospitalised with VD but it was just a case of penicillin for them and that was it. Cure the drip.

Could you describe for me what the Japanese

27:00 **people were like?**

Yeah, well it was a country, 1954 and was just getting on its feet again but they struck me as being very polite very hard working people. When I say hard working I always used to be amazed that the kids used to go to school for six days a week as opposed to our five days sort of thing and very disciplined people.

27:30 Once again the school kids all sort of wearing their sailor suits. You know the young primary school kids all waring the same sort of uniform always extremely well behaved rather than our kids who would be noisy running around and enjoying themselves. But the Japanese were so self disciplined and yet extremely polite, any Japanese you know bowed or kowtowed and all that sort of thing and I finished

28:00 up with a lot of respect for the Japanese. I think, yeah, they were a race then to be reckoned with and little did I believe that you know fifty years later they would be one of the power houses of the world but yeah, doesn't surprise me.

What effects from World War II did you see?

Yeah the, this naval base, Ebisu had been very badly

28:30 bombed during the bombing of Tokyo and there was still lots of bomb damage that hadn't been repaired. They had submarine pens there and that sort of thing and still signs of all that bomb damage there but otherwise Tokyo itself was back in business. And yet it had been devastated by the bombing of the war so it didn't take them long to you know get back on their feet again.

29:00 **You mentioned some of the operations in respect to your wound were there little things that you had to do to help the wound actually heal and for you to recover?**

Not that I remember there was a bit of physio you had to do but no nothing in particular that I can remember.

What was said to you in respect to be discharged or returning to the army?

Oh well, I was in the army all the time.

29:30 I had an occasional visit from Australians - I'd fallen out of the system really but in fact, I must mentioned the fact that my wife when I got bowled over. She was told I'd been critically injured but it took her ten days to hear from the army in fact she didn't hear from the army at all it was the Red Cross ten days later that told her where I was. That I was finally in Tokyo but lost all track of me completely and of course she was petrified,

30:00 all that she knew was I was critically injured but didn't know where I was and couldn't get any reports. So I think I'd fallen through the cracks of the administration of the Australian Medivac System but yeah so she eventually found out through the Red Cross and then the Australian Army told me what was going on. Yes, so in August of that year when I was coming up to being passed medically fit I was asked did I want to go

30:30 back to Korea or go home. I said well, the Korean War had finished the armistice at the end of July, so I

said I'll go back to the battalion for the last four months. And so which I duly did I went back as an intelligence officer of the battalion and my wife when I told her she was not very happy. But she understood as a professional soldier there was really no choice that you really

31:00 got to go back to where the war is and that sort of thing.

So, how did you make contact with your wife had you written and rung?

Yes, oh yes write, in fact we were only talking about this the other day, it's quite fascinating, these days, with the days of email, phones the diggers overseas are talking to their families all the time. In the twelve months in Korea I didn't speak to my wife once. Even when you know released from hospital because

31:30 there was just no phone conversation in those days. So it was just by letter the only means of contact and the same in Vietnam, when I had my year in Vietnam there were no phones to phone people and that sort of thing. And these days Christ if they don't speak to their wife once a week there's letter to the bloody minister, times have changed.

But in contacting your wife to letting her know that you were returning to Korea, how was that made via phone or?

No, no,

32:00 by letter but yeah, I think I just told her I'm going back but another four months to go and see me in February. Six months…

And your wound had healed completely at this stage?

Yeah, I was fighting fit. Well yes, fit enough to go back to the battalion.

What was required in respect to assessing your fitness before returning? What did you have to do?

I can't even remember,

32:30 do a few push ups or something like that but can't remember but it was when the doctor had passed me you know as fighting fit. Can't remember what the tests were but yeah.

Okay, how did you get back to Korea?

Back, going back via Kure and then on the plane across to Kimpo or whatever the airfield is at Seoul.

And when you arrived

33:00 **did you go to Camp Casey or where did you head?**

Yes, we were back at Camp Casey then, yep. Yes, and joined the battalion there at Camp Casey.

And what happened from there?

And then I became the IO the Intelligence Officer of the battalion and it was quite interesting. The war had finished but we were still busy getting –

33:30 the war had – the demilitarised zone is based on Hill 355, that area. So we had fallen back from that demilitarised zone and they were busy preparing the Jamieson line I think it was called. That's the next line of defence north of Seoul. And, so there was all the preparations of getting all the bunkers built and all the minefields laid and all that stuff.

And what's the role of an intelligence Officer?

34:00 To be the right hand man of the CO and all the operational side that, doing all the laying out of the defences, the map work and all that sort of stuff, yeah. It, when the war was on the intelligence officer did all the patrol planning too but I didn't have to do that because we weren't doing the active patrolling when the war was off

34:30 but, so it was a much easier job.

So, if I'm understanding you right you are working out basically the plan of defence is that right, the intelligence officer?

Well, the basic plan's worked out by the CO [Commanding Officer] and then he wants to know exactly where everything is so you're going around with the company commanders and that sort of thing plotting gun positions, machine gun positions, marking them on the map, marking the arcs of fire and all that sort of

35:00 thing. So the CO can see how it all looks and then whatever corrections are made you make the corrections and yeah that sort of thing.

Who makes all the decisions for gun emplacements or?

Oh, that'd be the company commander under the CO's direction he tells them the area he wants covered by fire and that sort of thing.

How did, I mean you were that for say what four months?

I went back in end of

35:30 August, so September, October, November, December it would be close on six months by the time, yes I came home in February.

So how did you keep the men occupied, you know they'd been in the war?

Oh right, yes, well they were busy constructing the new defensive positions and then training. Either training on major exercises and when I say major like a divisional size exercise. And they could be a divisional exercise could last for three four days, a divisional attack on a position and they could be

36:00 the most boring of exercises. On one occasion 3RAR was the reserve battalion of the reserve brigade, we went out on the exercise and did nothing for three days except wait because the reserve battalion of the reserve brigade wasn't employed. So, that's the penalty you pay on big exercises that they can be very boring for the troops involved. But yeah, so there were big exercises

36:30 going on and then the smaller exercise where you're training your troops, field firing and all that sort of thing as well as preparing the defensive positions so it was busy, yeah.

What was your role in respect of these training exercises?

I can't remember what we did about the field firing range, there must've been the field firing range there but yeah you'd have to get all the clearances and all that sort of thing for safety. And

37:00 I don't think I was involved in the writing of many of the exercise there but no I was busy on other things laying out this defensive position was the big thing at the time.

For my sake could you just go into the defensive position a bit more the actual thinking behind it, what is the thinking behind the defensive position?

It was just a replacement for the 355 position which we needed

37:30 bunkers and all that sort of thing, communication trenches and weapon pits it was another one of those but thirty kilometres, twenty five to thirty kilometres right next to the Imjin River was where the Jamieson line was, and building another one of those. Sure that was just a lot of work to build a proper defensive position

So just in respect to where weapon pits go or entrenchments or gun emplacements,

38:00 **what's the thinking behind, where do you actually place everything or where did you actually place…?**

Well, it's decided by the company commander at the time. The CO gives the company commander an area to defend and he said, within that boundary and that boundary you've got to defend that, and if he gives any extra support like maybe some tanks or that sort of thing. He will tell him what extra support you've got to do that and the company commander goes around and sites his platoons

38:30 and he's got to have depth as well as just to try and put them all in the front window, that sort of thing. So he's got to allocate his resources within that area of defence and then the, he does exactly the same to a platoon commander that's your boundary, that's your boundary there that's your arc of fire, you've got to protect that area. And the platoon commander then does the same of thing with his section commanders except he would be much more explicit and say I want a machine gun position there

39:00 with an arc of fire like that and weapon pits there to cover that machine gun and protect that and so on. And so that's how it's tied in.

What was the general feeling about the armistice, was it thought that it would last or?

Well, I wasn't there at the time of the armistice. I got there back there at the end of August, early September and by then it was lasting. There was a bit of a worry I gather in the forty eight hours that it might not

39:30 last because there was a hell of a battle on the last day, the Battle of the Hook but that they thought the Chinese might want to go a bit further. But, yeah it did last and by the time I got there they were quite convinced that yeah the Chinese were quite happy to stay where they were.

You shared just a little bit of life in Japan what about now during these four to six months of life in Korea?

In Korea, there was no leave at all for

40:00 anyone, Korean villages were completely out of limits so no one, I never went into Seoul and never went into a Korean village, you drove through them but you never – see there was no shopping or anything like that in a Korean village. Not like you went shopping it Tokyo but which was quite different but, mm.

We'll stop there and break.

Tape 6

00:47 **Tell us about coming home from Korea?**

Yes, it all happens rather suddenly you're in Korea one day and matter of twenty four hours later you're back

01:00 home it was almost a direct flight of course but good old Qantas once again the only way to travel. So yes and then no debriefing or anything like that you're, you go on leave almost straight away after the personnel depot and it's a bit of shock to the system no doubt about it. I think you're best to ask my wife of how much a shock to the system because surprisingly men are pretty still, are still pretty toey. She tells a story,

01:30 oh when I came home and went on leave, we hadn't had a honeymoon if you remember. I got married on a Saturday, back at work on the Monday so we said we'd go up to Yamba on the Central Coast or North Coast for a honeymoon and boarded the train. And low and behold the jolly floods arrived and we only got as far as Evans Head but or Nambucca Heads. And that's where the train stopped because of the floods at the time around Grafton and things. So we had to get off

02:00 the train there and so had my honeymoon with my wife and she said it was a very difficult honeymoon because I was so touchy and toey. And you'd just have to touch me sort of thing and I would grab her and try and strangle her and with that silly sort of reaction that men had in those days. We really were uptight when we came home. These days I think it's all different you get counselling and all sorts of stuff that helps you to wind down but there

02:30 was no winding down as such coming home from Korea.

In what other ways did that 'toeyness' as you called it or tension manifest itself?

I think it worked itself out pretty quickly. Within a few weeks I was as right as rain but it didn't manifest itself any other way I think but it was very touchy for a few weeks.

Were you or have you since dreamed about the war?

No, occasional dreams but no not

03:00 to anything that worries me or anything like that.

Was there any counselling available or any kind of help to men who had come back if they had requested it?

As far as I know none at all you were just expected to get on with life and get on with your job. But no there was no counselling and obviously some men were much more affected than others as I discovered in later years but no,

03:30 no counselling at all.

What about just the simple fact of being in a sort of all male environment and then suddenly being back in civilian life on leave, were there any problems associated with that?

No problems but it takes a bit of getting used to but no doubt about that but no, no problems that I found.

You weren't swearing like a trooper?

No, no, no, no.

We'll come back to in relation to after the Vietnam war and

04:00 **how that had changed but we'll talk a little about those issues later on. What was your next postings after that leave?**

When I came back I was posted as the adjutant of 4RAR which was a depot battalion for the other three battalions out at Ingleburn. And only there for a matter of seven or eight months because at the end of '54 I was then posted to a CMF Unit at Taree, the 13th Battalion CMF. And

04:30 it was one of those country units which a number of out centres from Grafton down to Newcastle, fortunately nearly all on the beaches, Coffs Harbour and Nambucca Heads and all those sort of places. This was in the days when National Service was still in, the ninety day National Service where they served ninety days full time and three years with the CMF. So on the books of 13 Battalion there was something like fifteen, sixteen hundred soldiers. So going to camp was

05:00 quite a business and I arrive once again in February in Taree just in time to go to camp and the Maitland floods were on. And I had four troop trains organised coming down from Grafton picking up people along the way and I think three of them were stranded there for at least two days couldn't get – so we had all sorts of problems getting those fifteen sixteen hundred soldiers into the

05:30 camp even. But yes the Maitland floods were quite something but, yes. In fact it was a pretty dangerous time the other CMF Brigade that went in the camp lost I think five soldiers drowned during the camp they were silly enough to try and cross a creek when it was in flood and they got washed away.

Adjutant's a pretty important role within a battalion is that designed to give you some specific lessons in your sort of further to be trained?

Yes, well

06:00 particularly in the CMF because you're the senior regular officer and in 13 Battalion although nearly all the officers were Second World War, certainly all the senior officers from the CO and all the majors were Second World War officers. You were the person that organised all the exercises and that sort of thing so there was pretty heavy reliance on the CMF adjutant and it was a very demanding job particularly with eight out [?] centres.

06:30 And at one stage think I worked eleven weekends straight, you know different parades at different times, different exercise. So it was pretty hard on my wife too. But yeah a very enjoyable, very satisfying job. I enjoyed it very much.

Moving through after that where were you posted?

From there I went to the SAS, Special Air Service, which was just being formed in Perth and I went to join it as the 2IC.

07:00 And that was quite challenging setting up a unit from scratch and getting it off the ground and going.

Can you give us some background there, why was Australian forming an SAS at that time?

A good question, we didn't have any parachute unit as such we had a parachute platoon at Williamtown where the parachute training school was. But that's all we had one platoon but there was a realisation that

07:30 we should have a parachuting capability and this was a little bit before a special forces capability came in but they could see some advantage of having an SAS type unit as a reconnaissance unit, a unit that could operate behind or deep into enemy territory. So they decided it was about time we had one. The British of course, were the starters of this and had one since the Second World War. So yes, in 1957 we started up the SAS.

08:00 **Was there a text book to use to start the SAS?**

No, there wasn't. David Sterling who was the founder of SAS had written a number of articles and that sort of thing and the SAS the 21 SAS was operating out of Hereford already. Although, none of our unit had been through their SAS training courses. We had people who had done the commando training courses so to help us get some of our skills going

08:30 we were loaned some instructors from the commando companies like Warrant Officer Ernie Tar who was an expert in cliff climbing and roping and all that sort of stuff. He was one that comes to mind a chap that was loaned to us to get the basic skills going. Otherwise it was on the job training of tracing ourselves.

What were the requirements of an SAS, can you describe…?

Well, we developed those requirements as we

09:00 went along. The first lot of officers that went there were just posted in the only requirement was that you'd got to be recommended to it and that you were already parachute trained after that it became more selective. Much the same with the diggers, we started the selection courses going during out time but the first soldiers were just posted in and from then on they were selected.

Why was it based over there?

Politics, purely politics it could've been

09:30 Air Marshal Chergurer was the Chief of the, Chairman Chief of Staff at the time and there was a political movement to get a major army presence in Perth. We had no regular units there at all except an engineers squadron or something like that and there was a move to get a whole pentropic battalion put over there with something like two or three thousand troops. But that would've been a very expensive

10:00 proposition for the army to you know set up a new camp with that many soldiers and instead Townsville was chosen to be another base. And so the cheap way out was to put a SAS Squadron there but it was politics basically.

What was your role from the beginning and what did it entail?

Yeah, I must mention, on the politics side it was ridiculous because we had to do all our jumping here in New South Wales here in New South Wales

10:30 in Williamtown. And we had to jump every six months to qualify for our pay and the air force refused to let the instructors from Williamtown go across to Perth to do our jumping there. So the hundred and thirty soldiers had to go from Perth across to Williamtown twice a year to do our jumping, crazy.

Just on that subject what sort of frustrations did this sort of make

11:00 **within the unit at the time this constant trip across?**

Well yes, we spent so much time away from home it was very hard on families apart from coming across for parachute training. All the major army exercises were held on the eastern seaboard so every year we were across for the major exercise of the year. So just for those alone we were away for about three months at a time and then we'd do our own exercise up in the Kimberleys or whatever it may be and you know they would take up to two

11:30 three months. A hell of a lot of time away from home but very hard on the families again.

Outside the politics, were there advantages to being isolated like that?

None at all. Well, when I say, advantages yes it was so far away from Canberra that, that better the army is the distance away from Canberra. Yes, there is that advantage.

Is that something the army worked out subsequently?

No, I knew, I discovered that in Townsville too that yeah,

12:00 the further you are from Canberra the better it is.

Back to my earlier question, what was your role and what did it entail?

Yeah, being the second in command apart from understudying Len Isles the CO administration setting up a new unit involved you know set out all your procedures all that sort of thing. Getting the right equipment and some of the equipment we wanted was very unusual equipment and lots of bloody arguments

12:30 getting all the right equipment and overseeing the administration both personnel and Q Store [Quartermaster Store] wise. Yes, so it was, yeah little things like being a new unit, regimental march so we had to go about choosing our own regimental marches. So we did a, did a canvass around amongst the officers for some ideas and we had the Western Command Band in those days so we picked about five tunes for a slow march

13:00 and a quick march. And we got them to come out and play them for the morning parade to the soldiers and let the soldiers elect. And that's why we chose the Happy Wanderer as a quick march which was a most unmilitary sort of march and Lily Marlene, a German tune, for the slow march cause the soldiers reckoned they were the best. So those sort of things all had to be done with a new unit but.

Were there any other traditions that were invented at that time?

13:30 Not invented, but no I don't know what the traditions are now in the SAS really that have grown up but we copied the motto of "Who dares win" from the British SAS naturally enough but no I can't think of any particular things. We had our own little idiosyncrasies we taught all the ladies in the officers mess to parachute jump and that sort of thing. Jumping off the mess fireplace

14:00 which is about four foot high. They'd all jump holding their skirts and be caught as they went but the old 'red on' - stand at the door, 'green on' – go. And they'd all jump on as a stick so that thing to indoctrinate the wives but it was good fun.

Was there any official British SAS input into that unit at the time?

No, at that stage no it was only later on that we had exchanges with the British SAS that developed in the early '60s.

Given that

14:30 **it wasn't something that Australia hadn't done before what mistakes were made in the early days of setting up that unit?**

I don't know any mistakes were made, we were – we were fairly slow in being developed but yeah that's with hindsight I don't think we could've done anything much quicker or better than we did at the time. But by the early '60s, once we went to Borneo first it proved we'd done

15:00 quite a lot in the four years from '57 to '61 when we went to Borneo we'd achieved a lot.

You mentioned your role in the settling up the requirements for getting into the SAS, can you talk a little bit about how those were refined?

Well, I didn't have much to do with that myself, that was more the Len Isles and the operation or the training carder [regimen]. But yeah, once again it was something that was gradually developed

15:30 a series of exercises to sort people out to test people before they were coming in. They started first with the soldiers but now or about ten years later all the officers went through it too but. But yes it became quite a steady selection process and then of course the psyche corps came into it and they did all sorts of psyche tests yeah but at that, it was an evolution of the selection system.

The SAS today is

16:00 **very much seen as the elite force in the Australian Army…**

Yes.

Was there a notion of that at the time?

Yes, well that's one of the sore points it was right from the day one of the SAS the conventional army, mind you it's understandable. The conventional army were not very much in favour of having a SAS the CO's of battalions didn't want to lose good soldiers volunteering to go to SAS when they could see a potential corporal and a sergeant. So

16:30 there was not animosity but there was not, not much co-operation between the battalions and the SAS when it came to the recruiting and all that sort of thing. So yeah, for a long, long time the SAS were looked upon askance sort of thing.

Did, within yourselves in this new unit was there a sense that you were

17:00 **something special or did…?**

Well, we were trying to, you know try and convince people we were going to be the best but no doubt about it. Yes, there was a sense that, yes that we were different and not super soldier that was not encourage in any way but you could do better at the basic infantry things. You could shoot better your field craft was better and all that sort of thing.

Were there any new

17:30 **advances in technology or equipment that came in during your time?**

Not in my time, no. They all came later but the new advance with the SLR [self loading rifle], everyone got the SLR and that sort of thing but as I said the equipment of SAS properly took quite some time. So I can't think of any specific thing but we had better radios than the infantry had but that was a slow process in getting the long distance radios

18:00 and that sort of stuff with the signal squadron. But yeah, a gradual process of getting the best equipment.

What about the helicopter as a means of troop deployment, when did you first see that?

No, not till Vietnam. Not in my day in SAS.

There was no assignments?

No, not in my day but that didn't come in until the early '60s when we got the Iroquois [helicopter].

Are there any other incidents or events that occurred during your time over there that…?

Well, I was talking

18:30 about all the exercise we had to go to the eastern states for every year for at lease three months. The most interesting exercise I went on was up to the Kimberleys Operation Drysdale as it was called where we worked with the army survey people and the Lands Department. Surprisingly the Kimberley's in the north had never been mapped properly and the old maps from the Second World War were done from air photos.

19:00 So we had the job of going up to Wyndham, driving up taking fourteen jeeps and about thirty soldiers, with trailers. And our job was to go in and put in the fuel for the army survey helicopter. They did have a helicopter, a little bubble helicopter to put in the fuel for them and to mark the helicopter pads for them to go right the way through the Kimberleys up to Kalumbaru. And also

19:30 to build an airstrip at Gibb River which is right plum dead centre of the Kimberley's for an Auster aircraft to come in. And we did that by cutting down trees, this is before chain saws were even invented and we used explosive, dynamite to blow the trees out of the ground and then used an old piece of railway line between two jeeps to grade the airstrip. So we built the airstrip at Gibb River Station for

20:00 the army survey and made our way all the way up to Kalumbaru Station positioning this fuel along the way and that took us about three months to do but very interesting time, met some very interesting people.

How long was your posting there?

That was two and a half years.

Next came staff college?

No, no, I was then sent off as a company commander in the 3rd

20:30 Battalion at Brisbane the pentropic days. There was an organisation called the Pentropic which was battalion groups and the company then of soldiers consisted of almost two hundred, over two hundred soldiers a very big organisation. So I was a company commander there for a matter of about nine months before I went to Pakistan.

The Pentropic was dropped fairly shortly after its introduction, what were your views on it?

Well, no one liked it, it was a

21:00 very cumbersome organisation. It was an American thing, the Americans had adopted it about three years before the CGS at the time I can't remember his name, thought it was the ant's pants. And the army switched on to but it turned out to be a disaster for the Australian environment and it was dropped within a couple of years after that.

Could you see that at the time?

We knew there were problems it was a big and cumbersome organisation that yeah

21:30 we didn't like it particularly but. So it was no surprise when it was dropped and we went back to the straight light tropical organisation which is what Australian are best suited for.

On to the next thing, why Pakistan? Do you have…?

Yes, well we have, or we had for many yeas vacancies in overseas staff colleges like Camberley,

22:00 Leavenworth in the U.K., Quetta in Pakistan and Wellington in India. In fact the, one of the first Australian students at Quetta was Field Marshal Blamey in 1906. So it goes back as far as that. It's nothing new that we'd had Australian officers there. So every year one Australian there and one Pakistani here but…

We haven't got much time to talk about it obviously it would've been a very interesting experience just to go, go…

Yes it was.

… do you have any

22:30 **lasting impressions of that time?**

Well it, looking back now, it gives me a much clearer understanding of Islam and of Pakistan generally. They were talking about the tribal areas the other day where Osama Bin Laden had been hiding, even when I was there they were busy fighting in the tribal areas. You know there's nothing new about the, all that's been going on and the relationships with the Afghanis

23:00 and all that sort of thing. And we used to practice fighting two enemies Russia and India, Wolfland and Fantasia. And I was always amazed that the enemy had Centurion tanks which was an Australian tank at the time. And of course the Indian Army had Centurion tanks so yes it was quite different that way but very, very interesting and particularly so at the end of the course I travelled around with my family for about a month

23:30 visiting all the various areas. And went across to east Pakistan which is now Bangladesh and that was an eye opener so all in all a very interesting time but.

Was it a difficult time for your family or?

Well yes, my two kids, the two eldest went to school there. They'd just started school and to go to a Pakistani school although though it was an English speaking Catholic school. They had a very difficult time because come play time if you didn't speak

24:00 Urdu you couldn't play. So at the end of twelve months at the age of five and seven they spoke fluent Urdu and so an eye opener for them. Ask them if they enjoyed it, I don't think they would've enjoyed it all that much it was pretty primitive.

But as you mentioned before it may well have had some influence on their future careers?

Oh yes, that's right, yes exactly.

Moving on then in your career just to pass over a few more things before we get on to the Vietnam days,

24:30 **these were coming up, Australia's involvement in Vietnam in the early 60s…**

Oh yes, well my…

What was your first inkling of it?

Yes, I came back to Canberra to the Directorate of Military Operations and Plans as a brand new young staff officer there. It was a very interesting time, two things going on the West Irian or West New Guinea was invaded by the Indonesians. And of course the

25:00 Dutch were overwhelmed and forced to get out and then SEATO [South East Asia Treaty Organisation] were planning all sorts of things to defend against the domino theory and the rise of communism in South East Asia. And my job was to run the briefing sessions for the various SEATO plans for the defence of South East Asia. So I was very much involved and in fact I had an office just like this room in fact about twice the size of it but

25:30 no windows right in the middle of the old admin [administration] building and one wall was lined entirely with New Guinea. And the other wall was Thailand and Laos and the other wall was Vietnam and there were things going on in all those places. And of course it was during my time there that we wrote the orders for the first deployment of the training team in July ’62.

What can you tell me about writing those orders?

26:00 **What did your job involve there?**

Oh mine, nothing very much just the odds and ends as you know the decisions were taken much higher up. It was sent, that’s why it was called a training team, it was just sent purely as an advisory role. No one ever envisaged how within five years we’d end up with the a task force there, about eight thousand soldiers, there was no inkling of that at

26:30 all which reminds me of a little bit like Iraq at the moment. It’s amazing how things can develop in a matter of five years but there was no pre-signs or warning that this could grow and grow and grow and grow. But yes, it was just a commitment of thirty odd soldiers to start with.

When you say there was no pre-signs of warning of what might happen, what about the French experience in Indo China, how much had the Australian army taken onboard of that?

The

27:00 strange thing we didn’t study much of that no but we should’ve been studying that a hell of a lot if our staff colleges and but I can’t think of any studies done at that stage. Later on, a couple of years later when the war developed when I was back in again as the MA [Military Assistant]. We had people like Bernard Fall the journalist or the writer wrote a number of books, Street Without Joy and that sort of thing to come and give a lecture at army office

27:30 but that’s a couple of years later. 1962, there was no idea that we’d be getting involved in a major war but you know even the Americans didn’t know it would’ve developed as it did.

You were sent to be an instructor at Duntroon after that?

Yes, yes went across to Duntroon.

What years was that?

That was ’63, ’64,’62…

28:00 ’64, ’65 back in Duntroon but yes, my G1 [Assistant Chief of Staff (Personnel)] in DAMP [Defence Acquisition Management Process], he said, “Got some good news for you, you’ve got a posting across the water.” And I thought London, Washington and he said, “Back to Duntroon.” Not a very nice joke. Yes, I went back there as an instructor in staff duties, training and intelligence.

Just a side question, was there water… in

28:30 **that lake at the time?**

The lake had just been formed, just been formed, yes. I think ’62 was ’63… or ’64, they’re just celebrating something now of the actual finishing of the lake but, but yes the lake had.

Did the fill it immediately?

It took a while to fill, six months or so but yes, Canberra changed from a little country town to a city overnight. That lake

29:00 made it, it really did.

Just a side issue, so I might ask you a bit more about that later on…

Yes.

… off camera. Duntroon, how had it changed?

It hadn’t changed very much at all but a few extra buildings but in ’62 from when I left in ’51 it hadn’t changed very much at all. It was still the same structure, the corps of staff cadets, no women,

29:30 no married people. It was only later on that it changed so for me very little different to what I'd known as a cadet.

The training principles learnt in Malaya and in Korea, had they been worked into the curriculum?

Yes, oh yes, and some of the warrant officer instructors at Duntroon, you know highly experienced from Korea and Malaysia and that sort of thing. So oh yes, yep and yeah the training was very, very good.

30:00 **What about the training team in Vietnam, was that type of combat that they were training the counter insurgency work and that kind of thing?**

That was one of the great problems, the American system of training is quite different to ours. I used to be horrified as many of all our advisers were of going to a training area and find probably half a dozen machines guns. If they were doing machine gun training, two hundred soldiers

30:30 waiting to be trained whereas we would have you know four of five soldiers per weapon and all that sort of thing that they'd had no idea training people hands on, properly. That and their tactics of use of fire power all the time quite different to ours. So there was a yes, very a much a difference in training that, however, we adapted and the Americans recognised that

31:00 we had particular specialties. When it came to tropical warfare and jungle warfare we were, knew far more than they did but, mmm.

Were there any new problems at Duntroon with regard to either bastardisation that you spoke about or was it all the same?

No, just the, just the perennial problems, occasionally it would burst out but no, no problems.

What about their relationship with the new university or the…?

31:30 University of New South Wales was just becoming part of then. It was just being formalised while I was there but no there were no problems with that I don't think. Not that I noticed at any rate.

Where were you when Australia did commit the first battalion to Vietnam?

I was at Duntroon.

And how did that shake things up or did it…?

Yes,

32:00 people realised that suddenly we were very much in a war but and that there's a possibility that we could all be serving in a war. And there was a possibility that we could all be serving over there at some stage so yes there was a complete awakening by the army and the suddenness of it. Yes, it was quite surprising. And of course it was the introduction of National Service which meant the doubling the army overnight almost but that had a big effect too that cause army went from twenty thousand to forty four thousand in a matter

32:30 of a year, two years.

Having seen this commitment grow in a space of two or three years to that point, were you, did you have any opinion on it one way or the other at the time or…?

Not an opinion no, no. Soldiers don't have opinions ask General Cosgrove. No… there was an awareness that yeah that we were involved in a major war but

33:00 our contribution once you're in – there was a realisation I think that one battalion wasn't going to do anything that you could. If you were going to do anything really you've got to have a brigade, an independent brigade and so they started with one battalion then it became two and two is still pretty useless. You've got to keep one battalion to defend the base and all that sort of thing so it wasn't until '67 when the full brigade of three battalions was deployed that the Australians were really

33:30 making a proper commitment.

As you said about the Korean war when you were a student at Duntroon it was a positive thing in that it would let you get away to war…

Yep.

… how did you feel as a much older officer and instructor at Duntroon when this new war broke out about your own commitment?

Yes, still as a professional soldier that yep wars are a good thing for an army, it's the motivation. You have no problems training soldiers when they motivate and

34:00 if there's a war on there's a reason for motivation straight away. I remember giving a talk at staff college when I was commandant saying that the biggest challenge for an army is peacetime soldiering much hard than wartime soldiering.

This was a very different war though, how much was known about the type of warfare going on?

Oh yes, we knew more than the Americans having been involved in the Malaysia campaign which was counter insurgency.

34:30 Very much aware of the basics of counter insurgency warfare which the Americans weren't but and so for us it was our bread and butter but, yeah. We didn't do everything right there but at least we knew what we should be doing but some big mistakes were made like the minefield and all that sort of thing.

Did it bring you new curricula into the mix at

35:00 **Duntroon when the battalions were deployed?**

No, I don't think so, it didn't. It didn't change the training in any way but, no.

Were you there at Duntroon until you went to Vietnam yourself or what was…?

No, no, no. no, after Duntroon I went to back across the lake again to become military assistant to Sir John Wilton who was the Chief of the General Staff at the time and starting with him

35:30 and then General Daley, Sir Thomas Daley. And that of course was extremely interesting to work for both of those generals. David Horne is writing the biography of General Wilton at the moment and it will surprise people because he will, he's the best general that the Australian army has ever had I think. Because apart from,

36:00 they called him 'Smiler' as his nickname because he never smiled but so he was known as Smiler Wilton. But the astute brain and the ability to handle politicians absolutely superb whereas General Daley very much a soldier's soldier, an outstanding soldier, and his first priority was his men, never understood politicians which was very sad. He used to have raging arguments with Malcolm Fraser and that sort of thing.

36:30 So yeah, to work for both of them to see the contrast between the two top generals, quite amazing and of course Wilton went on to become Chairman Chief of Staff for most of the Vietnam war till he retired in '70, '71.

Is the Chief of General Staff a politician or an army officer or?

He's got to be firstly, well that it, that's the contrast between the two,

37:00 he's a general, he's commanding the army first but he's got to be able to understand and work with politicians. And that's where Wilton was absolutely superb at and could twist politicians whereas General Daley never quite understood or trusted them and then had the big confrontation with Malcolm Fraser which almost cause the resig – well it did cause the resignation of Gorton in the end. So it led to the toppling of governments so this – so whereas

37:30 his loyalty first, Daley would say, "My loyalty is to the army and Wilton would say perhaps, "My loyalty is to the country." I don't know but something like that.

Your role alongside these men was as a military assistant?

Military assistant, yes.

What does that involve?

I was involved with everything that crossed his desk, crossed my desk first so I was there for all his briefings and making sure that all the briefs were prepared for

38:00 every meetings they went to the Chairman's Chiefs of Staff, Defence Committee and so on and then when they went on overseas trips to go with them. So I went to Vietnam, Borneo, New Guinea, Malaysia, all those sort of things, a very interesting time.

But hard to summarise in a few words but what were the issues that were crossing his desk at that time?

Well, Vietnam became the big one of course but I left there in '67

38:30 by then Vietnam was you know boiling. We'd got two battalions there and the war was starting to go very bad and it was Tet [Offensive] '68 of course when it really went down hill. So, yeah Vietnam was his main problem because we had enormous logistic problems with the supplies and all that sort of thing. The merchant navy refused to load the ships so we had to commission a

39:00 merchant ship, HMAS Jeparit, you know put sailors aboard a merchant ship to get supplies up there. So Vietnam, the biggest worry and I'd say the next biggest worry would've been New Guinea because things were very difficult up there. This is before Independence and we were, he was devoting a lot of time and effort to making sure that the PNG [Papua New Guinea] Army was properly trained and equipped. So yes, he would,

39:30 tremendous pressures on him at the time. When you think the pressures on Cosgrove with the little wars, you know Timor I don't think anyone was killed, Iraq no one's been killed and we were losing you know the Battle of Long Tan, nineteen soldiers killed in one day. And so the pressures are much greater I think on Daley than they are anything like on Cosgrove.

How much of that pressure at the time was coming from sort of public protest or public disquiet on the home front?

Yes, but I think nearly all soldiers tried

40:00 just close their eyes to it. Yes, it was right, blatant, in fact interesting, Lady Wilton, Lady Helen Wilton used to march in the peace protests while her husband is the Chief of the Army. But that was the sort of disruption in a family even that but that was sort of across the board but soldiers closed their eyes to it you had to. But yeah, it did affect them but to

40:30 what degree depended on each individual.

Stop there because the tapes out.

Tape 7

00:44 **Ray, you mentioned just in the last tape about going on several trips and a couple of those trips were to Vietnam with Daley, could you tell us about the first one, firstly?**

Yes, the first time we went up was immediately after the

01:00 Battle of Long Tan. Long Tan was the 16th of August and I think within the next week we were there just to see what was going on. It was a very difficult time for the task force at the time. The two battalions had just been established at Nui Dat. The North Vietnamese had this big battle at Long Tan which we were very lucky with there was a realisation afterwards that if they hadn't

01:30 struck D Company of 6RAR. If in fact those two thousand North Vietnamese had hit the task force we could've had a major disaster. So there was a realisation that we had got out of the first one very well and to see you know what the immediate problems were facing the task force and there were a lot of problems at the time. The logistics were not working all that well but although we got the troops in the ground there was

02:00 critical shortages of some types of equipment and munitions. So my job as the MA was to make a note of all these particular problems so that they could be briefed to people when we got back home and I was rapidly filling up notebooks at this stage. Also to assess the morale and the leadership around the place and General Daley could see there was some problems.

02:30 I won't go into the specifics of them but there was a realisation that the task force headquarters that we'd established there was too small for the job it had to do and it needed augmentation. There needed to be deputy commander to take some of the stress of the commander because the, at that time there was just the brigadier and then his three majors, the operations major, the DAQG [Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General] and the personnel

03:00 chap. And there was just not sufficient people to do the job. So there was a quick augmentation of the headquarters when we got back deputy commander was appointed and more officers to go in as duty officers to help the twenty four hour system that they had. So, and also convinced Daley that two battalions was not enough, that you've got to go back and

03:30 fight the politicians to say a third battalion there is absolutely essential cause with just the two battalions there at Nui Dat, one battalion was defending the base and one battalion was only available for operations outside the base. So if you're going to do it properly to get around Phuoc Tuy Province, so it was another thing that was learnt out of that trip to get another battalion in and also support like the

04:00 tank squadron. The decision came soon afterwards to deploy the tanks there too.

Just some questions on what you've shared with us, firstly the lack of supplies, was that in a sense a lack of foresight back home in Australian for what was needed?

Yes, it was bad planning. Now I can say at this stage the plan to deploy the Australians there,

04:30 the task force, called Operation Hardy Hood. That was all the organisation for the logistic base at Vung Tau and the operational base at Nui Dat and the operations for that were called Operation Hardy Hood. It was planned by Director of Military Operations and Plans led by then Brigadier McKye. And Brigadier McKye was sent up then to become Commander of Australian Forces Vietnam as a major general and

05:00 he had to wear his planning. And too much had been planned on a shoestring and it just wasn't working and he had to wear the mistakes of Operation Hardy Hood and it took awhile to overcome those

shortfalls.

The financial side, who was controlling the shoestrings if you like, was it the government or senior army officials?

I don't know how the budget worked in those days but yeah they were given

05:30 fairly much a carte blanche. If you had to have certain amounts of ammunition but it's a lead time to get things you know we ran, there weren't enough bulldozers and all that sort of thing. They had requisitioned enough but and you can buy them off the shelf a bulldozer that didn't have to be army specifications. They just weren't enough logistic people, there weren't enough engineers to build the bases and to build the airfield and all that sort of thing

06:00 so there was a shortfall in the planning. I don't think it was finance that worried them at all.

What relationship had been struck up with the Americans to get any further gear you needed?

Oh yes, the Americans were very helpful within the limits of their capabilities. They helped a lot but we were responsible for our own logistics there's no doubt about that but then they did they helped us a lot with a lot of shortfalls that we had.

06:30 **Long Tan, how was it viewed, you know as a victory, as a positive thing?**

It was a victory but by Jesus only just, and of course it was viewed as a hell of fright for the rest of the army for those of us who realised just how lucky we were. It was a big wake up call.

Morale, what was the assessment of morale?

The morale, always was good through all the time that I've been involved with the Vietnam, with the Australian

07:00 forces. Morale was never a problem with the Australian Forces be it in the training team, the task force or anywhere but morale was good.

And leadership there?

Leadership yeah, there have been problems, I mentioned General McKye with his problem which he created himself with Operation Hardy Hood before he left but the different task force commanders. It's probably not for me to comment but

07:30 they had their different styles of leadership and some cope better than others no doubt about that. I mentioned in that initial task force deployment just after the Battle of Long Tan. When we were there we realised or General Daley realised, that the headquarters was just too small to be able to cope on a long term basis. And that created pressures on Brigadier Jackson the leader at the time which I think he was finding it difficult to handle but.

08:00 **But General Daley's overall assessment of what was going on?**

Yes, well he wasn't in operational command he had to just make sure they had the right training and the right logistic support to be there. And that's when we saw the shortfalls after Operation Hardy Hood and we came back to Canberra and we got them fixed as quickly as possible. But he was very happy with the training we were well prepared training wise for Vietnam.

You mentioned

08:30 **not long after that an armed corps was sent over there?**

The tanks, yes that was within twelve months. The tanks were deployed but.

What was the reasoning behind that?

Well, the reasoning against it why they didn't go initially, there was no scope for the tanks in a tropical warfare. And it proved to be quite wrong and ideal for bunker busting and that sort of thing so that hadn't been thought through properly. When they were deployed they were invaluable

09:00 and we've seen the same argument today about the Abrahams tank, infantry need tanks for support no doubt about it.

So when you returned with General Daley what things did you immediately work on?

It was the logistics was the prime problem getting the logistics sorted out. And anyway, it was a very difficult problem.

When did you next return to Vietnam with him?

Oh, we did another

09:30 visit would've been the following year I think. Yeah, six or eight months later something like that I can't remember much about the second visit everything was going much better. General Graham was then the, or Brigadier Graham as he then was. Oh, that was the time of the minefield. Brigadier Graham

briefed us on this minefield that was being set up in Vietnam which

10:00 involved the laying of thousands of mines but it protected one flank of the task force area. And he was saying that he'd arranged with the Vietnamese for the coverage of the minefield making sure that it was protected. And of course it turned out to be a disaster, the Vietnamese army and the Regional Popular Forces couldn't look after it all the time. And the Viet Cong came and pinched the mines and used them against our

10:30 soldiers and that caused enormous number of casualties but it was General Graham's, he was the author of that particular tactic.

What was said to him about…?

General Daley never tried to involve himself in the operational side of things at the CGS. He was standing back and COMAFV [Commander Australian Forces Vietnam], General MacKye I don't know what, to what degree he discussed it with General

11:00 Graham but Graham was the commander on the ground. And that's what he want to do and he got the – he didn't get any knock backs put it that there might've been some reservations. But he didn't get any knock backs put it that way, there might've been some reservations but he didn't get any knock backs on putting the minefield in.

People like General Graham, I mean they had to be answerable for some of their decisions I presume?

Well yes, but tactically yeah it sounded good provided you could guarantee that the Vietnamese would stop,

11:30 would protect the minefield and not have mines pinched out of it. And there's no way that he could've guaranteed that because he didn't own the Vietnamese popular forces, regional forces or the ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam]. So there was a mistake there but.

Are there mistakes that occurred just in the general set up of Nui Dat and…?

Well, there's the question of why go forward and put the task force in Nui

12:00 Dat. You could've saved some overheads by just kept it at Vung Tau and deploying the battalions out from Vung Tau but that was another argument but we'd been the Americans were all in favour of forward operational bases as they call it. And it has advantages, your dominating an area when you go forward with a permanent presence but there were too's and froes on that. And arguments with pros and cons of do you need Nui Dat or should he keep them all back at Vung Tau

12:30 and operate from there. So no one will ever know the full answer on that.

Do you know how much the Americans dictated how they should fight the war?

They didn't. Oh, the Americans would've liked to have seen us up near DMZ [Demilitarised Zone], the MR1 [Military Region 1] but quite rightly Wilton when he went across said, "No way, we need to be in an area where we can operate ourselves and ideally have a logistic base on the coast of our own."

13:00 And Wilton was – but the Americans would've liked to have had us and the Vietnamese up near the DMZ where we'd have been involved in the heavy fighting with the North Vietnamese main force. Wilton was the man that decided Phuoc Tuy was the place.

Just for the archive, why did Wilton decide not to go up there, because of the danger or?

That's right, we would've been embroiled in high intensity warfare right from the word go and we'd have been sucked in to the American machine. They already had

13:30 two marine divisions deployed there and we would've just been part of another marine division. At least in Phuoc Tuy we had the province to ourselves and we were an identifiable Australian presence and he was very keen on that identifiable Australian presence.

What say did Wilton and Daley have in respect of the media and what they would report?

Wilton have very little to do with the

14:00 media and Daley also didn't say very much to the media. I can never remember him attending a press conference for example so very little relationship with the media. When I was there in '68 the official policy there would be no relation with the media at all unless there's a PR [Public Relations] officer present which is quite ridiculous. This all came about after the

14:30 torture enquiry, the water torture business at Nui Dat when the Viet Cong woman prisoner was tortured with the water. And the Press got hold of it and it became a major story and you know all sorts of fracas in Parliament and all that sort of thing. And the word came around that no one is to talk to the press without a PR officer present and that just didn't work.

15:00 **Could you just explain the water torture story of the woman, what happened in those**

circumstances?

Yes, a Viet Cong woman prisoner was taken to Nui Dat and taken into the intelligence section and there happened to be two members of the press walking past, she happened to be tied up you know arms were bound and that sort of thing. The tent flap hadn't been closed over

15:30 and they were able to see this interrogation going on and the woman having water poured down her throat and that sort of thing. And the word got out because it had been eye witnessed by the press themselves and no one could refute it. It was made worse when the question was asked in parliament and Mr Lynch, the minister at the time, referred it straight away to Tom Daley on the phone at question time, "There's been allocation of torture. Is it possible it could be true?"

16:00 and Daley quite foolishly said, "No way in the world could Australians torture prisoners." And then they had the irrefutable evidence from the eye witnesses so poor old Daley was hung drawn and quartered misleading the minister and all that sort of thing. So the relationship between the press and General Daley and the army general hit a bottom mark after the torture thing.

What did you know about interrogation

16:30 **practices?**

What did I personally know? This is later on with the team that? Yeah, some of our chaps were involved in Province Reconnaissance Units which were involved with interrogation. Yes, there were, one of my warrant officers I had to move on because he couldn't stand the torturing of the prisoners. So he moved to another unit but that was being done

17:00 Vietnamese against Viet Cong and North Vietnamese not our people involved. But oh yes, Christ torture went on.

I guess that's later, we can discuss anything that you knew but just in respect to Daley or what you may have seen or heard, did he know that interrogation and torture may have been going on?

No, no, oh General Daley's such an upright man, no way in the world could he have believed that a woman,

17:30 Viet Cong prisoner could've been given the water treatment by – but no, he was perhaps a bit naïve that way but he just couldn't that Australians would do it but of course they did.

What discipline reactions took place given his embarrassment and what went on?

I can't remember. I'd have to look at the newspaper cuttings afterwards I think the warrant officer was court martialled or something. Yeah, there were actions taken.

Just on the side now, when

18:00 **you arrived the first time at Nui Dat could you just explain the layout and what you saw of the actual base?**

Oh, going back to when we did that first visit just after they arrived. But they arrived in Nui Dat in July of that year and six weeks afterwards that we were there so it was all very primitive. A few tents around the place and that sort of thing, weapon pits around the place. But yeah

18:30 very primitive layout and they were just establishing the perimeter defences putting up the wire around the base because the base covered a pretty big area that, quite a large area, and it was still very much in the development stage, very much. That's why we were so lucky the North Vietnamese two seven five regiment didn't get in. Instead, had the Battle of Long Tan it could've been decimation.

What was the thinking

19:00 **in respect to war itself, I mean was it going to be another Korea?**

It wasn't going to be a Korea but no because there were no front lines except on the DMZ. But no we thought it would be a winnable war but… it was only at the time from the Tet Offensive onwards that people realised that no, it's not winnable, but up until the Tet Offensive

19:30 it was very much a winnable war.

You mentioned earlier when you were in Duntroon your, before the Korean War your eagerness you know o get there get involved given that's what you're training for, Vietnam did you want any sort of more of an active…?

Oh yes, yes that's why I was busting my neck to get there. That's why I was lucky to go straight from the MA's job to command the training team which was a job that I really wanted. But yeah, for a professional soldier that was the place to be.

20:00 **Was there anything more significant that happened during your time with…?**

As the MA, no I don't think so but those overseas trips and all the politicking going on in Canberra and

no, no.

Who were the major headaches for Wilton and Daley in respect to politics?

Malcolm Fraser as the minister, he was the Minister for the Army at the time. He'd just taken over as Minister for the Army and

20:30 we'd just moved into the new defence buildings at Russell. We used to be in the big admin building before and we'd just moved across and the minister moved into his new office at the end of the corridor and General Daley was right next to him overlooking the lake. And I was across the corridor from General Daley and one morning I heard this hell of a noise, this huge crash, about nine o'clock in the morning and it came from the minister's office. So I ran down the corridor and there was this woman in, almost

21:00 in tears and she was picking up her bag and she said, "I've worked here for nine years and I can't take anymore and off." And it was Fraser's private secretary, nine years worked for him and picked up the typewriter and smashed in on the floor. But he was that sort of man, he upset a lot of people but, yes.

With the right motivations?

He was very antagonistic, quite rude on occasions, absolutely rude

21:30 but he was a man determined to get what he wanted. That's how he became prime minister but yeah very, very ruthless is probably the word to use for him.

You mentioned sort of Daley's focus was a bit more probably army?

Oh yes, that's right and he and Fraser they had to get on, they had to talk one another all the time but never had any trust in Fraser at all

22:00 but, and Fraser had some pet hates. He hated General Harris and then General Brogen, two other generals at the time and really went out of his way to be nasty to them but, however.

What was Fraser's aim and focus in respect to what was going on in Vietnam?

Going up – well I don't know what he thought about Vietnam obviously it was a Liberal Party thing that we're in it and go all the way with LBJ [Lyndon Baines Johnson – US President] and Fraser played the party

22:30 line. He never, you tried to slow down our commitment in anyway. Yeah, I can mention another thing, the first soldier to be wounded in Vietnam was a Private Nowak, not wounded, first national serviceman killed in Vietnam was Private Nowak. He was accidentally killed by one of our own soldiers and the message came across,

23:00 CAZ [Casualty] Report, Private Nowak accidentally killed in action and Fraser said, "I'm not having the first national serviceman accidentally killed, he's killed in action. Send back to COMAFV, he's killed in action not accidentally killed." And back they went, he's now killed in action… but, Private Nowak. In fact John Hartley was

23:30 his platoon commander, John Hartley has just retired as a General and John is fully aware of this it was just one of those accidents of war that blue on blue we've been talking about. But, no way the first national serviceman killed, going to be an accidental death. So that was another – it was purely Malcolm Fraser.

How did, I mean the body count fellas dying over there or even getting wounded put pressure on Daley and in that matter

24:00 **Fraser in their positions, how did it affect them?**

Well, no one wants to see the headlines nineteen soldiers killed and all that sort of thing. It became very much later on in the war I don't know specifically but I've heard referred to by Sandy Pearson who became a brigade commander, a task force commander later on that the pressure was on to make sure you minimise your casualties. So nothing was ever written specifically but yeah

24:30 brigade commanders were encouraged to make sure you minimise causalities. You wouldn't go out on an operation to attack the Viet Cong base area if you're going to incur a lot of casualties like the Long Hai Hills and that sort of thing.

These days in war, we're sort of particularly probably the military are always looking for a positive light on what they achieved or battles that they may have won or even body count, what positives I guess were you

25:00 **looking for or was Daley looking to feed to the media or feed to the politicians about how the war was going?**

Yeah, well we had the Civil Affairs Unit who were the unit involved with the Vietnamese population all the time in the Phuoc Tuy Province. And they were having great successes getting people onside and whole villages you know outwardly supporting the Australians. And all that sort of thing and it was

winning the hearts and minds, that's what we were there for not just to destroy the Viet Cong.

25:30 It was 'winning the hearts and minds', the support of the population, generally we did it pretty well although one thing we were not good at there was a strict rule in the task force that no Vietnamese of any sort of type was allowed inside the task force area. And this goes on later when I was with the training team and when we were training Vietnamese long range patrols.

26:00 My SAS members were training them in SAS techniques and they would do a six weeks of training and then they would go out on operations run by our Australian SAS out of Nui Dat, delivered by helicopter run by 9 Squadron out of Nui Dat with one Australian and six or eight Vietnamese with their lives on the line. And for the final briefings run by SAS Brigadier

26:30 Hughes, at the time refused to let those Vietnamese soldiers inside the task force because no Vietnamese comes into our area. And I was furious, my soldiers, members of the team were furious so that sort of thing we didn't do well.

Who was Daley frustrated with in respect to those in command in Vietnam?

He wasn't frustrated with anyone in particular it was just different people,

27:00 different problems that you know I mentioned General McKye, Brigadier Jackson, Brigadier Graham all had particular problems or failings whatever it may be but. And there was another one I won't mention a name was brought home whether he was sick or what but he you know just couldn't handle the job but, simple as that so yeah, that's life.

27:30 No one is perfect.

No one is perfect yeah, but not handling the job, what signs was he demonstrating?

Medical, medical side.

What was his sickness?

Heart problem I think but he was not at all well. How he got there in the first place with a heart problem I don't know, but, mmm.

Just logistically wise, working with the air force and navy, what

28:00 **difficulties and problems arose working with them?**

Or there was some initial difficulties with the air force, navy no problem. All they did was take us up there on the Sydney bring up the battalions and run the Jaraparot but the navy, the air force a different kettle of fish. There were a lot of teething problems like at the time Battle of Long Tan, I said we were there the week later the problems with the air force came to a crux then. The air force believed they would

28:30 decide the time and the occasions when they would fly and not the army who were calling for their support, it came to a head and cleared the air. They were told in the end it's the brigadier that makes the decision not the group captain responsible for the air force. So there were some real teething problems to start with.

Who cleared the air, was it a politician or?

There were battles going on in Canberra yes

29:00 it was decided the chiefs, the heads of the air force and army level in the end to say that these have got to be the priorities and who decides the priorities.

So, at what stage was Vietnam just from a logistics point of view actually operating well, you know things were going the supplies…?

We didn't… let's see they arrived in about the July

29:30 when the Operation Hardy Hood started, within twelve months everything was perfect. Where they were building recreation centres and swimming pools and all that sort of thing in no time at all but it was that first, particularly the fist six months that was the bad time.

Okay, is there anything else that came up during those six months?

No, I don't think so but… no.

So,

30:00 **just share with me, why did you apply for a transfer on leaving where you were with Daley…?**

No, no, you don't apply for transfers in the army.

What's the situation then…?

No, no, no. I let the word, hoping in conversation you know having worked with General Daley for so

long I think I let it drop that I would love to have command of the training team. I was, either that or a battalion but with a battalion you've got to have twelve months training in Australia with the battalion before you go. And I

30:30 had a feeling that Vietnam was not going to last all that long so I was determined to get over there so I went straight from the MA's job to the team but yes I think General Daley helped to get me the job.

Just in respect to your feeling you felt that the Americans and Australians would get on top of the North Vietnamese is that your feeling?

Well, I thought they might've been, the war would be over one way or the other that it wouldn't go on forever because the Americans

31:00 at that stage I thought were getting on top. It was only when the Tet Offensive came that it destroyed everyone's illusions.

So, what did you do with the training team, can explain?

Can I take a break here.

Yeah. So you were just going to share with us the training side of things what you were doing.

Was this in Vietnam, going to the training team.

Yeah, before yeah.

Oh right, the preparation for

31:30 going there. Oh right. Yes, down to the intelligence centre do a quick colloquial Vietnamese course and have a briefing of all that was going on in the country and then going up to the jungle training centre at Canungra and the battle wing at that time was run by an old friend of mine Ron Gray. And Ron gave me a quick run through on all the weapons and munitions and weapons that I would need to be fully

32:00 aux faux with. So I spent a couple of days there and that was about it I think just about ready for the trip across to Vietnam.

What was your wife's response about going across now?

In fact when I left the MA's job I went on leave for three or four weeks in Canberra and I remember listening to the radio at the end of January. I was

32:30 due to leave in a few days time and the news of the Tet Offensive broke of you know every town in Vietnam was under attack and all this sort of thing you know. And my wife was quite horrified, realised what I was going into but so yes she was a bit horrified. So it was yes quite a surprise to hear the Tet Offensive just two days before I was to go.

What concerns did you have given your understanding of the Australia

33:00 **political situation and what was going on?**

No, to me it was just another military job. I understood the views of the protesters against the war but I certainly wasn't anti the war. But no I still even to this day that the South Vietnamese were trying to do their own thing to be independent and set up their own democracy as such, but

33:30 so yeah.

How did you get to Vietnam, can you share the journey over?

The usual way Qantas, except Qantas to Singapore, yeah it was a little bit different as I said the Tet Offensive had just broken out and there was a bit of chaos everywhere including back in Australia, "What the hell is going on over there?" Tan Son Nhut Airport had been closed because it had been under rocket attack and there's still fighting going on

34:00 all around Saigon and so when I got to the personnel depot just before catching the plane I was issued with a jolly self loading rifle all packed in grease. And my last night in Australia spent cleaning this bloody damn rifle and we all boarded this Qantas aircraft with these bloody weapons and ammunition we were issued with and flown to…we didn't land at Singapore, we went straight to battleworthy

34:30 which is quite unusual. And there we got aboard C-130s [Hercules transport aircraft] and flew to Vung Tau instead of Tan Son Nhut and fortunately when we got to Vung Tau we didn't have to fight our way off the aircraft at all. It was just some precaution everyone going to Vietnam has got to have a weapon with them and all that sort of thing. A bit of an overreaction but yes so we got to Vung Tau on the C-130s and then I can't remember how we must've flown up on a Caribou to

35:00 Saigon. But Saigon, when this was what three four days after the Tet Offensive had started was a city under attack. It was a total curfew, there was a twenty-four hour curfew, was still on there and it made getting around fairly easy because there was no one else on the road. But the chap I took over from Terry Trip took me around to meet all the various people I would be working with in Saigon.

35:30 And then we tried to get around the country to visit the various centres where and it was very difficult indeed and in fact I couldn't get to the city of Hue for about three weeks. Terry Trip, my predecessor, had gone we'd had a week's hand over and he'd long gone but it took me three weeks before I got to see the people in Hue. But the fighting was still going on three weeks after the Tet Offensive started. And in fact that was the biggest battle

36:00 of the Tet Offensive the Battle of Hue but and one of the things I realized out of the Battle of Hue, the western media had been covering the Tet Offensive, you know in great detail TV and newspapers around the world. When it got to things like the Battle of Hue where two North Vietnamese Divisions were involved and captured the city of Hue. And almost captured the citadel which is

36:30 part of the city where the headquarters of the 1st Vietnamese Army Division was the battle to recapture Hue was carried out very largely by the South Vietnamese themselves. The 1st ARVN Division did a magnificent job but the two marine battalions that came in were getting all the TV coverage and the headlines. And no, virtually no coverage at all of how well the South Vietnamese were

37:00 fighting and the fourteen Australia advisors involved in that battle will all tell you that the Vietnamese fought extremely to recapture the city yeah. Certainly with the help of the Vietnamese bombing and also the two marine battalions that came in but you'd think when you're watching TV it's the Americans that recaptured Hue, quite wrong.

What was your role there, what were you to

37:30 **do?**

As the commander of the team, the eighty warrant officers and the twenty officers that were deployed all around Vietnam was firstly to make sure that they were employed in worthwhile jobs, getting the best value for our money in our appointments. And then to make sure that they were properly employed, not misused in anyway. And thirdly to make that they were properly administered, they got paid and all that sort of thing and they got all they wanted in they way of clothing

38:00 and all that sort of stuff. But to make sure that we were getting the best value out of our hundred men that we had there.

Could you give me an example of properly employed versus not?

Yes well, to show you not, when I arrived a number of let's say about twenty percent of the team were employed with the American Special Forces, the Green Berets.

38:30 In Military Region 1 they had around Da Nang what was the base for the Mobile Strike Force called the Mike Force we had oh about eight or nine people. And also in Military Region 2 around Pleiku with a Mobile Strike Force. There we had another dozen and so two American Mike Force, two American commanders employing people in different ways and all under the command of the 5th Special Forces

39:00 Group based at Na Trang. First time I saw a major problem was in March, correction May of '68, when at the Battle of Kham Duc. We had part of this Mike Force from Da Nang deployed out to protect what they call an A Camp, these were the special forces camps along the Hue/ocean border.

39:30 Very dangerous bloody positions they were the main forces but no main forces but they were the special forces camps with Americans and Montagnards indigenous, not Vietnamese, but Montagnards. And they would be the, set up the camp there which would be right on the border and make it very difficult for the Vietnamese to bypass them because they would have artillery with them to

40:00 interdict the North Vietnamese. So the North Vietnamese liked to take these camps out so Kham Duc was one of these. It was under attack and they sent a Mike Force Company in with an Australian captain and two warrant officers with this, their own Montagnards about two hundred of them and they went and reinforced this camp at Kham Duc. A Vietnamese division came along and "kapow" they got hit in a big way. The Australian captain and

40:30 the two warrant officers, John White and his Camorras and Lucan the two Warrant Officers did an extremely good job of extracting themselves and their Montagnards. A lot of the Montagnards were killed or wounded in this sort of thing and they managed to get out but I was querying why they had been sent in in the first place when they knew there was an attack about to come. It sounded very dangerous and a month later

41:00 two Australian warrant officers were part of a reinforcement going to another one of these camps by road. A convoy got ambushed by road and the two warrant officers were killed and I thought it was an absolutely futile operation that they hadn't been properly, it wasn't a properly protected convoy, very badly done. So Colonel Shungall was the special forces commander up there I went along and saw

41:30 Shungall and I said, "I'm pulling the rest of the Australians out." I'd already had a talk with him about you know that I'm really not sure that this is all going well up here that I think you're risking lives unnecessarily but after this I can't take anymore, "Australians all out." And I put the rest of the Australians down with the special forces down in Pleiku and which was a much better run. They had some big battles down there, that's where…

Tape 8

00:51 **Ray, you just gave us an example at the end of that tape about how you one instance where you thought that they weren't, the team wasn't properly employed,**

01:00 **can you give us the opposite an example of how you saw the team's role and how far extended and what "properly employed" meant?**

Yes, well a couple of examples there the first one I'll give you is the training we set up for training we set up for long range reconnaissance patrols, LRRPS as they were called. A number of the teams were ex-SAS and they'd been trained in all the SAS techniques and that sort of thing. And I always thought that there was

01:30 a – the Americans themselves through their special forces had set up a school at Na Trang, called a recondo school with a sort of roles that the long range patrols were doing. But I reckoned we could do it better ourselves. We had enough men to do it, I had enough instructors to teach the Vietnamese and at Van Kiep in Phuoc Tuy Province there was a training centre run by the Vietnamese themselves which could accommodate this sort of

02:00 thing. So I believed that there was a good role for the Australians to get involved in training LRRPS. And after discussions with the American training organisation, the Vietnamese training organisation and my boss, the commander of AFV [Australian Force Vietnam], it was agreed that we should give this a try at Van Kiep to set up a long range patrol school with our

02:30 SAS instructors and with the task force supporting us. Because we had a SAS Squadron there and the idea was we would run a course for six eight weeks, I can't remember now how long, training these long range patrols. And then they'd go out on operations conducted by our SAS who would control them operationally. And 9 Squadron helicopters would deploy them and be

03:00 under Australian control and would see how it would work. Anyway, it was a great success to start with. But sadly when I followed this up later on in the year to see how well they were being employed back in their divisions, I went and visited two of the divisions that had got our graduates. I found that they were being employed improperly because the Vietnamese Army had no concept of proper patrolling into in-depth

03:30 patrolling, long range patrolling. So it wasn't the soldiers fault it was the commander's fault so we tried to overcome it by running a full day briefing a demonstration for Vietnamese generals. Whether it succeeded or not I don't know but it was a great disappointment that they weren't being properly employed. But another example was down in the Delta [Mekong Delta] where we hadn't had any Australian presence before.

04:00 The war in the Delta was quite different there were virtually no North Vietnamese down there it was nearly all Viet Cong so it was really a traditional counter insurgency warfare. And the American senior advisor down there, in fact the commander, General Ekhardt had been in Australia for a visit quite recently before and was very impressed with what he heard about Australians and said, "Could he have some Australian

04:30 advisers?" So General MacDonald, the COMAFV said, "Go down and see what you can do for General Ekhardt down there to see if we can employ usefully some Australian advisers." So I went down and had a talk with the Americans and the Vietnamese and yeah we saw some good openings there with working with Vietnamese villages and the Vietnamese regional forces and that sort of thing. And we

05:00 deployed, I think, to start with nine advisers down there working in pairs on the buddy system, what we call mobile advisory teams and they turned out to be a roaring success. In fact the techniques for village defence developed down there by one of these MATs [Mobile Advisory Teams] was so good that it was adopted throughout the country. So it was very, very good indeed so it showed you know with the expertise that some of these warrant officers had when they were turned loose you know

05:30 what's your imagination can you do for village defence. They produced some excellent stuff.

Can you explain the situation when you arrived in Vietnam how the team was deployed? You mentioned the…?

Oh yes, the bulk of the team had for quite a long time been deployed in Military Region 1. That's up near the demilitarised zone and Da Nang from Quang Ngai up to Hue and Da Nang and

06:00 that was the home of the Military Region 1, had the 1st and 2nd ARVN Divisions. They were the two best divisions in the Vietnamese Army. Well, recognised from being so apart from the airborne. We'd had advisers with them for three or four years and one of the things I'd realised not only from my previous visits there with General Daley that these warrant officers, some of them

06:30 were back on their third tour with the same battalion. But really they were not needed as much as they were originally. The battalions were performing well by themselves if the Australian wasn't there, they'd still perform well but the degree or relationship between these Australian advisers and their battalions became very, very close. I didn't realise

07:00 how close until I tried to remove one of the Australians, Shaky Gabriel, 'Shaky' was his nickname but Gabriel was back, coming back I think for his fourth tour at that stage back to the same battalion. And his original battalion, battalion commander had become a regimental commander the brigadier sort of thing. And I thought they really don't need Shaky, he's a very experienced warrant officer I'd like to put him somewhere else like down the Delta, that sort of thing. And low

07:30 and behold when I told Shaky he wasn't going and he was being deployed elsewhere the word got out to the Vietnamese and all hell broke loose. Senior general's were ringing General MacDonald and that sort of thing, "We've still got to have our Australians up here." And I got overruled and Shaky Gabriel went back to his ARVN Battalion. But, so the bulk of more than fifty percent of the team when I arrived were deployed in MR1.

08:00 Each of the battalions of those two divisions had an Australian adviser and then there were those with special forces and some of them with the regional forces in the districts so and then Military Region 2 had those with special forces. And a couple in training camps for the Recondo and the artillery school and then Military Region 3.

08:30 And we had a couple in the task force area working with one of the villages the task force area and three working in a very unusual organisation again special forces and Mike for down in MR3. I mentioned some of these American special forces were way over the top and I realised that a chap called Bo Grutz, Major Bo Grutz,

09:00 running this Strike Force down in MR3 was really a bit over the top. And the Australian Officer Stan Claznoff who was working with him and the two warrant officers were having a fairly hairy time with some very dangerous operations. And that's when Craznoff came to me one day and you know really upset as such that

09:30 he said, "Really, that it is too dangerous to be staying there much longer." And that's when I just had to pull them out but so that's another example of those decisions that you've got to make. So that's the deployment of the team the bulk of it in Military Region 1 with the Vietnamese Army. Oh, and then the Province Reconnaissance Units were the other one I mentioned around the country.

10:00 These were, they worked for the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], the Province Reconnaissance Units were funded by the CIA, controlled by American civilians. And we put some advisers in with them.

So generally within these three regions the advisers were deployed singly or in pairs or?

Mainly singly except with special forces where in each Mike Force there'd be a number of Australians but certainly with the ARVN battalions they were singly as an Australian

10:30 working with two or three Americans as part of the advisory team. But as the Vietnamese were pointing out when you said, "You know you don't need the Australians in the first and second divisions anymore. You've got enough expertise there and the team leader is normally an American Captain or at least a Lieutenant an American Officer." But they said, "These Australian warrant officers are ten times more useful than a young Lieutenant straight out of West Point,"

11:00 or something like. And they just wanted Australian warrant officers. But yeah, one Australian would work in with Americans when it became to things like the PRUs [Provincial Reconnaissance Unit]. They were individuals working occasionally with some other Americans but in special forces, one of the problems we had with special forces, like I mentioned the two warrant officers that were killed there were two in one Special Forces

11:30 Company. If you put two in together that buddy it's gone on since Weekly got his VC [Victoria Cross]. If one got killed or got wounded the other one had to stay with him it was bloody ridiculous because sometime lives were lost unnecessarily. And I think that's what happened with Hammersley and Durington, we don't know. We still don't know which one went to save the other but. So I laid down the edict that when Australians worked with the

12:00 special forces it had to be all the positions in the company rather than just two. And so we had a company commander and there'd be three platoon commanders that'd be Australian otherwise no Australians in that company.

Can you tell us a little bit about the South Vietnamese Forces at that time and what their strengths and weaknesses were?

Yeah, the South Vietnamese Forces, some of them were very good some of them were pretty awful. I mentioned the two best

12:30 divisions were the 1st and 2nd Divisions and they fought very well I gave you the example of the Battle of Hue, they fought extremely well. I think a couple of things to bear in mind, they'd been fighting nearly all of them, certainly all the senior officers, had been fighting for ten years. You know that war, not like the Americans and us, there for a year. And then you're off home again and you only go back if you want to,

13:00 so they were continuously involved in war. The training was of a lot of the Vietnamese was not good particularly of their regional forces and their popular forces a bit like our army reserve. They were

farmers by day and popular forces by night, you know guarding the village and that sort of thing. So yeah their training, not so good but if they were trained properly like

13:30 our village defence team that we had this mobile team that we used to go around, once they got the villagers on side and taught them some basic tactics yeah they were fine. The morale of the Vietnamese Army and the Tet had been pretty good I think. But after Tet everyone got a bit of a shaking but you know there were still some very good fighters. Some very hard fought

14:00 battles by the ARVN. Even when I returned later as the defence attaché when everyone else had gone home, when the Americans had gone there were some bloody big battles went on between the North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese Army and they fought well. Much better than they get credit for.

It seems on the face of it, the way you've described the deployment and single people in small groups

14:30 **are very difficult thing to administer, is that a fair comment?**

Oh yes.

What difficulties did you have?

Well, one of the way of overcoming this we set up what's called Australia house in Da Nang. It was a villa that we hired where a warrant officer could come in once and month and that would get his pay and he'd let us know by a signal through the system if he wanted some replacement

15:00 clothing or whatever or anything like that. Whatever he wanted he would come in to Australia House and so we set one up at Da Nang and we had one warrant officer there full time, just stayed there as the team regimental sergeant major, stayed there all the time to look after the people in I Corps. And then we did the same down in Tan An, down in the Delta for the people, because that contingent grow to twenty or so in the end. We had another villa down there called the Australia House down

15:30 in the Delta and that became the administrative centre for helping the, administer these people but getting around. Yes, I'd be on the road all the time visiting, trying to catch up with people wherever they were and go and see their operation so yeah it was a lot of travelling.

What was the first thing, obviously you arrived at a very difficult time anyway…?

Oh, arriving right at the time of Tet.

… what was the first thing you needed to do when you arrived, what happened

16:00 **then?**

Well, the handover from Terry Trip, it was alright getting around Saigon to meet the various people the Vietnamese and Americans and Australians that I had to meet. That was easily done but then getting around the country to catch up with the rest of the team was extremely difficult for the rest of the year in fact. But certainly for the first three weeks I was there but very hard in time and that was the major problem getting to see my men.

16:30 **You'd been thrown in the deep end in more ways than one, did you feel that at the time?**

Ah… yeah, there was an air of shock and dismay around Saigon when I arrived and no one could, believed that this could've happened. In fact everyone knew I think within a few days that it was the beginning of the end of Vietnam but, but over the year it was very interesting to watch the Americans and

17:00 the absolute decline of their morale, you could see it visibly. There was the Tet to start with then there was the assassination of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King and then the statement by L.B.J. that he would not stand for the presidency. And the American Military morale were just going down, down, down with all these different great tragedies that were happening to them. And it wasn't just the Tet Offensive there as also

17:30 a mini offensive in May and another one in August. These different outbreaks of offensive action by the Vietnamese, North Vietnamese so yeah but fortunately the Australian morale was untouched but we had no morale problems in the team I don't think, in the task force particularly.

I want to talk a bit more about the mechanics of your job, obviously there was a lot of travelling around to some…?

Oh, a hell of a lot, yes.

What else

18:00 **was involved on a sort of, on the ground?**

Well, my job was getting out to meet the advisers and their bosses to find out how they were going and all that sort of thing what were the plans for their use. And then a lot of time in conferences with the Americans and Vietnamese of setting up training organisation down in the Delta or the Van Kiep training area and all that business. Another one was taking visitors around,

18:30 it had it benefits and its downside too. Lots of visitors from Australia, people like General Daley I've just mentioned, General Wilton, the Minister for the Army, the Secretary for the Army. All these people and then all the other generals would be coming up to visit. The only advantage of taking them around was that you would get the loan of a VIP [Very Important Person] aircraft like a leer jet which you would get the loan of for the

19:00 period of their visit which enabled me to get around and see my people much easier even if I've got a visitor in tow. But every second week I was esquiring visitors around the team. But I didn't mind so much because it also had it benefit if we had a problem that the quartermaster general could fix you could talk to him first hand and get some new furniture for Australia House or something like that. So yeah, it had it's benefits but

19:30 being a bit of a waste of time too.

What would you try and do when you went out on a visit to one of the team members?

Talk to them, it was very hard to find quiet time just to have a talk with a chap to see how his problems were and that sort of thing. And the other thing you had to look at is how they bearing up to stress because all of them were under stress of some sort, some more than others and

20:00 one of my jobs was to see how they're managing stress. And if I'd had an indication that things were not going too well with this chap he might've been drinking too much or you know misbehaving or something like that I would hear that from other people. I could arrange for him to have a break, go down to Vung Tau for a couple of day or if necessary if he'd, like the chap that couldn't stand seeing

20:30 people being tortured get him posted straight out of there to another unit. But, so that was also part of the job to see how people were handling stress and do something about it.

Was there other major problems or was this bloke who you had to transfer one of the worst in the area or?

Oh, there were always little problems but no nothing that I can really think of I mentioned you know Colonel Shungle and the mishandling of special forces

21:00 up in Da Nang but no I didn't have to take any other major action at any time. There were occasional disciplinary action that had to be taken but I won't go into those, they were just minor stuff.

Who was on your back as it were, I mean obviously when you made that decision to pull that platoon out…?

Oh, I had to, I reported directly to General MacDonald who was the Commander of Australian Forces Vietnam, General A.L. MacDonald he was a bit of a

21:30 martinet. When I was in Korea I was his IO [Intelligence Officer], when we were talking the IO to the CO, he was my CO in Korea. So I knew him full well he knew me full well and he was very much a martinet. He, well he understood me pretty well but he had some very strange ideas on some things we had a great falling out over honours and awards. I'd put in my honours and awards

22:00 list and I mentioned the Battle of Kham Duc of Captain White, Peter White and his two warrant officers did an extremely good job of you know fighting of this bloody North Vietnamese Division and getting the bulk of their forces back to safety. And I put in for the only immediate award in my time a Military Cross for Peter White and two awards for Cameron and Lucas, Military Medal for Distinguished Conduct

22:30 Medal I think it was. And out came the awards list in due course every six months they were published of who gets what and Peter White got a mention in despatches and the two warrant officer got the gongs I'd recommended. And Peter White's elder brother John White was a major in 2RAR in the task force and he got a Military Cross and I thought this is very strange. The only immediate award that I had put in with an extremely good

23:00 citation for bravery for Peter White so I went up to General MacDonald COMAFV and I said, "Why didn't Peter White get his Military Cross?" He said, "Well, Charlesworth who was the Commander of 2RAR had put Peter White in for the MC [Military Cross] and John the younger, "I'm not having two brothers getting Military Crosses in the same awards list, and I've decided the eldest brother's getting it." Even though the citation for the young

23:30 brother was streets ahead. I was furious, the members of the team were furious and that just shows how ridiculous these bloody honours and awards lists are.

What was your role in relation to the honours and awards lists while you were there?

Make the citation visit, write the…

And how did you do that?

Have to rely on all the evidence I can find from people there at the action themselves that make

statements from their,

24:00 the Americans that were working with them, from the Vietnamese that were working with them, and from their superiors and all that sort of thing. You've got to get a lot of evidence to build up these citations. Actually, it wasn't too hard the Americans and Vietnamese were very good at writing their citations and I'd be using those for a basis for what I wrote.

What was the highest honour you recommended during that time?

That Military Cross. And, oh

24:30 no for the other soldiers Distinguished Conduct medals that's the next highest, goes VC [Victoria Cross], DCM [Distinguished Conduct Medal] , MM [Military Medal]. So, Distinguished Conduct medals, I think there were three of those from memory. But yes, honours and awards are a very difficult subject. Now, for example Hamersley and Durrington, those two warrant officers that were killed we could never find out who was

25:00 killed first and who went to help the other. One of those would've got a VC like Weekly and his thing but never know the full story there.

How did you feel the team's role was being recognised?

Yes, it was getting pretty good recognition. I'll go back to that ban on talking to the press. I was a great believer

25:30 that the more the publicity the team got the better it was for the team so I used to encourage the press to come along with us and go out on operations with members of the team and I had some great success. People like Neil Davis from Front Line he, Neil Davis and Pat Burgess were the only two Australian correspondents in Hue. And they covered this Battle of Hue with you know the fourteen Australians

26:00 involved and the members of the team thought Neil Davis and Pat Burgess were the ants pants [best] because they were living under the same conditions as the advisers. And they were right in the front line with them, so two first class Australian correspondents. American correspondents generally didn't want anything to do with anything that was Vietnamese or Australian, they just wanted to cover the American forces so not much joy there and then there was some very eminent journalists that

26:30 came up like Denis Warner who I got to know very well over the years and is still a very close friend of mine. Denis Warner and Creighton Burns and people like that what I call eminent journalists would come in not looking for the day to day story. They wanted to know how the war is going and what are the particular problems in particular areas and I enjoyed talking to them and I think they enjoyed talking to me. And they gave us some tremendous publicity and

27:00 there was a chap called Stuart Harris another journalist who just after Tet who'd been up. I sent him up to Hue to go and have a look at the advise - if he could get in there to go and talk to some of the advisers and he wrote an article which had a big write up in Time Magazine, he got half a page of Time Magazine. And that is worldwide publicity ,not just Australian publicity but half a page in Time Magazine by an Australian journalist was big time. And it was all about

27:30 the team and this Battle of Hue. So I reckon I was more than justified in my approach to the press but General MacDonald and I had a big fall out because he knew I was talking to the press and he told me to stop. And I didn't stop so he paraded me one day and gave me a kick in the pants however it was one of those things and I still believed I was doing the right thing and I didn't stop.

What about bad publicity,

28:00 **were there any incidents during your time there similar to the one that you described there that upset Daley?**

Not so much with the team we didn't have… well, there was a chap called Clarrie Wool who got court martialled when he came home. He'd been sending some stuff through the mail that he shouldn't have, some pyrotechnics. They weren't grenades or anything like that they were these smoke

28:30 flares and there was a big blitz on this and he got caught when he came home by customs. And he got court martialled out of it and there was all sorts of big publicity in the newspaper, a war hero being court martialled and all that sort of thing. So that was little bit of bad publicity for the team but apart from that that's the only one that I can remember, but the team did very well out of its publicity.

Just a general

29:00 **question, in hindsight, how do you feel the team was recognised or remember in relation to the other Australian involvement in Nui Dat?**

Yeah, very well I think but there's a very good history, you know the History of The Team by Ian McNeil? Well, that was a bit of a battle to get that done too but I happened to be in Canberra as a brigadier when Ian was working in the military history section of the army.

29:30 Fortunately, I got on very well with General Dunstan who had been my previous boss in Sydney here and convinced him that Ian should do that before the task force history. And he accepted it and we got the team history done. So that was a big win to get that done. And yes, the team has been generally very well recognised. Well, there were so many personalities every senior warrant officer in the army I think served in the team at

30:00 one stage so yeah, well known.

Was there anything that you couldn't control or you didn't know was going on? You mentioned some people came under the control of the CIA what was your relation to that?

Oh yes, all the advisers were under control of someone other than me but under operation control of either Americans or Vietnamese or CIA or

30:30 whoever. But that didn't worry me as long as they were being properly employed.

You had all the data on what they were all doing though? You were always…

I was being briefed yes, on what the, yes, yep. In fact I worked with the CIA on the Province Reconnaissance Units we did extremely well. One of the jobs we had had a very good chap called Len Opie, captain, ex-Korean War did two tours in Korea, Malaya.

31:00 And he was a soldiers soldier but he couldn't pass promotion exams, that's why he stayed as a captain sort of thing but first class bloody soldier and they wanted someone to take charge of their training at the Province Reconnaissance Unit Training Centre near Vung Tau. And Len got the job and he did a superb job, the Americans thought he was the ants pants because he knew about counter insurgency and all that sort of thing. So by

31:30 getting Len Opie, picking the right man for the right job I got great satisfaction out of that, no, quite happy. Yeah, operational command with other people but I kept a very close watch on what they were doing.

Can you tell us a bit more about the physical circumstances of your job obviously you were travelling around a lot but when you weren't where were you working from?

Yes, I lived in the Brinks which was a bachelor officer quarters right in the centre of Saigon, just been

32:00 knocked down in the last year and there's a big hotel going up there now. You don't know Saigon? No, no, right, well it was right in the centre of Saigon and it was a bachelor quarter for lieutenant colonels. And the headquarters of the team was in a little tin shed in the Free World Building where the headquarters of the Australian Force Vietnam was. But we were in a tin shed at the back.

32:30 **And who did you work closely with, who were you assistants or secretaries?**

Oh, I had an adjutant who did all the paperwork for me and a warrant officer who was the chief clerk looked after that side of things. A Vietnamese typist Miss Louarn who was very good at English and she spelt better than I did. And she used to bash away on her typewriter and Ned Kelly. And Ned Kelly was a Vietnamese driver who had been driving the CO with the team since Ted Sarong in 1962.

33:00 When I went back as an attaché Ned was still driving, he was then driving for the Americans in 1975.

Was, did the influence of Sarong have any kind of lasting or lingering effect on your position?

In the team? Training team? No, had no connection with Sarong in the team. When I went back as the attaché I'd see Sarong quite often and had connection

33:30 with him there. But no, Sarong had nothing to do with the team after 1964.

What contact socially or otherwise did you have with the people of Saigon?

Yes, got to know some Vietnamese through the Vietnamese Army that you know, Vietnamese officers and then their wives and families. Not too much, just two, I went to two families places and

34:00 yeah, not all that much really, no.

What were you impressions of the city, I mean after the curfew ended and the Tet Offensive, what sort of place was Saigon during the war?

It was jammed packed with traffic, mainly American military vehicles and Hondas with little ladies balancing on them and all that sort of thing. A city very much at war sandbags everywhere because you know rockets were coming in all the time and be grenade incidents.

34:30 So a lot of sandbagging around but a city at war but a very busy city.

A dangerous place to be?

Not all that dangerous. People might've thought it so but no I never felt a sense of danger in Saigon. The occasional rocket, the occasional grenade incident, fights in the streets but you know they were all pretty rare.

35:00 **What was the closest sort of call you had during your time in your travels around Vietnam?**

Oh we had, with General MacDonald once in a helicopter, we had a bullet go through the helicopter but fortunately didn't touch anything important or us. And oh yes rocketing up in near DMZ visiting one of the advisers in a forward unit at a place called Cam Lo, got out of the

35:30 helicopter and rockets started to come in. And I thought as a senior officer, "I'm not going to run too fast. I will move sedately." But I got under cover fairly quickly without being panicky, but yeah the occasional rocketing and that sort of thing.

Were there any attacks on buildings or people around you in Saigon?

The Brinks, where we stayed,

36:00 that bachelor officer quarters, we used to – there were American military police in a guard post on front but we also had to mount guard duties ourselves. Lieutenant colonels on guard duty was unheard of but they had a roster system where you'd to mount guard duty because eighteen months before they'd had a car bomb blew up the front of the place. And they were worried about car bombs and all that sort of things but you know

36:30 that was before my time that the building got bombed.

Any public protest in Saigon?

No.

Religious protests that went on?

No, no, that was the mid '60s they had the barbecued Buddhists and that sort of thing. There were protest movements and political movements but not street demonstrations, no.

What was the worst thing about your job?

37:00 Being away from home and my kids because at that time I had three kids and the lack of communication with the family just the letters. As today of course there's emails and jolly phones and all that sort of thing but the five days' R & R was very nice to have. But I'm not sure it was a good idea. It was a terrible feeling to come back after the five days R & R back in Australia but

37:30 it was a break.

What did you do during that R & R?

Oh, my wife flew up to Sydney left the kids in Canberra met me and we spent at the Chevron Hotel. And then we flew back to Canberra and we went down the south coast as a family for four days, back to Canberra then off again. My youngest ,who was about six or seven couldn't quite understand why I was going so soon.

38:00 **What did you tell you children about what you were doing?**

Oh, we had also, the other way of communicating was these tapes, the letter tapes. So I used to talk to them on the letter tapes about the, not too much about the war, about Saigon and then ask them about how they were going on at school and all that sort of thing. And talk about family things so for them and they'd occasionally write letters to me but it was the family voice tapes, that it was a good way of communicating.

What was your

38:30 **wife's reaction when she saw you on leave for those five days? Were you…?**

Oh yes, she was pretty pleased, yes, yes but I think she would agree it was, going back afterwards is very difficult after five days.

Where there any problems with tension or what was the real problem there?

No problem. I don't…

Leaving the family, again?

Well it is, yeah that's right leaving the family yes, yeah

39:00 and knowing you're going back into the uncertainties of the war. I was certainly more worried going back the second time then I was going over to Vietnam the first time but. So going back after the R & R, I didn't enjoy.

Was there any chance to wind down while you were, while you were in Saigon days off or?

Yes, occasionally. The Americans tended to work seven days a week but wherever

39:30 possible the Australians would like to take a Sunday off. But if I was free on Sunday, yeah I'd have a day

off and take a stroll around town, got to a bar and have a few beers that sort of thing. Yeah, but the days off weren't very frequent. We worked pretty hard.

What was the basis of you uncertainty going back? What was the most uncertain thing about the war at that time?

40:00 Well, I thought saying then you could see the war was being lost. I was talking about the decline in the American morale and it was obvious by August of that year when I had my R & R that we weren't going to win this war. It was just of matter of how long before the Americans get out I think but there was a noticeable decline.

I'll just have to sop there.

Break?

Tape 9

00:44 **Just during your time there, the ambassador, did you have anything to do with him?**

Very little. We, occasionally I'd be invited to parities at the, like Australia Day or something like that at the Embassy. Mr Harry,

01:00 the ambassador. On, I think two occasions we took him around to meet members of the team as part of an ambassador's tour but General MacDonald laid it – made it quite clear to everyone that the Embassy had their reporting line and that he and his staff as COMAFV [Commander, Australian Force Vietnam] had their reporting line back to Australia and never the two should mix. So he made sure that we were kept quite separate from the Embassy who had their own military attaché and Jim Norrie was the Colonel Military

01:30 Attaché at the time. So I had no relations with him, Norrie at all. And Jim Norrie would not, he fully understood the rules that he wouldn't interfere or get any ideas from me or any members of the task force for that matter.

And that system worked quite well?

Well, it was a system but I don't know if A.L., himself laid it down but yeah, yep, the Embassy did their things and the Commander of Australian Forces Vietnam

02:00 did his thing with his own headquarters, yeah I think it was probably sensible in its way. As opposed to the Americans where there was a great intermingling of ambassadorial stuff the American ambassador and the American military command were intertwined completely.

When did you leave Vietnam?

February of '69, that left Vietnam but…

02:30 **What were your feelings?**

Never expected to see it again if ever, little realising I'd be back there again in four or five years as a Vietnamese linguist.

What were your feelings about leaving?

Well, I realised that the war was on the downhill run, I think everyone had realised it at that stage but I still believed what we were doing supporting the South Vietnamese that was the right thing to be doing. I believed that if

03:00 they were allowed to stay as an independent country it could be like North Korea and South Korea today, they would have been a prosperous strong country as South Vietnam but they didn't get a chance.

And as far as Australia's approach to Vietnam, were we getting it right then?

Once we'd made the decision, be it right or wrong to go in, and the decision was not made for military reason really there wasn't a threat for Australia in anyway. It was that support of the

03:30 USA, it was our insurance policy and I think it's worthwhile remembering at the time that Indonesia was in a dire state – straits. If Sukarno had turned communist and the communists had got control of Indonesia we would've been in big trouble here. And it was part of the insurance policy to make sure that communism didn't spread that far that we supported America and Vietnam and it was I think the

04:00 right decision at that time.

Coming home, when you arrived in the Australia did you come in any contact with sort of the social side and the opposition to the war?

Yes, family friends that there were many people strongly opposed to the war. My wife who was working she had to put up with all sorts of – she used to work for a Persian Carpet Gallery, an

04:30 upmarket one in North Sydney. And they'd have their social evenings inviting people in to have a glass of wine while you buy a carpet, that sort of thing. And on a number of times they would discover that I was one of the 'baby killers' in Vietnam. She used to be abused by all sorts of people, but yes she had a tough, but no, I never had to suffer from those brunts at all.

What were you views given your service over there

05:00 **to those who…?**

I understood that people wanted to protest yeah, there were two sides to every story. I wasn't bitterly opposed to those who were marching and demonstrating. I mentioned Lady Helen Wilton, she used to join the marches while her husband was the Chief of the Army. But there were that sort of things that went on, they never worried me.

I'd like to jump forward a bit so cover a couple of years and go to the point of returning to

05:30 **Vietnam as the Defence Attaché, can you share with me how the opportunity came up and what preparations…?**

Yeah, I'd been forewarned well beforehand. I went back there 1973, February 1973. The year before that I'd spent at language school a whole year learning Vietnamese, the worse year in my life. Dreadful language that it's a tone language and I'm tone deaf so could read and

06:00 write it well but for comprehending it not so good but. So I knew before I went to language school that I was going to be promoted colonel and go back as a defence attaché so, but that probably came about. General Brogen who was CGS [Chief of General Staff] at the time asked me to organise a presentation at the Chief of the Army exercise, the CGS exercise about the training team which at that stage was still in Vietnam. So it must've been

06:30 '69 '70, 1970, I organised this presentation and I got some of the old warrant officers and some of the officers who had been in the team. And six of us gave a presentation for a couple of hours at the exercise which evidently was a roaring success. And so I think I got earmarked then to go back and if you like Vietnam that much, go back for another posting which I didn't mind because it was promotion to colonel. And

07:00 so I was looking forward to going back to Vietnam.

You've spoken about obviously learning the language, what other preparations were required before you were sent?

Nothing else, I don't think, oh you'd do the attaché briefing course in Canberra, get all the briefings on the intelligence world and all that sort of stuff. But it was only a couple of weeks after language school and then getting my family all prepared for all going in different directions,

07:30 yeah.

What was going on in Vietnam by the time you arrived there?

When I arrived, the so called 'Pissing' – Kissinger Peace Agreement had just been brought in, that was in January of '73 when Kissinger and the North Vietnamese had signed this agreement where there would be an international control commission come in to supervise a ceasefire. And there'd be a joint control

08:00 commission of North Vietnamese, Viet Cong and the Americans and South Vietnamese to control the return of prisoners the MIAs [Missing in Action] and all that sort of thing. And that all started in January the 23rd, '73 and I arrived a week later. So there was so called peace in inverted commas because peace never happened. And then the pull out of the Americans, the last American fighting soldiers withdrew in March

08:30 of '73. Great ceremony at Tan Son Nhut Airport, General Wayend and the last of the soldiers going and for them, for the army the war was over, the American army was over. But they left behind the Military Assistance Command Vietnam which was fifty people in uniform and about five thousand people that had taken their uniforms off and put civilian clothes on but working for either the CIA or the American army under cover

09:00 and all that sort. But only fifty in uniform at the headquarters of Defence Attaché Offices it was then called.

What about in respect to Australia, did we have anyone?

Yes, they left, when I arrived, most unusual, they left behind an embassy guard of thirty diggers who volunteered to stay on and two officers, Greg Lockhart was the Captain and Roberts the Lieutenant and thirty

09:30 diggers. Now when an army finishes a war and they take home with them all the gear they're supposed

to take home. They leave behind the stuff they're not supposed to have and I was left, we took over a whole hotel called the Vin Loi Hotel to house the soldiers, this guard. And the bottom floor of the hotel was full up of weapons, machine guns, mortars, ammunition of all sorts, radios all the control stores

10:00 that the quartermaster says, "That's not on my list, that's got to stay here." So that was all left and had five different vehicles, land rovers and things that were unaccounted for left with this, the leftovers of an army that had been at war. So I pondered over this for a week or so and talking to one of the sergeants, "We can give it to the Vietnamese but it's a bit of a waste…" cause some of these bloody radios are worth you know

10:30 thousands and thousands of dollars. And I said, "Well, what say we send them back to Australia?" and he said, "Who to?" I said, "Address it to the quartermaster of the signal school, the quarter master of the infantry centre, the quarter master of the school of artillery or whatever it was. So every month we had a C-130 to come up to the embassy for embassy supplies. And they never had any back loading so I said, "We'll backload all these stores, backload to Australia." All except the

11:00 ammunition which we gave away and to this day there are still quartermasters scratching their head of, "Who's the bastard that sent me these control stores that I don't want but I've got to take on charge? So it was a good way of getting rid of those. But yes, I had the embassy guard there till March, till the end of March. They had them for three months and they had to protect the embassy, stand guard on the Embassy and the

11:30 ambassador's residence and the consulate. And there were twenty-four hour guard on all three of those places but it was a very boring job for the soldiers. So on one of the weekends I organised a trip down to Vung Tau as a bit of a break for them, got them accommodation in a hotel for about half of them that went down. And, we took some of the families from the, because I had a fairly big staff I had about fourteen in my attaché's office of

12:00 different people and we went down for the weekend. And we were playing throwing a ball around in the surf on the beach and suddenly some Vietnamese joined in and it turned out eventually about fifty of young Vietnamese playing against about twenty Australian playing this rather vigorous volley ball in the water. And then it turned out one of the said, "Me D445." And that's the Viet Cong Battalion that lived in the Long Hai Hills,

12:30 because this so called peace was on but you know there was no war at that particular time. But so yes it was the Viet Cong doing their R & R down at the beach and playing with our soldiers at water polo, great fun.

So what Australians were still working with the Vietnamese in training aspects?

None, in fact Mr Whitlam came into power as prime minister in December of

13:00 '72 and he issued an edict that you know National Service is finished, Australian troops, the last ones to be out of Vietnam immediately. A bit like, "Home for Christmas," as Mr Latham is saying, but except he gave them two weeks notice for the last Australians to come out except for this guard platoon for the Embassy. And we were to establish diplomatic relations with Hanoi. So, I was in the uncomfortable situation of

13:30 having accreditation to the South Vietnamese Government and I was the only attaché whose government had opened diplomatic relations with Hanoi. And the curtains came down on me with the Vietnamese, we were bad news because we'd established quickly, so quickly, diplomatic relations with the North. So that was an unusual thing too.

So, in a sense at the time you could only choose relationships

14:00 **with Hanoi or either South Vietnam was that the situation?**

Well, up to then, yes, no country had had relations with both, none of the countries represented in Saigon had representative – we didn't actually have a representative in Hanoi but Whitlam had said, "We will establish diplomatic relations." Which we did later that year, August that year. So, yeah it was unusual.

And I guess what were the benefits in establishing contact with Hanoi in

14:30 **relations?**

Oh, this was Whitlam showing quite clearly that he's not going to kowtow to the Americans that he believe Ho Chi Minh and the North had a valid case and he wanted nothing to do with the South Vietnamese, quite, quite clear.

What benefits came from establishing that relationship?

Well, the same benefits, well having been to Hanoi what five or six years ago, it was a very astute move and the long

15:00 term benefits to Australia have been enormous. We were the first western nation to establish diplomatic relations with Hanoi so the in for our business people has been absolutely enormous. We get sort of favoured nation treatment through the North Vietnamese. We established relations with them long

before the Americans. It's only what seven or eight years since the Americans have established business so it's been of enormous benefit to us in the long term that,

15:30 no, a very astute move on Whitlam's part. I didn't think so at the time but, yeah, for the long term benefit of Australia, it's been very good.

Could you define your particular role there at the time?

Yes, as a military attaché, your job is to report on armed forces of the nation you are with so on the South Vietnamese and what's going on military wise in that country so it meant

16:00 covering the war once again. Because the war really started to hot up after a very short period of time that for example in the Military Region 1 where the first and second ARVN Divisions were some major battles. And in 1974, the last full year of the war the Vietnamese suffered more casualties in that year than any other year of the war. But that was all over

16:30 and done with as far as the world was concerned. But not so in the country and then of course the final collapse which, yeah.

So given that the Embassy established contact with Hanoi, I mean how difficult did that affect your particular job on reporting what was happening on the South Vietnamese side?

Yes, I didn't have any special favoured treatment even though I had been there before

17:00 I was the only attaché that had been there before. I was only the attaché that spoke Vietnamese and I knew a lot of senior Vietnamese officers but the fact that our government, well Whitlam and his government were opposed to the South Vietnamese, didn't like South Vietnamese and established diplomatic relations, yes. The curtains came down on me I found it very hard to get in with the Vietnamese as I expected

17:30 to do and also with the Americans because it was, I'd only been there three or four weeks when Lionel Murphy who was the attorney general at the time raided ASIO [Australian Security Intelligence Organisation]. Do you remember the Federal Police raid on ASIO, this was world wide headlines and the Americans who I had worked very closely with on the intelligence side, for ten days the curtains came down and I was not allowed access into their intelligence briefings.

18:00 But then after ten days they relaxed and they realised it wasn't as bad as it was pointed out. But that was after the Federal Police raid led by Lionel Murphy. So between the Vietnamese and the Americans my first couple of months, I found it very hard going.

Who were you reporting to?

To the joint intelligence organisation or defence intelligence [organisation] as it is now, DIO,

18:30 but Defence Intelligence Organisation. You report to the ambassador and but you report direct and like other people in the Embassy the ASIC [Australian Securities and Investments Commission] chap reports direct to his net and that sort of thing.

So given that information was hard to come by…?

Yeah, but we still had a very special in with the Americans. I went to briefings which no other attaches went. The Australian and New Zealand ambassadors every second Friday

19:00 we'd have a briefing by the CIA head of station, Tom Polgar, and his briefing officers would come along and brief the two ambassadors and myself on all the latest things happening. No other attaches or embassies got that. We had special privileges because we were very close to the Americans.

Just one quick question coming back, you still arrived on relative peace at the time, did you see that

19:30 **lasting at all?**

Everyone was hoping it was going to last. It… when the peace was declared there was a lot of argument over what is the dividing line between the two forces the communists and the South control. And it was the war of the flags, you know villages would put a North Vietnamese flag and the village next door would put up a South Vietnamese flag, and there was a lot of skirmishing went on

20:00 for the first, oh couple of months until there was a fairly clear demarcation line. And then the North Vietnamese started to put some military pressure on launching real proper divisional attacks in certain areas to seize objectives and old General Czap was a very astute chap. He knew that President Thieu didn't want to lose any ground at all. What he got, he wanted to hold

20:30 so he launched some attacks against those two best divisions the first and second division up in MR1 seizing some key terrain some big mountain and he knew having seized it that the, President Thieu would tell the 1st Division or the 2nd Division to go counter attack until you recapture it. And that's what happened and they lost a lot of men recapturing things that the North Vietnamese

21:00 would quickly seize. And then force the South Vietnamese to try and recapture but very astute tactics by old General Czap, but yeah and then as time went by the fighting got very intense up in the north part.

Just if you could share now a bit of your relationship with the ambassador or ambassadors, Maurice was the first fellow?

Yes, Malcolm Maurice, he,

21:30 he'd been there for about three years I think, two or three years, and very well liked by the Vietnamese. During the Second World War he was in the British Army in the Guard's Armed Division fought through Normandy and all that sort of thing. Very, very pro military in fact he used to wear the black beret for the Tank Corps when he'd go out and meet a military unit and he was more of a military attaché

22:00 than I was. It was just amazing how military minded he was so he had a very good. He was held in very high regard by the Vietnamese Government, President Thieu and the military people too. In fact before he left President Thieu turned on a private lunch for him and one other the consulate general and myself and the air force attaché

22:30 and five of the top Vietnamese ministers. It was a very interesting lunch but for old President Thieu to turn that at a very busy time you know a couple of hours with him was very useful but very good.

What… sorry…?

As I said, Whitlam came in and Malcolm Maurice would've left two or three weeks after I left by the end of February. I think he was gone because Whitlam said, "Well, I want to fix these South Vietnamese, I'm going to send in a chap

23:00 to cut down the size of our Embassy…" It was one of our largest I think our second largest in the world when I arrived, huge Emb… hired about fourteen attaché staff we had all sorts of aid people and huge Embassy. Anyway, he sent up a chap up called Cook, Michael Cook, anyway a young chap appointed as ambassador and his job was to sever our relations with

23:30 the South Vietnamese without breaking relations altogether. And yeah he really went about that task and to cut the Embassy down in size. And he, I finished up with myself and the air force attaché and one other, oh a major and a warrant officer. So I went from fourteen down to four in, overnight sort of thing and then all the aid people were cut, and the administrative staff were cut

24:00 and as I said he laid the edict down that – we used to relationships between some of our schools, military schools, like the school of artillery and the South Vietnamese school of artillery where they'd exchange all sorts of things, idea and he said, "We're going to stop all these exchanges." So I had to go along and explain to these various

24:30 schools that no longer can you contact the Australian schools so cutting down on those sort of this. Oh, he really was a hatchet man that we had some great fights. I had use of any Embassy car that I used to use all the time for going to and fro from home and all the various functions. And then he laid an edict down that the military can only use a vehicle

25:00 for a national day or an armed forces day. And anyway I went to, I mentioned, I went to this international commission which were Poles and Hungarians from the communist world about two hundred and fifty of each. And the Canadians and the Indonesians from the western world, they were the ones overlooking this so called cease fire. But they'd have their diplomatic days, an armed forces day for the Polish army, and I went along to these and used the Embassy car and

25:30 he used to go through all these bloody work certificates on the car. And he paraded me one day and he said, "I see you've been to this Polish armed forces day and they are, that's a communist country which we're not exchanging diplomatic relations with and you're not allowed to use that car. I want you to pay four dollars fifty or whatever it is, by close of business tomorrow otherwise you'll be going home." You know silly things like

26:00 that and it was…so I got on to Department of Defence and I said you know this is what's happening and they said, "Well, that's simple you pay it and we'll repay you." But that is just crazy but it was just that nasty in-fighting that Cook, that's what he was about.

Were his decisions wise though?

No, he was just a hatchet man. They weren't wise decisions, they were just

26:30 there to be done. Cutting the Embassy down in size I don't think was a wise decision but yes, it had to be done I suppose.

Politically, how did he deal with the South Vietnamese and…?

How did he?

Yes…

He avoided them, he avoided them as much as he could. He went along and did all the things that he

had to do as an ambassador but he'd turn up, but he didn't cultivate any friends or anything like that. He was only there five months and gone and then we had a proper chap come in.

27:00 But yeah, but five months and his job was done and yeah he came back and went on in foreign affairs he did all, he became the first – he set up the office of national assessments, ONA [Office of national assessments]. He was the first head of ONA so he was a bright cookie.

Again, just before we move on to the next one I mean Maurice what did you admire and respect about him?

Oh, he was, it was his second last appointment. He was you know well into his fifties at that stage and he might've been, yeah,

27:30 at least fifties. A very nice chap, not going to set the world on fire but yeah he went out of his way to understand Vietnam. He spoke a little bit of Vietnamese which he taught himself. Yeah, he was, yeah what you would expect of an ambassador did all the right things.

Okay. I take obviously the Embassy was in Saigon?

Mmm?

The Embassy was in Saigon?

Oh yes, yes, yes.

How had

28:00 **Saigon changed since you were last there?**

Not all that much, there were still signs of war still all the sand bagging the only difference all those American vehicles and all the Americans on the street were virtually gone. They all went by March so yes the American military presence was the only difference otherwise Saigon looked exactly the same.

Did you remember sort of seeing the

28:30 **Americans finally pull out?**

Yes, I went along to the big ceremony at Tan Son Nhut. Yeah, but oh yes they made quite a thing of it but General Wayne who was the Chief of the Army at the time was there for the final celebration and… and there was that. Well, I think they knew that they hadn't won the war but I think they thought they hadn't lost it because it looked like it could be set up as two countries like North and South Korea but it was only

29:00 two years later they found they couldn't do that.

The next ambassador was Geoff Price?

Yes.

What did he bring to the job?

Also a very good ambassador, he went out of his way to you know understand the Viet Cong, the Vietnamese, and I think he did a very good job. He did a lot on the aid side established all sorts of aids projects and

29:30 took an interest in the military. But yeah, and I found him a very good ambassador to work for but then of course his undoing came at the end with the collapse of Saigon and the way we treated our people in the Embassy which was absolutely appalling but. Because we had about a hundred Vietnamese that had worked for us some of them for a very long time and only one of them managed to get out that. And they we were sending back

30:00 empty Hercules from Saigon and not allowing the Vietnamese aboard because Whitlam had said, "No visas to be given to any Vietnamese coming out." Dreadful, so he was involved in the end you know fighting his masters in Canberra and got a bad name and when he got back was banished to run Radio Australia, that destroyed his career. He got one more posting I think as an ambassador to Holland and then he died at an early age.

30:30 **Were you there at the very end?**

Not quite the end, I left in February of '75 and it was all over in April '75 and…

Could you see signs?

Well yeah, the signs was the worst thing that ever happened was Watergate. That was August of '74 when Nixon got sacked cause Nixon had set up this agreement.

31:00 Kissinger was working of course for Nixon and in the letter that Nixon had signed to President Thieu guaranteed that American military support would be provided if you are attacked in a major way again. Of course the B52s didn't come when in '75 when the North Vietnamese did attack and took Hue and

then Da Nang

31:30 all collapsed and the highlands and all that sort of thing. No, no military support and on top of that the American congress refused to vote in the seven hundred million dollar budget. It sounds small now seven hundred million, but that was for the munitions and the petrol for the Vietnamese armed forces to carry on fighting, and refused to vote it in. This was under President Ford that took over from Nixon and of course

32:00 that was the plummet.

But did you realise at the time that Watergate would have that much impact upon what was going on in Vietnam?

No, no, I didn't realise at the time because I thought the Americans would back up the, President Thieu and the South Vietnamese that if there was a major attack that the B52s would return because it was there in writing, "We will promise that military support if it is needed." And I didn't believe

32:30 that the American Congress and President Ford would pull the plug on the South Vietnamese by not giving them their seven hundred million dollars. So by the time I left it was clear if, it was getting critical if they didn't get some munitions and petrol, yes they would grind to a halt.

Did Australia also have such an agreement with South Vietnam to also help out if they were…?

No, this is part of the Kissinger peace agreement

33:00 and then the letter written personally by Nixon to Thieu, which has been published. It's well known that Thieu published to show that yes, "I will guarantee you." "You can trust me," like I trust any bloody American." No, I came back, after the collapse of Vietnam extremely cynical of anything to do with the American military and I have that abiding distrust to this day that,

33:30 no, not to be trusted. Not so much the military, it's the politicians behind them that you can't trust.

I mean, just on that subject because you obviously had insights into the Americans since the Korean war, had their army and their approach changed in respect to war and helping nations out?

When I think of the capabilities of the American Army of course Vietnam they weren't trained for. They were trained to

34:00 fight the Russians and the bloody the fields of Germany and all that sort of thing so their troops were not trained for counter insurgency warfare but it was quite obviously so that was their major failing that they hadn't been trained for that type of war. And I think much the same is happening in Iraq, they're not trained for insurgency in cities. One of those things, sending tanks in against insurgence very doubtful.

34:30 **During your time in Vietnam, personal safety, how safe were you going to and fro?**

Yeah, felt pretty safe. Interesting, I mentioned this joint control commission of the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong in Camp David at Tan Son Nhut. We'd be invited to like the Polish Armed Forces Day or the Hungarian National Day and at these diplomatic functions

35:00 they'd invite the Viet Cong, North Vietnamese from Camp David to attend and they had to be allowed. The South Vietnamese had to allow these people to attend these functions so my wife and I over a two year period got to know some of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong pretty well. And in fact there was one old chap, a Colonel called Gee who had a, his family were at a little town called An Loc, it was an enclave north of Saigon, in the

35:30 communist controlled area. And as I said, the war was still going on and the air force would bomb An Loc and that sort of thing. And so I'd say to Gee to old Colonel Gee, "How's your wife and daughter today?" And he'd say, "Oh it's all okay, there's no problems with us." And I said, "We're going to Vung Tau this weekend, is it okay to drive Vung Tau this weekend?" "Oh," he said, "this weekend not so good, you go next

36:00 weekend." And he knew that he was telling me that I would be telling the rest of the Embassy and it would go around the whole diplomatic world. All the Embassies would know as a security check and you could rest assured there would be a bloody bomb incident on the road to Vung Tau that next Saturday or Sunday and the following weekend would be clear. So that was the sort of relationship that went on about you know security. We trusted one another that by the Viet Cong telling me

36:30 when it's safe to travel and all that sort of thing.

Almost a, I mean a strange relationship you have with…?

Oh yes, well my wife being a small blond woman and that sort of thing, they thought she was fascinating. So the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese were pretty small people themselves, loved to talk to Eileen and at the end of the bloody evening I would say, "What the bloody hell have you been talking to them about today?" And she said, "Oh, they've been telling me all sorts of interesting things all about their

37:00 staff college in Hanoi of how they got the Battle of Dien Bien Phu on display with all the lights that come oscillating the battle." And then she came home one night and she knew that I was mentioning these diplomatic relations with Hanoi, we were trying to find out, or waiting to hear what date that they were going to send or a representative to Canberra and expecting us to send a representative to Hanoi. And Eileen came home and she said,

37:30 "I've just heard when they're sending a representative to Canberra and we're establishing diplomatic relations it's the 18th of August…" or something so because it was such an interesting subject I let the ambassador know that night and low and behold Eileen was right, she'd got a scoop. Yes, funny old business.

So did you have your kids over in Vietnam?

Yes, my youngest went to school there, hated it, it was an English

38:00 speaking school but he was very lonely, he was ten years of age. And he's the only ten year old I know who volunteered for boarding school at the age of ten so we sent him back to Australia to board at Shore. And my eldest son came across for six months before he went to university. My daughter finished her HSC [Higher School Certificate] and came across for twelve months and for an

38:30 eighteen year old, very attractive blond she had a ball for twelve months. Her boyfriend was a helicopter pilot working for Air American who rode a huge Harley Davidson. Oh dearie me, it scared the daylights out of me so anyway she filled in her time by teaching English to Japanese and Vietnamese who wanted to learn English, but she had a lovely time there for twelve months.

How did

39:00 **your wife cope just on the normal day to day?**

She thoroughly enjoyed it, one of the best couple of years of her life she reckoned. Eileen not the sort of person that likes Embassy tea parties or anything like that so she's always been involved in kindergartens, teaching kids. So she set up her own little kindergarten there and it was very sad at the end, she sold it with all the equipment that she'd bought and that sort of thing to two New Zealand girls, I was saying, February

39:30 '75, she sold it. Of course two years, two months later these poor New Zealand girls were out. So she sold it just at the right time. I mentioned the International Control Commission, I mentioned these defectors we had now that, the Embassy guard, as I said stayed on for three months and I'd only been

40:00 there…

We might just pause you there and start that off at the end of the next tape because we're at the end of this one.

Yeah, okay.

Tape 10

00:51 **Ray, you were about to tell us about the Embassy guards and defectors?**

Oh yes, yes.

What was that story? Can you tell us from the beginning?

Yes, well it would've been

01:00 February of '73 just soon after I'd arrived and I was out at a social function one night and had a phone call from the sergeant of the guard at the Embassy to say, "He had a gentlemen dressed in running clothes arrive at the Embassy who said he wanted to go to Australia seeking political asylum." So I said, "Right, I'll get across there

01:30 as soon as I can." So I got my, the major and the warrant office and let a couple of the other people in the Embassy know the ASIC chap and so on. So we went across to find that this chap was a Hungarian a member of the International Control Commission. He was a sergeant in the Hungarian army and it appeared he held a very sensitive position in their intelligence organisation and he said, "Yes, he wanted to defect to Australia to seek political asylum."

02:00 So on a Saturday night this caused a bit of problem we had to work our defector drill and the member of the Embassy who was responsible for defectors had a search to find the right sort of procedure that we had. Anyway we sent a signal back to Canberra on the Saturday night and a decision had to be made whether we'd accept him or not. On the Sunday morning we got a reply back it had to go up to

02:30 Whitlam to get the final okay on it. And Whitlam was down in Albury on that Sunday morning but he

said, “Yes, he’s allowed in as a migrant but yes we will take him, give him political asylum.” So we then had the job of then getting him out the country. We notified the Vietnamese Foreign Affairs and Tran Van Larn who was the Foreign Affairs Minister, a great friend of Australia thought it was tremendously funny

03:00 to have a communist defector in South Vietnamese, defect from a communist country. It was the first one they’d ever had but under the International Control Commission they didn’t want to have any part of him being taken out of the country. And neither did the Americans who were very keen on not upsetting the International Control Commission in any way. But, Tom Polgar who was the CIA Station Chief was a Hungarian by birth and could speak fluent

03:30 Hungarian and he was known to the Hungarian contingent very well. And they knew he was the CIA Station Chief, he said that, “They were very aware of the sensitive information that this sergeant had and that they might take all sorts of measures to stop him getting out of the country.” So he told us to be extremely careful. So we then hunted around for an airline that was willing to take this chap out

04:00 with some escorts that we had organised. Two members of the Embassy that would go with him, to get him out and eventually it was Thai Airways said they would be willing to take him. And the two members of the, civilian members of the Embassy they didn’t want any military people involved. And the two civilian members of the Embassy were administrative people, not diplomats but they were administrative people travelling on diplomatic passports, or officinal passports. And

04:30 they were both given a pistol each and given the rudimentaries of using it and one of them who was a very effeminate sort of a chap was quite upset by the whole business. But he said, “Yes, he would do it and went along with it.” So on the Monday we had the job of getting him out to Tan Son Nhut airport and we had two cars organised,

05:00 and the Caravel Hotel which was the Embassy. We took this chap down in the goods lift and we had a Commonwealth police sergeant, George Foreshaw, who was outside securing the area as such. And the Hungarian sergeant went in the back of my car with my secretary who had the job of kissing him and putting her hair all over his face all the way to Tan Son Nhut airport. Anyway, we got him

05:30 out to the airport, got him aboard the plane with these two very nervous escorts and away he went. But my secretary Cynthia said, “She joined foreign affairs for excitement but,” she said, “that’s the best bloody job I’ve ever had in my life.” Cynthia thoroughly enjoyed it, she really did. So yes, that was our first defector that went back to Australia, disappeared into the system, no idea what happened to him.

06:00 But sadly about three months later we had another defector a Hungarian captain who once again approached the Embassy and this time we had a very smooth system. He was taken to a safe house, organised and out of the country in no time at all. He wanted to defect to meet up with his Vietnamese girlfriend in Australia and she promised him he would be there very soon and he was a married chap with

06:30 two kids back in Hungary. All very sad because the Vietnamese girl was an agent for their intelligence service and a week later she was working on someone else, so a broken romance there and a defector for no purpose. So that was the two defectors that we had there in a matter of three months, very interesting.

Were they the only two during your time?

The only two yeah, and yet we had very good relations with the Hungarian

07:00 organisation of ICCS [International Commission for Control and Supervision] but used to go along to the parties and functions and that sort of thing. And the Poles got really good friends with them. Yes, it all seemed to work together even though you know some so called enemies even those North Vietnamese and VC [Viet Cong] at Camp David that we all got on very well.

Are there any other events that stand out in you mind from your time as Defence Attaché?

07:30 I don’t think so, let’s have a… no it was a very interesting time but I mentioned the Watergate and the final collapse and all that sort of thing.

Why were you pulled out then when you were if you didn’t know what was going to happen?

Oh, my replacement arrived and his wife didn’t even unpack her bags. She was back home two weeks later. It was the middle of February that I left February the 12th of something like that and the country collapsed by April the 30th

08:00 but they pulled the families out 10th of March I think but. So it was just by good luck that I wasn’t there right to the end.

What did you, obviously you followed those developments fairly closely from back in Australia how did you feel about…?

The final collapse?

… the final, yeah we’ll leave that…

The final collapse, heartbroken, absolutely heartbroken

and very upset that the Americans had broken their promise to provide the military aid at the end you know where they said if there was a major attack against them by the North Vietnamese they would provide military support in the way of B52's. No support was ever given so it was that let down by the Americans and the way you know the whole of that final, dreadful evacuation where we left all our Vietnamese staff

behind as did the Americans that left most of their people behind, absolutely shocking.

Are there any personal friendships you'd struck up amongst those staff?

Oh yes, now to carry on subsequently, when I was up in Townsville as the brigade commander I got a letter from a refugee camp in Malaysia written by a young woman called Mee Har, Fum Cow Mee Har, and Mee Har said, "This is the third

letter I've written. Please I hope this one finds you." Of course she had written it to my Sydney address here and it hadn't been forwarded up to Townsville but eventually got to me. She was a daughter of a Vietnamese colonel who was a very close friend of mine, Van Cow Dom. And he was arrested and put in prison and he spent thirteen and a half years in prison. However his daughter and her husband were in this refugee camp in Malaysia said,

"Please can you help?" So I mentioned Denis Warner the journalist, the writer, so Denis Warner and I got together and we sponsored her to come to Australia. So she's still like my adopted daughter sort of thing. So we see quite a bit of her and then her father was released from prison, what thirteen and a half years, from '75 that's '98, '99. I helped to pay his fare out here

the family weren't well off so he came out here and settled in Melbourne. Great old chap became one of the leaders of the Vietnamese community. Got work as a court interpreter and then died last year unfortunately but a great success story for that family. Mee Har and Trung and they're completely Australian and three lovely kids and their daughter doing law in university now, and absolute great success story.

What contacts did you continue to have throughout the rest of your career with Vietnamese in Vietnam?

In Vietnam, virtually none. When I went back to Vietnam five or six years ago I met Miss Luarn my secretary but I hadn't been writing to her or communicating. But yes I got in touch with her in Saigon and she came along and had afternoon tea with us

and that sort of thing but apart from that no contact with…

Just to jump forward to that what was the purpose of that visit five years ago?

Oh go back, it's a lovely country we like Vietnam. My wife loves it, reckons it's the best place on earth. See we went back for a holiday and we met up with some friends of ours an Australian ex-TV [television] cameraman used to work CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System – US television station]

who married a Vietnamese. They live in Washington and we said, "Why don't we get together in Saigon and tour the country?" So we met up in Saigon and we had a month. We went to Hanoi, you can do what you like there, hired a vehicle and drove around the north and amazingly Mish, that's his wife's name, Mish, had her family came from the north originally and in

1953 when they all divided up there were three brothers. One stayed in the north in this little town near the Chinese border, one went down south and that was her father and he became one of the police chiefs of Saigon, and the other one went to Taipei and became a business man. And then the year before we were there the three brothers got together in Taipei for the first time in fifty years, sort of thing, quite amazing. But we went up, drove up to this little

village where her uncle still lived, he was the village elder sort of thing, and the hospitality was absolutely amazing. We spent about twenty-four hours there, we stayed at a little hotel in the town but they entertained us for lunch and dinner and it was great to talk to them about anything but then the war. They were quite happy to talk about the war and two of the sons of this family had been involved in the army and the Ho Chi Minh trail

and all that sort of thing. And their younger son was a major in the North Vietnamese Army right then, this is 1998 and he was attending their staff college in Hanoi and as an army man he was very interesting to talk to. Yes, so we then travelled the whole country we drove the whole length of the country.

How had Saigon through it all, or Ho Chi Minh City changed?

Oh, no sandbags anymore,

no barbed wire anywhere and it was a lovely, and the buildings had been painted and Saigon looked magnificent. And there were five star hotels going up everywhere it was amazing. Saigon had changed the most, Hanoi I hadn't been too it was my first time to Hanoi but that was very much like an old

French colonial area. There were very few high rise only a couple of fire star hotels. But went down to Vung Tau,

14:30 it was amazing we asked can we go where the Australian troops were in ’68, ’69 in my best Vietnamese. “Kon duoc de lou er dou sammy tan sammy chin,” and this young taxi driver looked at me and he got on his radio, they’ve all got car radios and he said, “Where were the Australians in ’68, ’69?” he said, “I didn’t know the Australians were

15:00 here.” Anyway, they took us out to Vung Tau where the old logistics base was and not a sign of Australian or military presence. It was all condominiums and high rise apartments now overlooking the China Sea. Quite amazing. Yes, you wouldn’t know Australia had been there.

What cause did you have then to reflect on the war and its value of the war otherwise?

It makes you realise how unnecessary wars really are

15:30 but still I have no regrets of Australia going in it was the right thing to do at that time of going into the Vietnam War to establish closer relationships with the Americans. And with the worry of Indonesia but times change, I don’t know why we’re in Iraq but that’s quite different.

Who were the real victims of that war? Did going back after so much time…?

The victims are the people,

16:00 the people not the military. You know over the three years there particularly after I could speak the language a bit talking to the ordinary people they couldn’t give a bugger who’s running the country, the communists or President Thieu or anyone. All they want is peace and their own little plot of land and get on with life as they know it. So ninety percent of the people couldn’t care less of who is running the country but they just want peace. I think that applies

16:30 in most countries, they don’t want politicians they just want peace.

We’ll skip through to the end of your army career if we can, what were you thoughts on leaving the army?

I thought it’s time. I’d have a very good career up till then and I’d had enough. Thirty-four years and no regrets, none at all. You now I was leaving

17:00 just at the right time. They’d posted me back to Canberra and I didn’t want to go back to Canberra for another posting but, no.

When you look back at those thirty-four years at retirement what were the highlights for you and what were you proud of?

Oh, I was proud of the, all thirty-four years but highlights of course the Vietnam War had the biggest influence of that time not just being there but the preparations before going. Like working in DAMP,

17:30 the influence there and MACGS [Marine Air Control Groups] with all the time spent on Vietnam and then coming back training in 1 Div [Division] and in the school of infantry training other people to go to Vietnam. So Vietnam had a enormous influence on my career so that was the biggest as opposed to Korea that was only one year out of my life. Vietnam was a massive hunk of my life.

Sure it’s a

18:00 **board question but maybe you could give us some idea how do you think that your involvement in those two wars changed you as a person?**

I don’t know if it… well one thing that did change when I came back from Vietnam in ’69 after my tour with the training team I was posted to staff college as an instructor. And that was the first time I’d knocked a posting back in my life and I said, “From now

18:30 on my family comes first, first priority and,” I said, “I’ve got to have a posting in Sydney because I want to put my son into Shore and my daughter into Abbotsleigh and I’ve got to be there on the ground to start that off.” And then the system realised that no longer was the army my priority in life. It wasn’t from the age of thirty-nine when I came back the family was the priority so that’s one of the changes that the war made.

19:00 **What about Korea, I mean when you look back at the conflict now, what images still stay in your mind?**

Just a very conventional, professional war and a war that in my time in the Korean War didn’t involve civilians at all. In the early stages of the Korean war it did of course when they were going up and down the bloody country people were getting killed by their thousands but in my time it was a very clean,

19:30 clear cut. And the fact that the Chinese recognised the white flag when I was wounded, a very honourable war. It was the cleanest, tidiest war that you could find but if you can call any war clean and tidy, so, yeah.

In the world that became subsequently Vietnam and the world that we live in today is there nostalgia in a war like that?

No, there's disillusionment and disgust. What I see

20:00 going on these days in Iraq in particular, that disgusts me. It's a place we shouldn't be in. I'm all for the American allegiance but don't get me going on this for too long, all for the American allegiance but not to the degree that we're going about it. A country that we should look at doing it the right way are New Zealand. Okay, their allegiance with the Americans gets a bit rickety but they lay down firm rules of no nuclear ships

20:30 coming in and that sort of thing but they've had commitment to Afghanistan. They've got troops in Iraq, mind you engineers, but they had, they've got now their SAS in Afghanistan which we haven't. We've got one soldier left, a lieutenant colonel so they're doing more against the war and terror than we are. Anyway…

You're right, the archive doesn't want to be drawn too much into current events, but one question given your experience I feel it's relevant to ask, can you draw parallels between this

21:00 **and the Vietnam conflict?**

Oh yes, I think so, yeah. Just that starting off in a small way going back in 1962 with thirty advisers going into Vietnam no one knew then how that war would develop. The Americans didn't know and we didn't know. Right now, you know twelve months ago when Bush said, "1st of May the war is all over, mission accomplished." It's not and it's just going to get worse and my prognosis has been

21:30 ever since it started that the Americans will rue the day that they every went into Iraq but it's not going to finish this year, next year, until such time as the Americans go. So yeah I can see very much parrels.

Looking ahead to the future then as you are this archive's been put away for fifty or a hundred years time, is there anything that you could say given your experiences that we've talked about today to someone watching

22:00 **this in the future about war?**

About war? No war's a good war but some are cleaner than others. Yes, if you can get wars that are just between soldiers without involving the civilians that is what I'd call a good war but more and more the wars involve civilians and that is very, very sad. You know the good old days like Korea or like the Battle of Alamein, those sort of things that what I call good wars

22:30 but the insurgency wars, no, not good and that's unfortunately is the war of the future.

One question that I said we'd come back to and we didn't, regarded the effects of those wars on the soldiers who fought in them, obviously after Vietnam those effects were given names and there was a lot more attention paid to it.

Like post traumatic stress disorder and that sort thing?

What comments do you have about that?

Well, I'm going to be very honest on this,

23:00 there is the Vietnam Veterans Organisation which I don't belong to. I know a hell of a lot of Vietnam veterans but I don't belong to their organisation and I get very annoyed and upset of how the Vietnam Veterans Organisation are deliberately encouraging people to claim post traumatic stress disorder. In fact I've seen a document, a thirty-six page document showing the questions you will be asked and these are the answer you should give if you want to claim your post traumatic

23:30 stress disorder and a TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated] Pension and that to me is not only non Australian it is quite immoral to do that sort of thing. So I'm very opposed to the Vietnam Veterans Organisation. Vietnam veterans, I know a lot of them very well and most of them don't go along with that the absolute dreadful stuff that the Vietnam Veterans Organisation is doing. However, there are some

24:00 very valid cases of post traumatic stress disorder but there's a hell of a lot that are not.

What does Anzac Day mean to you today?

Oh, it means more to my grandkids I think than it does to me. Last year I went to Bungendore to march with my nine year old granddaughter because she wanted to join her grandfather in a march and you can't do that in Sydney and she was absolutely chuffed with the whole thing. So

24:30 I'm very pleased that Anzac Day means something now to the grandchildren around the place. And for me personally it's a chance you know you remember those have gone but the mates that you've lost and it's a chance to get together with those that are still around that have dropped off the twig yet.

Have you had over the years a tradition you've tried to keep on Anzac Day or did…?

25:00 No, no, I've been in all sorts, I've had some unusual Anzac Days one of them was in Vietnam in 1974 there was the Australian War Memorial at Baria built specially to recognise the Australians. And the ambassador couldn't, was called away from something or other and I had to go down at short notice give the address to all the village elders at Phuoc Tuy Province and which I managed

25:30 to get through in Vietnamese. So they were quite chuffed that someone was talking to them in their own language, so that was an unusual Anzac Day. And the other one I remember was in America in 1980, 1980. When I took over Staff College they sent me to visit the staff colleges of the world, western world because we were changing from a staff college to a command and staff college and they wanted to see how other places

26:00 were doing it. So I went to Camberley in the U.K., and the Fuhrungsakademie in Germany and then Leavenworth and Carlisle the bull college in America, Wellington in India. Anyway, at Leavenworth I happened to be there on the day before Anzac Day and got the briefings and had a very good session with General Richardson, the commanding general explaining all their, what they do in their college

26:30 and what they're trying to do. And that night there was a dinner turned on for me and the one of the visitors there that night apart from me was a chap called General Otis who was the Chief of Operations of the American Army. And at the end of dinner there was a toast to Australia and then a toast to freedom. And I thought a most unusual toast so toasted freedom anyway got home and went to bed. Next morning being Anzac Day, I was going to join

27:00 Australian students and DS [Dean of Students] and Turkish and some Americans who had been involved with Australians for a breakfast, a working breakfast so I was up early and turned the T.V. on while I was having a shower. And they kept flashing on the screen, "Standby the American President is about to speak seven o'clock in the morning." And I thought this is very strange for the President to come on at seven o'clock and low and behold it was Jimmy Carter came on the screen and he said, "I have to announce that

27:30 there's been a tragic accident in Iran where our rescue mission to get the hostages has finished in a disaster where two aircraft have crashed." This was the abortive attempt to rescue the hundred hostages and of course that was an absolute disaster for the Americans. So going along to that, oh the escort officer was picking me up, the lieutenant-colonel came along with a long face

28:00 he said, "We just can't afford another disaster for the American military forces. It's hopeless, this is so soon after Vietnam." and all that sort of thing. And then it was the most gloomy Anzac Day breakfast I've ever had long faces everywhere with the Americans with their got another one wrong. So yes, unusual Anzac Days.

We'll have to move on to the end last question

28:30 **or so, why is it important to do what we're doing today? What is it important about telling these stories of war?**

Why is it important or what?

Yeah, why do you think, why have you decided to contribute to this archive?

Oh right, well I think yeah it is worthwhile, I've done the same thing for my grandkids. I've written some stuff out on my early days of life and all that sort of thing. For the older generation it's

29:00 worthwhile recording things that particularly if they're unusual but for the younger generation to see and all those that are following on. I wish my grandfather, I can't find anything about my two grandfathers and I've been to the records office in the U.K.. I wish they'd have thought you know of recording something about their lives but no so I think it is something worthwhile doing to record for the next generation.

29:30 **Any final words for your great, great, great, great grandchildren?**

No.

Anything you'd like to add?

No, avoid wars if we're talking about wars, avoid wars, yep.

It's been a great pleasure talking to you Ray, thank you very much.

Thank you very much. Yes, and Michael.

Cheers, thank you.