

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Michael Morrison (Midge or Angry Ant) - Transcript of interview

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**Some parts of this interview  
have been embargoed.**

The embargoed portions are  
noted in the transcript and video.

### Tape 1

- 00:41 **First things first, thank you very much for doing this. So give me a summary of your life, from your childhood and where you grew up?**
- Yes, I'd be glad to. I was born in England in
- 01:00 Surrey on the 12th of June 1937. The reason for that, my mother had married a first officer on the Orient Line, my father Keith Milner Morrison. My mother was an Australian and she came from a rural background and our family Chisholm had been in the Goulburn district for many a long day. When the war came, or was imminent, my Dad
- 01:30 thought, "Ay, I'm going to put the family away where they are not likely to be bombed or get involved in heavy wars." He was then seconded to the Royal Navy or the Royal Naval Reserve unfortunately; on the 5th of November 1940 he perished at sea. He was the, I think the first or third officer of the HMAS Jervis Bay and the captain,
- 02:00 Captain Fogarty Fegan just sailed the Jervis Bay straight at the German battleship [HSK] Admiral Scheer thus allowing three of the 38 ships in the convoy to get away. So that left my mother with two young sons. Unfortunately my brother never saw my father. I can remember seeing my Dad once. As the war went
- 02:30 on I think I had a good growing up, it didn't affect me personally because I was too young to know what it was all about and too young to realise what a father was. Anyway we were very lucky we came out to Australia in November 1944, we came on a ship called the RMS Rangitata. The duke and duchess of Gloucester were on the ship,
- 03:00 when the duke came out to be the governor general of Australia. I think the Orient Line thought very highly of my Dad, and we got a berth on the ship. Moved to Australia, Sydney. Lived at Lindfield for two and a half years. At that stage I went to Knox Grammar Preparatory School. My grandmother died, she left a house we moved to Gordon, so
- 03:30 for the first time since we left England we were a family unit again, albeit my mother and my aunt were the greatest of friends. I went through Knox Grammar Preparatory School, then because of associations with Cranbrook School, in that my grandmother had given large sums of money to the school, my uncle had been to the school when it was first opened and unfortunately
- 04:00 died. I was sent to Cranbrook, and also another uncle had been there, but my uncle was an uncle of one of my aunts, not direct line. At school, Cranbrook, probably some of the happiest days of my life. I did five years up to the leaving certificate, and then I don't know why we came back. In my case they had to come back because I had applied for the Royal
- 04:30 Military College and I'd missed out on one of the subjects. Other reason were, we all came back to be jockstraps. And I was a good jockstrap. Played in the first 15, I played in the first 11, I was the school

diving champion for six years, I was lucky enough to be in Murray Rose's swimming team all the way through which was fantastic, nice person.

- 05:00 And as one of the headmasters said, "I urge you to enjoy the fullness of Cranbrook," and I think I did. As well as sport I was keeper of the games room and I was head of the cadet corps. That put me in good stead. Then I went to the Royal Military College in 1956 and that started my career, February 1956. The first month, if you are ever interviewing any of us RMC [Royal Military College] graduates,
- 05:30 absolute hell. But somehow we survived it. I did reasonably well at RMC, I finished up as a colour sergeant which was the second in command of a company. Again, I got colours in all my three main sports, I was lucky enough to be named best and fairest in my final year in rugby and I left with a good start.
- 06:00 I very much admire the staff of the Royal Military College, mainly because they knew what counter revolutionary warfare was. I go back to Korea as being the start of counter revolutionary warfare. And when you get people like General Sir Francis Hassett picking the staff, you are getting some good people, and they were again, both officer instructors and warrant
- 06:30 officer instructors. So off I go to 3RAR [Royal Australian Regiment], but there's a hitch, Sir Robert Menzies closed down national service and initially I was to go to 11 national service training Battalion. I spent a year and a half in 3RAR, a funny sort of time because we were changing from the tropical warfare establishment
- 07:00 to an adaptation of the American pentropic establishment, pentomic establishment, which we call Pentropic. I stayed in 3RAR for one and a half years, we really didn't do that much, then I went to PIR [Pacific Island Regiment] Port Moresby and that was really exciting. I think we were young, brash; we didn't have too much accountability
- 07:30 we had the responsibility of looking after our soldiers. Again played a lot of sport and we used to go on these whacking long patrols, and I've got a couple of old reports for later. We went all over Papua New Guinea. Then from PIR I went to Woodside to the 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. The first regular
- 08:00 battalion formed on Australian soil under the then Lieutenant Colonel David Thompson, now the Honourable Brigadier David Thompson. In the meantime, just before I left PNG [Papua New Guinea], I married my wife Helen, we had a long separation in PNG, when we were engaged, we just didn't see one another. No mobile telephones and I think it was one pound ten
- 08:30 for a call back to Australia, so we used to make it once every couple of weeks. What was interesting about PIR was the Pacific Islands Regiment that we could as well as being colonialists, we were moderators. We had people from every different district and province and tribe that you can imagine, and we were impartial, so
- 09:00 if there was tension they got an independent person like a white Australian to sort it out. In 4RAR I became the regimental signals officer. Hardly ever home because we were always out practicing training because we'd been worn down from Malaya. So we spent a lot of time from home, in South Australia
- 09:30 we went once to Nelson and then we had a huge big exercise in Queensland called exercise Downpour. From there we were presented with our colours, come about August, we started moving to Malaya.

### **This is 1960?**

Archive ID 1965.

- 10:00 And I became tail-end Charlie and had to organise all the families, but my signals platoon I think, is some of the finest soldiers I've ever met, superb in their job, very hard working and because you own them as signallers, but they are attached to companies, I never had one play one off against the other.
- 10:30 If they thought something was wrong, they'd come and tell me, and I'd go and talk to the company commanders if needs be. Then after that David Thompson, no, oh, we went to Borneo, during confrontation and we saw the tail end of Borneo. I think it was August 1966 and when the two foreign ministers of Indonesia and Malaysia, Tun Abdul Razak, and I can't remember the other person [Adam Malik of Indonesia],
- 11:00 signed the agreement you have never seen a battalion leave the battlefield quicker than we did. And I think there was some embarrassment, but I will talk about that later. When we came back to Terendak, I moved from the signal platoon and I became the adjutant and I really learnt what hard work was like with being a paper pusher, but had a wonderful CO [Commanding Officer] as well,
- 11:30 Colonel Colin Leaf, commonly known as 'Cha-Cha'. More elderly than most and a Second World War veteran, but he trusted me implicitly as his personal staff officer. I had a fine year, again I'm dwindling in sports, I'm only diving at this stage, but I did get a bit of diving in. I think Helen enjoyed it; the separations were starting to get a bit

- 12:00 nauseous. And then one dreadful day in May or June I got this signal as the adjunct saying, "Hey guys, you're warmed up for Vietnam," I thought, "Hey." Anyway I didn't say anything, took it into the CO. Then we went back to Brisbane to prepare to go to Malaya. I'd say we arrived back in Brisbane in October we left to go to Vietnam, the advance party
- 12:30 May 1968 and by then I'd been promoted and I was the officer commanding, Admin Company. We were all determined to stick together as much as we could with our families during those eight months rather than be separated for eight months before you go, and then 12 months after that. Vietnam
- 13:00 I think we ran a superb logistics organisation maybe I'm biased because I was the company commander. But I guess you could say for my first six months as the OC [Officer Commanding] Admin Company in charge of all the logistics, I was called head Pogo [person not involved in contact]. Then at the end of six months the CO changed people around in major positions and I went to a rifle company
- 13:30 called Charlie Company 4RAR, what is also significant about 4RAR is that it was the Anzac battalion. We had three Australian rifle companies, two New Zealand rifle companies, and a sprinkling of New Zealanders amongst the port company and in my admin company.
- 14:00 **Well come back to all that stuff afterwards; after Charley Company did you have other roles in Vietnam?**
- I didn't, then we came home and I went to the director of army recruiting. Thoroughly enjoyed it after I didn't think I would. Went to the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] staff college as an exchange army student. I think I was a bit young and a bit naïve, and I didn't do all that well, and I hadn't
- 14:30 had enough staff training, all my life had been regimental. After that I went back to New Guinea, to the 2nd Battalion, Pacific Islands Regiment as the 2IC [Second in Command] and that was fun because I was the Mayor of Moama. We had at that stage, four children, three children, and our last was born
- 15:00 two weeks before we came home. It was an exciting job then in particular because Papua New Guinea was preparing for independence. We didn't know when it was coming. You can take an Andrew Peacock remark to Michael Somare when he says, "Well Michael you can have independence any time you like," and he says, "Oh no Andrew, you'd better stay a bit longer."
- 15:30 But my version of why it happened is through Gough Whitlam. He wanted to establish us as a middle power in the region and in the world and he wanted good relations with China, and you can't be a colonial in that sense. Anyway, finished, PIR went home, became the military assistant to the vice chief of the general staff, which in plain language is,
- 16:00 personal assistant to the second most senior person in the army. I had the job for a year, at that stage we'd just bought a house and I just wanted to settle down for a while. After that I got promoted, at the time when the whole defence network was changing a lot through the auspices of Sir Arthur Tange, and there was layer upon layer
- 16:30 upon layer and it wasn't much fun. But anyway, I persevered and I had a number of postings in Canberra. One was in establishments division, another one was in personnel branch another one was the coordinator of army safety and another one was in what is called the Director General of Army Works. Then after I'd been there nine years I
- 17:00 think the system said, "Hey, he's got a flea," so I went off to Sydney, to the then-headquarters, field course command I was staff officer grade one personnel, which I thoroughly enjoyed. At that age I was 47, I didn't know whether I was going to get promoted, we'd had two children who had been through, our girls, in Canberra.
- 17:30 The two boys, I didn't know what I was going to do. So I wrote to my old school and said, "Any jobs going?" And fortunately there was one. So I retired from the army from Victoria Barracks in February of 1985. And that's roughly my life.
- There's a few years after that, what did you do after '85?**
- 18:00 Oh, okay, I would prefer to call it the development officer but I was the executive officer of the school foundation for the old boys association, and what was happening in the schools was that things were starting to firm up in education in that instead of so many honorary and unpaid jobs, they combined secretary of the old Cranbrook association
- 18:30 an executive officer of the foundation to a permanent job. Basically in the foundation my role was to be the vehicle to make sure we had the right plans in place to raise money. In our major capital appeals, of which I did two, one in 1985 as a learner and
- 19:00 1990, we contracted it out; I think it was to the national fundraising council. So I literally became the offside to that appointed officer. But I also believe in the foundation I had a more important role, with what's called 'friend raising' and I participated in anything I possibly could,
- 19:30 particularly sport, like training cricket and football teams, going on what was called an outward bound or which we called 'Cranbrook in the field' which had replaced cadets. To me that was important, and the old boys [association], I did as any secretary does, and that doesn't need explanation. I had that job

until 1991,

- 20:00 and then I left. I worked temporarily for the Red Cross in a fundraising job, but I'm not sure that they were that coordinated because we would have people specialising in one particular area, but me responsible for overall, but specifically fundraising and it was hard.
- 20:30 Then I had a year or two years' unemployment, and then I went to the oldest charity in New South Wales called the New South Wales benevolent society. The director at the time, or head of it was David Richmond, who as you are probably aware went on to be one of the lynchpins of the Sydney Olympic Games. I had that job for
- 21:00 under a year and I thought, "I've had enough of fundraising, this is not at all exciting," so I left. And then I tried very hard to get other jobs, but unfortunately I couldn't. However the fortunate thing for me was I had a reasonable pension to tide me over, I had a pretty good severance
- 21:30 package from Cranbrook school and my wife decided that she'd like to go back to work full-time instead of part-time. And she's very much a mother, a very loving mother; she always said the kids come first. And from then I was unemployed. And then the 'shan hit the fit' said, my daughter said, "Dad, I think you're drinking too much." I said,
- 22:00 "Why do you say that?" and she said, "Well you really shouldn't interfere with my job." I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "You should have never written to the head of the NRMA [National Roads and Motorists' Association] saying that they needed another person to do the job." And she was terribly unhappy at the time, and I didn't think they had the right person and I thought I knew a little about personnel. Anyway, that's by the by, I did put myself into Saint Edmunds
- 22:30 clinic at Eastwood and I thought halfway through this, "A lot of our diggers have died and have drinking problems," and we'd at last defined shellshock and battle fatigue, call it what you like, post traumatic stress disorder, that together with unemployment was driving me and the wife up the wall.
- 23:00 Or my wife and I, so I said to the doctor is there any possibility that alcoholism is not the problem, but it's the outward manifestation of PDS [Prolonged Duress Stress Disorder]? So he put me through that and the result was that maybe, but I can't be sure. Anyway I visited the veterans review board, which is
- 23:30 pretty gruelling stuff because they bring up a lot of sensitive detail, and in November 1998 or 9 I was classified TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated]. I did have a good voluntary job through the '90s I was secretary of what was called the Australian Papua New Guinea Friendship Association. And we particularly wanted
- 24:00 to make contacts and there were some remarkable people on that committee, perhaps one of Australia's finest southeast Asian diplomats ever, Tom Critchley, Mr Justice Ken Gee, Colonel Colin East, Rear Admiral David Leach, and a couple of us who had extensive experience in
- 24:30 PNG, Major Donald Ramsey and a fellow called Mr David Marsh who'd been a district commissioner in his time. And I had that for about six seven years, I think we did a good job but as invariably happens with progress once you loose your contacts you can't be effective and younger people are going to come up
- 25:00 and make the policy for the country and that was that. But it is noteworthy and Australia's position in New Guinea, just forget the Kokoda Track for a minute, every time PNG has been in difficulties the Australian government has always come to the rescue and I'll quote things like the Sepik floods, the Sepik tsunami,
- 25:30 the Rabaul earthquake and the famine, Australia has never ever stepped aside and said, "Not for us." So then the association didn't fold up per se, it seemed to take a smaller and smaller role, and that was it.
- All right, we'll stop there,**
- 26:00 **that was very thorough, thank you very much for that.**
- That was more than five minutes and I'm terribly sorry.
- No that's excellent, your career summary is fantastic. I'll start back at the very beginning; do you have any memories of your time in England?**
- Yes, I went to a school called Radnall School, as a little boy and it wasn't that
- 26:30 far from our place. I can always remember tobogganing down the hill for the first time. I remember we mucked around with the light switches, and the fuses and we blew the whole school electric system. And I did see a flying bomb the V2. It landed in the field and of course there was a tractor driver and the tractor driver, end of tractor driver.
- 27:00 I remember with fond memories my grandmother; she would come down from Harrogate, Yorkshire and stay with my mother and she took me to places like St Paul's Cathedral. And all over London so at least I knew a little about London. I can remember I made great friends with a Canadian transport unit

- 27:30 which was based just around the corner and I nearly got to Normandy because I snuck on the back of the truck and someone found me and said, "Young man, it's goodbye, I'm sorry." And the kindness of a family in London, the Stowes, they wanted to move their daughter Margo out of London somewhere safe, and she became my mother's housemate and
- 28:00 probably best friend. In an all-embracing lateral way, just the friendship that was shown to my mother was incredible. Particularly the Orient Line and just people round about. We didn't want for much and I had a pretty good growing up in the circumstances.

28:30 And Mum grew our own veggies.

**What concept did you have as a very young child of what was going on around you in wartime?**

I would think it would have to be fun, because the Canadian unit were around the corner and they put a maple leaf on my little t-shirt, but I didn't understand that much about it that's for sure.

- 29:00 I think the two things I can remember that stick in my mind that so many people have said that my father was a fine man, your father died in a most glorious naval action, always be proud of it, and I think I have been.

**What did you know about your father growing up, I mean, who told you about him, and what did you learn?**

- 29:30 I guess I've been learning over the years, probably very little until I came to Australia. But I leaned about the courtship, well as much as my Mum wanted to tell me. I've got two photograph albums which is of their wedding, and their early life and memorabilia that I've collected.

- 30:00 But particularly with three of my cousins, my father had two brothers, one had two daughters Jennifer and Pauline and Jennifer is a fund of knowledge and we went to England in 1998. We stayed a lot with Jennifer and she told me a lot. With Pauline, when their father, Uncle Colin died,

- 30:30 Pauline was good enough to go through her father's personal stuff and I got photographs and everything like that. Which there is a lot displayed around this house, and that's thanks to Pauline. My other cousin Hugh, who is the eldest of the lot, fills in snippets because

- 31:00 while the rest of the family, no, Hugh's family lived in Leeds, my father's, my grandmother lived in Harrogate, I can't remember where my Uncle Colin, so you know, Hugh fills in snippets like that. And there is a book called The Jervis Bay which I've got.

- 31:30 **What about your mother, she must have been quite a strong woman, how did she fare getting on without your father?**

Well for the first thing, she never ever married again, and I don't think she ever contemplated it; she was so much in love with my father. I think she had the heart of a lion and the sensitivity of an angel,

- 32:00 and she also had a bad impairment, she was partially deaf and her mother sent her all around Harley Street, London from Australia to see what they could do. And my Dad said to his mother-in-law, "You are not going to get her fixed up in Macquarie Street, Sydney, send her over to London." She

- 32:30 never revealed her sadness, her really best friend and protector was Aunt Betty. Now my Aunt Betty could be, from my point of view, could be up there like a saint one day, and someone I wouldn't want to meet the next, she was a mercurial character, but in hindsight she was a wonderful woman, not only in her own right, but as a friend to my Mum.

- 33:00 **What do you recall about coming out to Australia?**

Having my first drink, someone gave me half a glass of beer, and my Mum found out, gosh she was cross. Coming across the Bay of Biscay, we didn't surface for three days we were so seasick. And we had a makeshift swimming pool, where I think I really learnt to swim.

- 33:30 Meeting the duke and duchess of Gloucester. Stopping in Aden and as it was then, Ceylon, and that was just beautiful, I'd never seen plantations before. Then when we, when someone said we were close off the shores of Australia,

- 34:00 I just couldn't wait for the trip to end, it had taken, I think, six weeks in those days. And oh, I remember probably the last thing on the trip, looking up from the deck, looking at the mast, looking at the Harbour Bridge and thinking, "How are we going to get under that?" But that's about most.

**And what were your impressions of Australia? Did you fit in straight away or did it take you a little while?**

- 34:30 I think we fitted in very quickly because we went to stay with our aunt and uncle, that's Aunt Betty and her husband Garren, we were all very much the same age. I'm a month older than my cousin David; my brother Tony is a year older

- 35:00 than our cousin Geraldine. We had a nurse and you needed it with four young sprats ranging from what was it, seven to four or something. And I think the best thing was going to school, a new school, a new environment. And I can always remember
- 35:30 the teacher called Miss Stowe, she publicly welcomed me in front of the class, told the class a little bit of what had happened, how I'd got there, what had happened to my family. No problems I liked it. And in 1945 I went to the second test at the Sydney Cricket Ground, after being locked in the bathroom for being a bad young man and I say the great partnership,
- 36:00 fourth wicket partnership of Barnes and Bradman, 405.

**Who were the male role models in your life without your father?**

Most definitely my uncle, the family accountant, inestimable, he was so good. Unfortunately my aunt and uncle

- 36:30 split along the way, but this guy John Mackellar-White who was amongst other thing head of the New South Wales tax payers association, was just wonderful, it wasn't just books, it was all about growing up. And very luckily he had a daughter about my age, Jackie. Jackie and I have been mates for a long, long time. My other role model, if you can call role
- 37:00 model when you are in your 20s, was a fellow called Keith Archer, this was at the Royal Military College. A lot of Canberra would give us sort of home away from home, and I think Keith had been taking in cadets since 1958, and he was tremendous, he eventually became the Commonwealth
- 37:30 statistician. He would berate me, he would tell me things, he would encourage me to do things, ah yes, one of the best. At the end of RMC I won the military history geography prize I think it was, I said to Keith, "Look I've got to write this essay can you help me?" He said, "Yes, what's it on?"
- 38:00 I said, "The Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation, SEATO [Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation]," so he took me around to about two or three high commissioners of some of the nations and had me interview them. No wonder I won the prize. He was that sort of man. He had a daughter Margaret, who's a little older than I am, but we have been best friends for
- 38:30 a long time.

**Can you tell me about the first houses you lived in, was your first real family home in Gordon in Australia?**

I've got to talk about Lindfield first, it's 34 Middle Harbour Road and my daughter's thinking of moving up this way and I'm sure she's seen this house because it fits like a glove, she said, "God, that's the place I'd like to live."

- 39:00 Went down the driveway it had a master bedroom on the bottom floor, dining room, sitting room and laundry, upstairs it had three bedrooms and a box room, guess who won the box room? Me. Gordon, three bedrooms,
- 39:30 sold brick, very nice veranda, but no architectural masterpiece, let me tell you, but it was good, we had our own space and because my grandmother was getting old when she moved to Sydney, she had a housekeeping in to look after here and I eventually ended up with her room.
- 40:00 I had my own space.

## Tape 2

**00:41 How did your family get on for money as you were growing up, what was the income?**

I think my father, who's not as well endowed as my mother eventually was,

- 01:00 I can remember in letters he wrote to her, "Make sure Gran is looked after." I'd say we were sort of middle class, we weren't rich, but we weren't poor. The fact that she could afford to send all the children to private schools was okay we always went away
- 01:30 on holiday, albeit the big one was at Christmas when we'd go to Rayburn Station. I'd say we were moderately well off, and reasonably frugal.

**What were the biggest luxuries in your life, what would you look forward to?**

- 02:00 I'd think most of all music, and we were lucky enough to have the subject for one period a week called music appreciation, and I guess as well, as people like reading, I like listening to music. Undoubtedly sport,

02:30 recreational things that I should have done, I never took the family skiing, I never went skiing myself. I don't know how to say this, but just being able to get on with my siblings, the young fellow over there, Simon, is brilliant at it.

03:00 He's so different from the rest of the family, in terms of his professional career, but he can get on with anyone from eight to 80, he's that sort of person he's always been in my affections.

**What kind of, how would you describe your personality as a boy? Were you outgoing or?**

03:30 I'd say I was reasonably outgoing, shy doesn't really apply, but reserved would. I was never afraid of being in public and when you fill up the North Sydney Olympic Pool and you are aged 14 and you are on a

04:00 diving board that's not bad. I won't say I wasn't nervous but unfortunately in my last year I had to bring down from the board because he was so nervous. Other things I'd say, I'm highly sensitive.

**In what respect?**

04:30 I feel things too deeply that I shouldn't, I should just forget that they've happened, get on with it, if it was my fault, apologise, if it was their fault, say, "Okay, I don't have to deal with this any more if I don't want to," or make up. I don't think, but breeding doesn't come into it.

05:00 And I can guess I can say I am a reasonable personality because, if you've got to go through psych tests for the Royal Military College, those tests are very searching.

**What did you get into trouble for as a boy?**

Smoking, age seven.

**You were smoking and drinking at age seven?**

05:30 No, I pinched a fag. In my last year at Knox Grammar Preparatory School someone alleged that I'd stolen something, I didn't think I had. What else did I get in trouble for? Ah,

06:00 having a naughty weekend, and I'm not going into the details, but there was a whole lot, about five of us and we took over, one of the guys took over his Dad's house and we had the equivalent number of girls, we stayed there all the Labour weekend. Nothing of a promiscuous nature

06:30 happened, but you know, it really wasn't the right thing to do. And he actually pinched his Dad's car, the grand old Rover, we went for a drive around Kings Cross, 'cause we'd never seen Kings Cross before. Ah yeah, first year at Cranbrook I was a boarder and

07:00 our boarding house was across the street from the school in Victoria Road, we used to go up and down there for meals. One Sunday we thought, "Oh well, we'll have a bit of a flirt with some of the cars," so we threw imaginary stones, of course we were caught by the house tutor and got six of the best. Now they say theory is no motivation,

07:30 but pain is a real motivator. We'd stand under the shower with our bare bottoms and the welts of the cane under it.

**Who was the enforcer of discipline in your family, did you get in trouble there?**

No,

08:00 probably my aunt was, but it wasn't discipline per se, you know, if we did something wrong, she'd tick us off, on the other hand, I can't remember how old I was, but we were sitting around the table one night having dinner and I can't even remember how the subject came up, but we talked about reproduction,

08:30 so yeah, she was a good mentor in that way.

**What were your ambitions? Did you have any early ambitions or dreams that you wanted to be something?**

No I didn't, the first thing I knew was that I wanted to matriculate from school, so I could get to university.

09:00 Then when I, I don't know how this happened, absolute luck, but I went to Singleton on an under officers course, and suddenly I'm coming first, I think I finished up fifth, so I got promoted in the cadets. I'd seen the Royal Military College

09:30 play football and I thought, "Gees, this might be for me," so I applied and I was accepted, I forget which I failed, it was either English or maths and I had to go back, but no one put any pressure on me at all, and I just didn't know how my mother was going to put me through university.

10:00 Big sacrifice for putting you through private schools and I had to repeat the leaving to do what you want, and as it turned out, in my second year I got a Commonwealth scholarship anyway. Sorry, that's a

very roundabout answer, but I can't do any better.

**Were there any military influences on your growing up, you were in cadets obviously, was that about it?**

10:30 Yes.

**Can you tell us about cadets, what did you do?**

Well you know, I started off as the scruffiest little 14-year-old kid, with a rifle that came up to his shoulder, and then we had selections for people to go on this under officers course at Singleton, I got selected. So I went,

11:00 came back as a sergeant, the next year I was an under officer, the next year I was a senior cadet under officer.

**What did you, did you go on camps or did you?**

Yeah we did, we went on one camp per year, and we generally went to Singleton,

11:30 we'd go on bivouacs, I can always remember doing the leopard crawl, through this savannah and what's called the objective is some meters away, and a very fine Australian happened to be with us, Jika Travers, because Jika Travers had been a brigade major in the Second World War and knew a

12:00 lot about soldering, and he said, "Young fellow, get up and walk for a while, I'll tell you when to get out."

**What did you like about the cadets?**

I really can't explain, I don't know.

**Where there any other subjects at school that you**

12:30 **enjoyed or inspired your imagination?**

Yes ancient history because we had a wonderful teacher called, Harry Nicholson, he was adventurous, he was exciting and he was pretty broadminded, and the chemistry master, the late Mark Bishop, the mad scientist

13:00 as we used to call him. So outgoing and he made it sort of human, I remember we were talking about some particular product and he said, "Now that gentlemen eventually leads to soap," he could tie the science to what happened in the outside world.

13:30 And he was good. A fellow called, Guy Moyd who had some sort of gift of teaching kids that weren't that good at mathematics to make sense of it all, as a teacher. Some of my influences, or some of the people who gave me chances in life and at my school, were

14:00 Mark Bishop again, he said, "Okay Morrison, you're too small to be a break away," I think he's right, "So I'm going to make you five eight." So that launched my fad into big-time football, into the school first 15, into RMC, and eventually the RMC first 15, but I struck a really good player who's a great mate of mine called Red Sutton

14:30 so I was put back to full back. And the headmaster Gavin Hewitt, went on to score a ton against Waverly in the second, put me up to the first and said, "You are going to stay there for a while, I'm not going to have you in this side for just one or two matches, and if you fail I'll kick you out." And that happened in the old third term of 1954 and he said, "I not just having you as

15:00 a batsman, I'm going to make you a slow, off spin bowler," and he did. So they were the sort of people I was grateful for. For one form master, a fellow called Gilbert Jones who took us for French, perhaps one of the loveliest men I've ever met, we had him for a year, but he was just so good, and he used to produce all the school plays. So

15:30 they were the sort of people we grew up with.

**You described yourself before as a bit of a jockstrap, did that culture extend off the sporting field, was that a sort of sub group of people at Cranbrook?**

No, for instance, our debating competitions and the associated schools, were held every Friday night, I would always go to those nights,

16:00 no, yeah, whilst we were teams on the field we were clanny, off the field no, well, I wasn't. I was too busy, being no great academic; my interests were always in making sure I passed the exams at the end of the year.

16:30 **What other major interests did you have then other than school and sporting agenda entirely?**

After starting in Miss Coe's dancing class, girls. My spiritual beliefs were pretty strong, albeit it was



mandatory to go to church, and on Sunday

17:00 after you were confirmed, there were three services involved, communion, the morning service and then we used to have evensong, so yes my spiritual values are important.

**Were there ever any conflicts between your spiritual values and your interest in girls?**

No.

17:30 Can you ask me the reason for the question?

**You mentioned you got a little bit of sex education from your aunt, was pre-marital sex something that came into your sphere of?**

No not at all. So many of the girls we went out with were in church fellowships anyway, us boarders we couldn't go to church fellowships, no.

18:00 **What did you do with girls, what sort of courting rituals were around in your day?**

Lot of dancing and man could I jive, go to the pictures, I think go to the pictures mainly, formally being invited

18:30 for lunch at dinner at someone's place. And then opposite St Marks, Darling Point, there was a girl called Jan Williams, she lived downstairs and her grandparents lived upstairs, Sunday afternoons we were allowed to go for a walk, and a lot of us would congregate there, not necessarily from one school, and just shoot

19:00 the breeze.

**You mentioned jiving, where did you go to dance in the early '50's in Sydney?**

I guess being an eastern suburbs nob, we went to places like the Royal Motor Yacht Club, maybe Royal Sydney Golf Club, there was, I think Florida House springs to mind

19:30 yes, there were nice public venues. But we didn't spend nearly as much money as my children do, on their formals, we just had a suit and that was it, some might have had a tuxedo. God here I am, for our kids when they were at school, you hired the dinner suit, you paid the cost of the function.

20:00 "Dad, she has to have some flowers, if you are not going to pick us up we need a hire car." Costs you the earth, it started so early. When I say 'started so early', it started in year 10, so there is year 10, year 11, year 12. I don't think we even had an end-

20:30 of-year function for our leaving class, we may have, I just can't remember.

**What did you wear to the dances then, were they formal occasions at all?**

Yeah, I remember my intermediate, I did get a tuxedo I can remember it, it was a jacket, the old black trousers and a black tie,

21:00 I only wore it once or twice, don't know what happened to it, other than that, if it was formal, yeah, you'd have to go in a suit.

**Better move on, 'cause we've got a long career to get through, were there any other events maybe of a traumatic nature or an exciting nature, from your childhood that influenced you one way or the other?**

21:30 Yeah, the death of one of our class mates, that's my first year at Cranbrook, who was run over by a bus, very fortunately Gilbert Jones, who was the form master, now this person, Victor Solomon, had started off in the prep school with a whole lot of others,

22:00 in I think we were in remove A, had started off together, and the sadness that went 'round our class was incredible, for me it wasn't so great because I didn't know Vic that well, albeit he was a nice person, but it was, Gilbert Jones just guided us through that time.

22:30 **All right, getting on to the end of your schooling, you applied for RMC, can you explain how that came about, where you first got the urge to do it?**

I really didn't think I was any great academic, so try RMC, and I had some reservations about that, and I said to my mother,

23:00 "I'd like to join the army, I have been in the cadets and I think I have some liking for the disciplined life style." And I did that with trepidation because she'd lost her husband at war, so I applied, I got the interview, I did all, jumped through all the hoops and had a final interview with them and got accepted.

23:30 But the thing that I didn't get was the required matriculation, so I said out of both a feeling that I had for the school, because I really had enjoyed my life and the results hadn't even come out at that stage, I said to my Mum, "Could I go back to do another year?" and she said, "Yeah, of course you can." And I

did another year.

24:00 And in hindsight it was just the best thing that ever happened to me – A, I was too young in myself, I think to go to RMC, and secondly, I went to RMC with a lot more achievement than I would have had, had I gone in '55 instead of '56.

24:30 **What were your mothers arguments, what conversations did you have at that time when you wanted to join up?**

Very few, she said, “If that’s what you want to do, go ahead, I’m not going to stop you, so long as whatever you do is decent, not outside the law and you like it, then do it.”

**Was she an encouraging parent in that respect, did she get behind everything**

25:00 **you did?**

Yes, she was supportive, but she wouldn’t come and see me play every Saturday, she’d come occasionally, and at that stage she wasn’t that well and couldn’t be expected to come and see me.

**What was she suffering from?**

25:30 I don’t know, that is highly sensitive, and that’s something I’m not going to talk about.

**When did your mother pass away?**

1957.

**What happened then when you got into RMC, what was the next step?**

First up after you get your gear and

26:00 are allocated to a room, you get put under what is called a ‘Lord and Master’. He gets all the punishment for any mistakes you make for the first six weeks, if it’s outrageous. But you are together as a class basically doing what is called infantry minor tactics, and no one is allowed to have a go at you. You are essential under the guidance

26:30 of the, or in our time we were under the guidance of the infantry wing, then you get back and you sort of become a member of the core proper. That means you can get extra drills and all the privileges of being a cadet. And then your academic life starts.

27:00 The first six weeks is entirely military, or it was in my day, and because Duntroon in those days was not a degree-granting institution, we just had academic study, and we were split into three streams, dullards, oh sorry, people who like the arts,

27:30 science and engineering. The engineers and scientists after graduation, as I recall, went on and completed degrees, and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology sticks out in my mind as being one.

28:00 And then you know, you played sport, I think we played three times a week, Tuesday was practice days, Saturday the game, again, I thought I was lucky having a, being a sportsman, springboard made

28:30 my life more pleasant than it had been for the last sort of eight weeks. I won both the one metre and three metre and someone said, “Ay, this guy might be worth a quid.” What else did I play? Oh, you did a lot of drill in that first six weeks

29:00 up and down the parade ground, which is fondly called Square, and we had this RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] a fellow called Peter Steer, who as well as being a very good instructor, he was also very good on the traditions of the service and so on, and he’d tell us lots of talks of how regiments got

29:30 formed and what certain things meant in a regiment, so you were brought into it pretty closely. Ceremony with parades were a big deal, I think the first one we were allowed to go on was the Queen’s birthday parade, dining had it’s problems, ‘cause you’d sit at the end of the table, and there

30:00 are eight on a table as I remember, and you could get a couple of first class up the top, that’s the graduating class, then second class, a couple there, then down third class, the class above you and then you right at the bottom of the table. I’ll never forget it; we had what’s called formal dining in-nights, which mean

30:30 we got a better meal than usual, and it included ice-cream, grog absolutely out, no drinking at RMC at all. Anyway, I was sitting at the end of this table, they said, “Gees Mr Morrison, you look as if you are underfed, you can have all the ice-cream,” and I had to go through the tray of ice-cream that large.

31:00 And because I was at Cranbrook boy and I don’t know if you’ve heard the song: Tiddly Winks Old Man, if you can’t get a girl, get a Cranbrook man. I had to stand up in the mess and sing that in front of what? Two hundred and fifty cadets, but it only happened once and that was that. But mealtimes were something else.

### **What other ways did the senior**

#### **31:30 class control the new boys at Duntroon?**

Oh, very much as mentors, showing us how to do things, putting things into practice, giving us the benefit of their experience, excellent.

#### **Was there any bastardisation or sort of physical initiation?**

32:00 Now where does this start and where does it end? We had I'm told, a guy who'd got off the train at Canberra at three o'clock, went into the college and was back on the train at five o'clock, because someone had given him a hard time.

32:30 Anyway, this came to the attention of the commandant, and I just can't remember how the meeting came up, but I guess someone said we've got to find out what fourth class think, so we had this meeting and one guy got up and said, "Oh, this may be really awful, but let's

33:00 persevere with it," I thought to myself, "I'm having a shit of a life Sam and I don't give a stuff what you say, but I wouldn't mind it easing off." But in the end, I don't think it was so bad, I think the most stupid thing that was done to me was to fill out what was called an extra drill form 21 times over a whole weekend, just to

33:30 get it absolutely perfect, and my section commander would always be able to find a reason to rip it up. Other stupid things, have you ever seen all Montgomery's decorations? Have you ever tried to memorise them? 'Cause that's what I had to do, "Blow me down," I thought. And that was the only bit bastardisation I ever took

34:00 until first class. I could always remember this, asking this guy Staff Cadet Massingham, said, "You can go and learn all Montgomery's decorations," well blow me down, he's walking into the library and the dean of studies, Professor Traill Sutherland said,

34:30 "Son, where are you going?" He said, "Oh, off to learn Montgomery's decorations, just memorise them," "Oh, who are you doing that for son?" Colour Sergeant Morrison, well, anyway this got back to the head chief and the then, Commanding Officer Sandy Pierson,

35:00 later General Sandy Pierson who commanded 1ATF [Australian Task Force] in Vietnam. Another fine guy, Lou Hodgkinson who was the adjutant sergeant, appeared at this tactics do we were having one day at the Queanbeyan Lookout, anyway I was called aside, given the appropriate rocket, and Sandy walked away and he said, "Oh by the way,

35:30 keep playing good football." But that's as much as I ever did.

#### **Had the system changed in between your first class and your fourth class year?**

No, very little.

#### **What was this lord and master idea; can you explain that in a bit more detail?**

Yeah, a lord and master was just a person to settle you in, here you are in the most different environment than you've ever been in,

36:00 and you know nothing about the military, if you think you know a lot about the military when you are a cadet you don't, for instance, you know, I didn't even know what core's were, that there are thinks like infantry, artillery, armoury and so on, and this guy's just there to guide you through it, to settle you in.

#### **Who was your lord and master?**

Oh my lord and master turned out to be a very fine soldier, a fellow called Ted Chitham.

36:30 He went on to command the 9th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, got an MC [Military Cross] for an APC [Armoured Personnel Carrier] charge outside of Baria, he's imaginative, Ted.

#### **What sort of things did you have trouble with getting used to this new environment at Duntroon?**

I'm not going to answer

37:00 your question directly, I'm going to go a way around it. I said to myself, "This is going to be hard, but I'm not giving up," and that was the attitude that I took, that's what I'd selected to do, and that was what I was going to do. For me,

37:30 the military life and the sporting life were the joy and no way was I going to fail an examination, and I did never ever fail a civilian or an academic subject. And I never had what's called a Pom toc, a CO's toc or an OC's toc,

38:00 which is a talk to discuss how you are going in your studies, and you'd better pull your bloody socks up. But in a way, and I don't know much about university, but it was forgiving, if you failed say, one or two

subjects, your Christmas leave was cut short by a week, and you went back and did what was called supps [supplementary exam],

38:30 just sups, you were there. Now I don't know whether that happened at university, is it you pass you pass, you fail you fail?

**They do have at some schools probably a similar thing.**

Okay.

**Your hardships though, were they related mainly towards the academic side of things, or towards the discipline or the military establishment?**

I just knew I had to try hardest in my academic subjects,

39:00 to make a go of it. You know one gave a bummer if you win playing whatever sport at whatever level, but you had to pass your academics and of course you had to pass things like map reading, shooting, and all those basic military skills that are required of any person.

39:30 **What did you think of drill?**

The smallest guy marches in the middle, and when you go down the square on a march past, it's always by the centre, I don't know how many kicks in the bum I got for stuffing up the dressing or getting the pace wrong, or whatever.

40:00 One of the best answers I can give to that is an anecdote: One wet Monday morning I was hitching up my strides, the RSM saw me and screamed out, "You horrible little man," he wanted to see me after the parade, and I did, "You are on a charge,"

40:30 "Thanks very much," I went in front of my company commander who was then Major Baldwin, later General Baldwin, and he heard what I had to say about how they slipped down, he said, "Bad luck son, I find you guilty, two extra drills, but let me tell you, drill is essential to the purpose of people working together

41:00 in any environment," and from there on, I just took it like that. Ceremonial parades, we used to march in what's called the slope arms position...

## Tape 3

00:42 **On the last tape we were up to ceremonial parade and the march with the slope hands?**

Slope arms - what happened to me was in about my third year; I used to get cramp in my arms and on one

01:00 parade I thought, "I'm not going to make this," so I just marched off the parade, where no one could see me, anyway I went up to the adjutant later and said, "I'm sorry for what I did," he said, "Son, you took the right option, I would have hate to have seen an embarrassment on the square." And another time it happened to me and I nearly got away with it,

01:30 but it was Viscount Slim, so I thought, "I'm in trouble here, I've only 200 yards to go and then we'll order arms," so I put my arm over there hoping no one would notice. But ceremonials, I think for

02:00 my class, a very proud moment was when we were presented with the sovereigns banner, and it was presented by the late Queen Mother, Queen Elizabeth, and I will never forget, as we were coming down the back straight, as we broke from slow-time to quick-time all the crowd stood up and clapped,

02:30 and it was good. Ceremonials you think we are always like that, no speaking, but the amount of team work in your company and in the ranks is incredible, talking to one another, sort of, "Move up a bit, drop back a bit, hey rock forward on your toes, if you stand on your heels

03:00 you might faint," so there is a lot of talking went on, and being a bit cheeky but not a pervert, some of the instructors' wives were very glamorous to look at, if you had to put up with the whole parade, you might as well look at some good scenery. But yea, they are a big deal, and my senior class were

03:30 on parade when the Queens regimental colours were presented by the Queen and they say that is the finest parade, I have no reason to doubt them, I just think I went on the second finest parade.

**What subjects at Duntroon did you actually excel at?**

I did best at

04:00 economics, economic history and English, enough to give me credits to get into any major university, but I said to a very good friend of the cadets, his name was Boyd Dempsey, he was the senior science teacher, I said, "You know

- 04:30 with this degree Boyd, will we get through now?" He said, "Look, those who got through when you got through would get through now, it's just that we've changed the system and we are under the University of New South Wales, but our enlistment standards still apply, it's just that you guys were unlucky that it wasn't a degree-granting course."
- 05:00 **Were there, or was there anything at Duntroon during the years there that you found useless or unhelpful for later in your army life?**
- Yes, in my second class, it is hard to balance three streams in a workload situation in the academic subjects, the engineers always had to work
- 05:30 like heck, the sciences a little less so, and the artists, even less so. I thought we had too much free time, instead of formal lectures in that year; now how you would have ever changed that, I don't know, but I seemed to spend more time in my room than I did in the classroom or the lecture room.
- 06:00 **You mentioned earlier about your love of the dances and that sort of things, what was graduation like?**
- Fun, it is the one time that your family come, generally to a ball, you'd be taking a
- 06:30 girl, that's it, you go through the parade, the class is on it's own it does it's final march, and that was in the morning, in the evening was the ball. At 12 midnight they pin your pips on and lots of funny things can happen; some guys have met their girlfriend even before they joined the
- 07:00 army, but they may not necessarily have come down to the balls that we used to have during the year, other guys have met up with Canberra girls and then the terrible thing happened. The girls from home come down and the preference is for the girl from home rather than the girl from Canberra. Then there are just friends.
- 07:30 **Who did you end up taking?**
- I ended up taking one of my brothers' former girlfriends, and after the pinning on of the pips, she wasn't that interested, so I can remember at four o'clock in the morning with one of my classmates, General Brian Horrie Howard, having a beer race round the Rex Hotel.
- 08:00 So that was the end of it for me, but I said to this particular girls' friend, who I subsequently took out, "What actually happened?" She said, "Oh Michael, you're a fool, all she wanted to do was go to graduation." But there's the fun of it, and we used to have it in the gymnasium,
- 08:30 the gymnasium is spring-mounted on the floor. By one of my great mentors namely Keith Archer, he gave me a dinner at the Canberra Hotel, it was immensely generous of him.
- Why did Keith Archer and others, but him in particular take such**
- 09:00 **an interest in you?**
- I don't necessarily think they took an interest, but for me he was a person I could look up to, and I did, stood no nonsense, but had a fun way of doing things, and that was it.
- At this stage, where was your career headed, did you have a plan or a direction for**
- 09:30 **where you wanted to be?**
- Now I mentioned previously, we didn't even know what cores meant until we got into the army; I hope this is not too flippant, but I'm sitting down at the end of the table and the sergeant at the top says, "What core are you going into?" I said, "I don't know sergeant," he said, "You are going into infantry son."
- 10:00 That's how my decision was made, and I enjoyed infantry because I enjoy people, the only time I ever thought about changing my core, was in second class, I went up to the gunnery instructor a fellow called Major John Salmon, later Brigadier John Salmon, and said, "What are my chances of going into artillery sir?"
- 10:30 He said, "I think colour sergeant, you are in the right core," and that was it. Others of course were academically motivated, you can't be an engineer unless you've got a high rate of intelligence, you can't be a signaller unless you've got a high rate of intelligence, so they would invariably come from the
- 11:00 science stream or the engineer's stream, some scientists did become infantrymen, but a lot went into the more technical corps, RAEME, Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.
- So after Duntroon where were you posted?**
- 11:30 Can I go back to just one point about Duntroon because I think it's worth recording, if no one else does? We had the most terrible accident at Duntroon in my first year; five cadets were drowned on Lake George and that went through the college like anything, I think it happened in July, and Lake George

was freezing.

12:00 Anyway, certainly first up, the core of transport, or as they were called then, service core went out with what's called a 'duck' which is a floating army vehicle, they went out, and then the whole core went out and we just searched the lake, I think say from 10 o'clock through

12:30 to six or seven the next morning, and we came back, I think first class then went out again on the Tuesday but I'm not sure. But the doctor said, Doctor Nimmo, he said, "Look, it's no use going on and doing anything now, because the bodies will not rise until spring."

13:00 Sure enough, the bodies did rise in spring, and first class had to go and recover them, but that was an awful incident.

**Were you one of the fellows that had to go and recover them?**

No, I was, this was my junior class, it was the senior class, three classes above us, but I was 'round the lake with the rest of the core.

13:30 **How did the initial accident actually occur?**

I think a couple of people who belonged to the sailing club wanted to have a day out, or do a couple of things, weren't going to go out that far, and then the boat capsized and then two others went out to try and help them,

14:00 three others went out to try and help them, and then two of my classmates went out to try and help them, well they fortunately lived, and both were awarded the George Medal, Frank Elesey and Kev Gosling.

**So this was a recreational activity, not an educational activity at Duntroon?**

All pastimes were part of your education,

14:30 but it was unsupervised, if you get my drift; but yes, we had all sorts of clubs, we had yachting clubs, ski clubs as well as sporting associations.

**So how did Duntroon change after that accident?**

15:00 Not very much outwardly, but I think it left a profound effect upon us, for those who were there. The boat shed is now no longer, and that was probably because they have Lake Burley Griffith, I don't know whether you're allowed to sail on Lake Burley Griffith, but as someone

15:30 said to me the other day, it's a pity that they have never ever put up a memorial on the side of the bay, and I thoroughly agree with him.

**Was there a memorial service?**

Oh, it was incredible.

**Can you talk me through that?**

The first sort of week

16:00 we had to, as a group of people had to get through it, I won't say that we were counselled, but we were spoken to about the circumstances, a lot of emotion from naturally some of the parents who'd lost their children, and they addressed the core, and later I think around I think October when the

16:30 bodies floated, we had a full memorial service, as I was told last week, three were buried in the Canberra Cemetery, which was out at the Woden and I think the preference of two others families was that their children be buried at home. But we were glad when it was all over.

17:00 **How did it affect you personally?**

Sad, and of course I've been holding it back, breaking the rules.

**Sorry, what do you mean by that?**

Well they shouldn't have been there.

17:30 **Thank you for sharing that with us. After Duntroon, where were you posted from there?**

I was posted to a unit called 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, a unit that had just come back from Malaya, and was in the process of turning 'round

18:00 the people. Previously I'd been posted to 11 National Service Training Battalion, but Robert Menzies ended the then conscription system, so we had to be placed somewhere. So we went off to 3RAR, we were overstaffed with officers like billy-oh, it got to the stage when in some instances, you had assistant platoon commanders,

18:30 that's a no-no. And I was lucky enough; I was my own platoon commander and had didn't have anyone to share the job with.

**What were your feelings about national service coming to an end?**

19:00 Not of any great affect, I'm not a great believer of , Send him in the national service and I'll straighten him out." I only believe in national service or conscription if there is a constructive end to it and the selection process is

19:30 what we would call in inverted commas 'fair."

**I could imagine that some of the fellows in your situation would have been disappointed 'cause it may have robbed them of opportunities to lead men?**

Oh, but that all sorted itself out later; I don't think in 3RAR that there were assistant platoon commanders for more than say, nine or 10 months,

20:00 they were given things to do, whether they were useful things, I don't know, 'cause I didn't have to do them.

**Were men from Duntroon like yourself made assistant platoon commanders, or were these other sorts of men? Who was chosen to be the assistant and who was chosen to be the actual leader?**

We had two streams of officers,

20:30 RMC and the officer cadet school at Portsea, which are now merged, to be quite honest, I don't remember. I know of my class, we were all platoon commanders, full stop.

**Was one colleague seen to be above the other?**

No I just hope that we were officers in the Australian army and we came through different streams,

21:00 and that's that. I'm glad now that the officer cadet school at Portsea is closed down, the Royal Military College in terms of it's military training is responsible for all streams of officers, albeit the one's who go to ADFA [Australian Defence Force Academy], spend a few years at ADFA and then they come down and

21:30 the graduate from the Royal Military College.

**Just coming now to your role in 3RAR, what kind of things did you do with the men?**

Did a lot of rifle shooting; I can't remember going on that many exercises,

22:00 I can remember one at a place called, Tin Can Bay at the end of 1960, we were attached, my platoon was attached against C Company at one stage, but we had an unfortunate experience in our company, we'd had a couple of what I would call temporary company commanders

22:30 but then we got the real guy, his family, his wife, Shirley, had just had the first baby, and he was down at McWhirters buying a coming home present for his child and he just dropped dead. And we sort of seemed to be in between bits and pieces, C Company

23:00 and A Company, then I moved to Delta Company at the end of the year and I received a whole platoon of recruits, bar the section commanders, that's the corporals, and a platoon sergeant, with them I trained over the Christmas period,

23:30 getting to know them, doing a lot of physical, it's the two mile run and the nine mile run, we did a big trek from Canungra through to Burleigh Heads, what else did we do? Oh yes,

24:00 we went on a good will mission as befits the army to do, spreading the word, this is what the army has, this is who we are, and I remember going to places like St George, Kingaroy, Surat and so on. But yes, worked hard, trained hard.

**Is there, it sounds like the companies were a bit at sixes and sevens**

24:30 **with this fellow dropping dead, did it take a while for leadership to really get established?**

No, just a matter of getting a replacement; I think the people who really suffered, were a lot of the company commanders, they'd served with John Croft in Korea or previously,

25:00 and I can remember it really crushed the duo, they were very, very sad, you just wouldn't expect to see it in men like these, or you know, at our age we didn't think so, but that was.

**After this, you did a signals course at Balcombe, can you tell me about that?**

25:30 Yes I did, now what happened? Aha, this is my first year, because of having too many officers in the battalion, the CO who was then Colonel Bill Morrow, because we'd gone pentropic, got us all in the mess, all the sub-lieutenants one afternoon,

26:00 and said, "If I sent you on a course, what would you like to do?" And they all went around, this, this and this, the main one was, I want to do the parachute course, anyway, comes around to me, "Midge, what do you want to do?" "Oh I'd like to go parachuting too sir," and there was this crusty old colonel from the Second World War, Lieutenant Colonel Frank Cook, DSM [Distinguished Service Medal] OM [Order of Merit]

26:30 he said, "Son, you'd go up instead of down." And I took umbrage at that, and I thought, "Well, up you for the rent, I'm going to pick the longest course that's the furthestest away from this battalion and I'm going to apply for that." And it turned out to be the regimental signal officers course down at Balcombe and we were in Brisbane, and it lasted for six weeks.

27:00 And I'm bloody glad it did because I couldn't care less about parachuting now.

**What sort of things were they training you in equipment-wise?**

How to use, we didn't have great sets in those days, how to use your sets, things like aerial theory was important, for instance, I don't know

27:30 how it's called in kilowatts these days or whatever, HF, high frequency went from two megacycles to 10 I think, and it's got a different style of wave propagation, it literally goes up to the ionosphere and bounces back, very good long distance communication from them,

28:00 but at ground it's hopeless, whereas you get VHF [very high frequency], which is direct line of sight, but it has certain characteristics, one that I can remember off hand is that it will bounce off hills and so on, all that sort of stuff. You are taught how to use your radio sets, you are taught codes, I'm not too

28:30 sure whether I had to learn the code Lindex [?] down there, and of course, there is only one way to go when you are teaching someone practical, you have to go and do it, and I think we spent say 70 per cent of our time out in the bush, just working with various scenarios.

**Had you done any work in this area?**

29:00 No.

**So it was all completely new to you?**

Yes. The only work that I'd done was, "Oi, signaller, get headquarters and tell them where we are." I think without slagging it, I think we were taken through voice procedure pretty thoroughly,

29:30 and to the meanings of some of the slang and why it hold good, such as BASS, brevity, accuracy, security, speed. And those sort of things get instilled into you, you instil them into your sigs, and your sigs instil it into people who have got to use the radio, like the company commander,

30:00 "Hey boss, stop waffling."

**Was Morse code at all taught at this point in time?**

No, to me it wasn't taught, Morse is a long procedure, although not that difficult to learn, but it takes up to eight weeks, or it may take longer,

30:30 I don't know. In Malaya they were using what is called the radio set A510 and because they were long distances apart, they used HF and they used Morse because Morse is so much more effective than voice.

**So you were trained in Morse at a later date?**

No I wasn't, I'll come on to Morse later. With my sig platoon, 4RAR.

31:00 **That sort of sounds like the army was going through a bit of a change and evolution, national service had sort of been disbanded at this point, and you also touched on the fact of the pentropic system?**

Yes you are very right.

**What were your views just of those changes at the time?**

I think I was too young to know, in the first instance

31:30 I'd never served in, I'd never served in a battalion, the one unit that didn't change from tropical warfare to pentropic, was the battalion that was stationed in Malaya, because they were part of 28 Commonwealth Brigade, which were English, New Zealanders and Australians basically, and they had to have the same organization.

32:00 In the long term, yeah, pentropic wasn't the answer, I accept the ideal that you'd have something like a mini task force, but it's too cumbersome.

**Did it affect your role at all at that time?**



No not at all, if you are a platoon commander at my age, you are a platoon commander.

32:30 **How did the opportunity to go to New Guinea arise?**

A lot of, it arose initially through the CO, Colonel Jim Norrie, of PIR saying, "I don't think I've got the right, or I know I haven't got the right manning of

33:00 top staff." So he got a lot of his top staff in platoons changed from warrant officers to officers, this is as I recall, a whole lot of my mates suddenly drifted out of the battalion and they went to PIR, after a year and a half I was supposed to PIR, and

33:30 how do I put this modestly? General Tom Daley who is the Father, or we regarded as the Father of the PNGDF [Papua New Guinea Defence Force] and PNG, was trying to send good officers there, and I was lucky enough to be selected, and if I've got anything to say about the Late Sir Thomas Daley's eulogy

34:00 and obituary, I wished they would have mentioned more about what he did in PNG. So he was the person who set it up as the GOC [General Officer Commanding] Northern Command, after Colonel Norrie, thorough his boss, Ralph Eldridge asked General Bayley. So you know I must have been great at something. Anyway, I was talking to

34:30 one of my former section commanders, Ron Hamlin, who went to Waverly, and I go to Cranbrook, so, and we opposed schools, in a good way, I said, "It was a privilege to get posted to PIR Ron," he said, "Midge, they only wanted you because they wanted a five eight."

35:00 True story, I don't know.

**They had obviously a rugby team?**

Oh yes, we played in the Port Moresby rugby competition, under the name Army, we played rugby league, you need a whole lot of us, and there were six teams in the competition. I was captain of the team

35:30 the second year, but then the CO changed and Ken McKenzie, said, "I want to make this more broad in terms of sport, that involves more of the various provinces, or districts," so I think he was eventually responsible for changing us from rugby league to rugby union.

36:00 But Aus [Australian] rules always stayed.

**What unit did you join up there?**

I joined the Pacific Island Regiment, as it was known then, what happened or how it was formed was, from Northern Command came ahead of Papua New Guinea,

36:30 Area Command, under that Area Command was, amongst other units, the Pacific Island Regiment, it's now changed it's got the title or Royal, it's still got two battalions, but it now answers to the Papua New Guinea Defence Force Headquarters.

**And what were your responsibilities there?**

37:00 For the first year and a bit I was Pogo and Mr Sport, I ran a platoon called the details platoon, details what's that? But I had people like the hygiene, can't remember who else was in it, I think as well the 2IC of the company

37:30 I can't remember that either. So I supervised the, oh, the military police under me as well, odds and sods. Then because we did a lot of patrolling in Papua New Guinea, I was given a patrol to take from a place called Kaiapit, I went there by army boat, called the AM Fern,

38:00 then we went up the Laruma River, to Bulldog, on to Wau, Baden Bay and then a lovely trip home, via Lae, back to Port Moresby on the Fern, but we had to tell people what the army was all about, familiarisation with the ground, to show the flag,

38:30 and I can't remember the other two, but they are in my patrol book, and I've got them here today.

**Sorry, those were the reasons for the patrols?**

Yes, standard reasons, in any patrol order that I had anything to do with.

**On these patrols, I take it that you'd be fully armed?**

Yeah, we were fully armed, but I don't think we carried any ammunition.

39:00 **Was there any dangers during your time, while you were in Papua New Guinea?**

Oh hang, on, yeah, we did carry ammunition, no not on my patrol, they were just long hard slogs. I looked at the number of days

- 39:30 that I was out on my two long patrols, the first one was just on a month, the second one was I think, 35 days, yeah, now you remind me of ammunition. I made a terrible mistake on the border of Papua New Guinea and west New Guinea, as it was then,
- 40:00 they said, "You've got to demonstrate the equipment." So I got a person, one of my guys to fire a self-loading rifle 7.62 into a log, well, that went down like a lead balloon, there was nearly a riot on the ground. But still, you learn, I thought I was doing the right thing.
- A riot because there was a shot fired?**
- They'd never ever, these people are
- 40:30 quite primitive and they had never seen or heard anything like that or what it could do. But to me as well, if I'm going to talk a little about patrolling I just have to mention the administration, and the phrase you probably heard, kiap or patrol officer.

## Tape 4

- 00:43 **We are up to the point of where you were about to tell us something about kiap?**
- Although we did the patrols ourselves, it was impossible to do them without the support of the administration, in my time it was called the Department of Native Affairs,
- 01:00 and the whole of the law were given the nickname kiaps, they were patrol officers who were young men about my age, assistant district officers, district officer and district commissioner, they provided us with so much information we needed
- 01:30 to do our job, it is unbelievable, we could have just strayed all over the place without good on the ground knowledge, which we couldn't get back in Port Moresby or later out of Wewak, the kiap provided an essential service to us. And like us,
- 02:00 they were brash they were fun and they had a very hard job to do.
- The phrase kiap, is this referring to a role or a particular position or a tribal group?**
- I don't know where the name originated, it's either German or Dutch, I'm not sure. But correctly,
- 02:30 patrol, and as well, because we dragged our soldiers from every part of Papua New Guinea, we only gave them leave once every two years, things happened at home, and problems arose, you had to find out, so the poor old kiap, he did the investigation for us, found out what the story was and
- 03:00 in sent it back to Port Moresby.
- In a sense, the kiap was in that role, keeping their pulse on what the communities around?**
- They like us, a good kiap was off his post more than he was on his post. Without being too sentimental, I feel a great sadness that
- 03:30 it hasn't been remembered and respected as has us in the military, and I say that with absolute sincerity. There were people who spent their whole lives there, what did they get at the end, not that much, okay, independence in PNG was a great celebration, but don't go and hide a lot of the people who did a lot of the
- 04:00 work under the table.
- What was the relationship between the Australians and the locals, it was quite good during World War II, was there a development of the relationship?**
- Oh yes, the CO Jim Morrie used to say, "The most common way is communication, if you don't learn pidgin English, don't worry about coming here."
- 04:30 And it was as simple as that. We all worked together, we played sport together, when we were in the bush we lived together. Our opinions may have been a bit hard in some instances, as if to say, "We'll never make soldiers out of this lot," but if we
- 05:00 we'd thought that, we tried to prove ourselves wrong. I can't put my finger on it, but I just enjoyed, particularly my first posting so much, so much freedom, so much responsibility particularly when you were on patrol. One of my mates,
- 05:30 Peter Stokes said, "It's a pretty terrible thought, when you have got a soldier running a temperature of 104 degrees, and you are in the middle of nowhere, it certainly sorts the men out from the boys." But the Pacific Islanders, as we called them, health-wise, got far

06:00 greater fevers than we did, when you on patrol the temperatures would go up like that, and then come back, but we didn't know we weren't to worry about that.

**What was being given to you in regards to malaria and preventing you from getting any tropical diseases?**

Paladrin. Cup of coffee, smoke, and a Paladrin in the morning,

06:30 plus what was left of the meal before, I think we eventually got bully beef, bully beef and rice.

**Did many of the men, the Australians, end up getting malaria?**

No, I don't think so, I think just before I got there in 1961, there was some kind of scare, and that was that. No not that I can recall.

07:00 **I understand that there is a story about a guide in a village and basically around two o'clock you were buggered, can you tell us that story?**

Oh yes, sure. Because the maps weren't that good, in fact in some cases you would get the map and it says,

07:30 "Nothing done, surrounded by clouds," so we would pick up guides, if you were lucky you could get a guide for say, three, four, five days who knew the way to go, or other's you'd get them from village to village, anyway, you're struggling along, you reckon you've got a fair idea of where you are on

08:00 your map, you turn to the guide and say, "How fare is it to where we are going?" "Em short fellow master," which means, "not far," "No mel lik lik," that means, "somewhere in the middle,"

08:30 or, long way, or "Oh long way to maas." I've had guides who've said, "Where are we?" "Oh, close to master," in the end it's been, "long way." You know, you didn't know.

**And this story about being buggered around two pm?**

Oh yeah, you're just tired.

09:00 I think I had some notion of on patrol you should do an eight-hour day, that's the conventional thing to do, and I started out trying to do this, anyway, on

09:30 it was when we were going between Bulldog and Wau, which is a hell of a climb over the Stanley's, my guide came up and said, "Sir, we haven't done this before," "What do you mean?" He said, "We usually walk three or four hours," and they were pretty tired in the afternoon and going up the mountain, so was I, in fact, I was more tired than some of them.

10:00 So thereafter, two o'clock was around a good time to stop, and it also depended where you were. I was speaking to another one of my platoon commanders, Major Jim Underwood, who went down in the western district, western province area, which is the closest province to Australia, he said,

10:30 "I used to get up and in some instances at two am in the morning, and finish at six am." So we all became very flexible.

**How did you cope with the conditions and the weather there compared to Australia, which would have been different?**

First up, is the hot blast

11:00 that hits you when they open the plane door, there's nothing like it. Immediately someone gives you some water and says, "I'll see you in two days time." And then you just get yourself fit, the more fit you are the easier it is to acclimatise. On patrol I just didn't have any problems I was so

11:30 fit, I drank plenty of water, they were difficult, but I never had to ask anyone to carry my pack or anything like that. But in terms of my metabolism, and I can't answer for others, having been to PNG the first time, going to Malaya was no sweat, going to Borneo was no sweat,

12:00 Vietnam was no sweat, I just think my body had acclimatised. But the first time, and I remember playing my first football match, and it was called, we used to call it the 'sunshine highway' or something like that, I never ever felt like running around the field because I just wasn't acclimatised.

12:30 **You were made, as I understand, the temporary officer in command of Port Moresby, was that?**

No, I was temporary officer in command of the administrative company, because my company commander had to go home, I think family reasons, his replacement was due to go on leave, so I was made the acting company commander. Probably at that stage,

13:00 it was one of the largest companies in the whole of the Australian army.

**How did your role and responsibilities change at that time?**

They didn't, just it's a case of knowing your job, knowing the environment that you're in, no one took

offence at it, that the CO had chosen

13:30 to take that step rather than bring someone in temporarily. I'll be arrogant, yeah, I was proud.

**Just coming now to that point, the Dutch change over to the Indonesians, what can you tell me about that and your experience**

14:00 **there?**

I went on patrol between October and November I think the months were, and the patrol was basically along the border, I went first to a place called Amanab and then went through two areas called the Warasai and the Wasianam,

14:30 and I was walking the track and some six months before the Indonesians were due to take over, I met a couple of Dutch catechists along the way, and said, "How do you feel?" they said, "I think we feel for our people that were looked after for a long time."

15:00 And then, I think it was the United Nations mission that was in Dutch New Guinea at the time, and I said, how I ran into them I don't know, 'cause I'm not allowed to cross the border, I said, "When's this going to take place?" "Probably sooner rather than later."

15:30 And I found that pretty interesting in hindsight, in the 1960s we were trying like all get out to curry favour to the Indonesians, to build up a very good working relationship with them, and in our case, along the border. Of course there is always going to be transmigration.

16:00 because you draw the 141st meridian, it doesn't mean to say your family can't go and see that family, but we worked very hard diplomatically and it came through where we were, to make it as easy for the Indonesians as possible. Now it came as sort of a surprise to me, a couple of years later, I'm out there fighting

16:30 the Indonesians, but I went along the border at the time of the changeover. I'd think the locals were so remote that they didn't understand what was happening, but I think we did try to understand what was going to happen, it didn't mean

17:00 anything, but how's it going to work. And that's it.

**Just so I understand correctly, Papua New Guinea or New Guinea as we know the Island, is broken into two parts, there's west New Guinea is that right, and there is Papua New Guinea?**

Yes you're quite right, or now, Irian Jaya.

**So Indonesia was taking over from the Dutch, West New Guinea?**

Yes

**Whereas Papua New Guinea was**

17:30 **remaining an independent?**

If you like to go even further than that, further back, until the finish of the First World War, New Guinea belonged to the Germans, the Australians owned Papua, annexed by Queensland I think in 1883, but when Germany lost the First World War, it became the state of Papua New Guinea.

18:00 **Great. What constituted a border, you said you were doing a patrol along the border, was there a fence-line, a road, how did you know you were inside or out of the border?**

You didn't, I won't say it was death to cross the border, but we were totally and absolutely forbidden, and you just, I guess in the end,

18:30 had to be careful of where you went. Now you know sometimes I would know whether I was in two miles or 10 miles of the border, I think that's being honest. But let me be cynical, there is a border marker, at the north end,

19:00 up just out of Wanim, and I think the other one is in the south of Morotai, that's a thousand miles apart.

**Just coming back to general life in Papua New Guinea, what was there any rules in respect of fraternising with local women?**

19:30 Definitely, you didn't, absolutely.

**You mentioned that you were overseeing some of the police element of the army, did fellows break that rule and was there punishment, are there stories?**

No, a lot of Caucasians, to use the word, have married

20:00 local people, but for us, it wasn't an option to go out with a PNG lass.

**You also met during your time there, Michael Somare?**

No, that's the second tour.

**Second tour, okay. Well let's talk about your return home, given that you weren't allowed to fraternise obviously**

20:30 **with the women in PNG, did you meet up with girlfriends back home, what did you do socially when you returned?**

Oh no, there were lots of Australian women in PNG, they lived in hospitals, the ones that I can remember are, Ella Derina, Tua Gurber, and the Haushi Wales, and lots of single girls, we had a great social life, don't worry

21:00 about that. Or as one senior officer in the battalion called them, flop houses. We didn't flop.

**I guess what I'm driving at, your brother helped you find a date for your graduation at Duntroon. You also rang him about finding a date, what's the story there?**

21:30 I just said, "Tone, I've been home a couple of weeks, I don't seem to know anyone to go out with, because some at uni, some married, some don't want to know you any more." He said, "Okay, let's go to dinner," he invited these two girls, and the girl who ended up being my wife, thought she was going out with him,

22:00 but not so. So I went out with Helen, she was a teacher at Loftus Primary School, poor kid I don't think she got any sleep or any rest for eight weeks, she had to teach during the day. Well, I didn't have to do anything during the day, and she went out with me during the night. And we got engaged just before I went back to PNG on

22:30 from leave.

**So why had you returned home?**

Three year posting, someone's got to give you holidays sometime. We, like the locals, sorry, like the Pacific Islanders, we got leave every two years, and generally the policy was for the Australian officers

23:00 that we went home after two years, and did another year before we got re-posted.

**So when you returned to New Guinea, had anything changed in respect to your role?**

Yeah I got the flick as the 2IC of B Company, and became the transport officer. And that happens, when I say get the flick, I'm being flippant,

23:30 a fellow called Ian Hands came in and he was way senior to me, so he got my appointment as, he was appointed as 2IC of B Company, I went off to run the transport platoon, back into pogo land again.

**You were disappointed with this?**

24:00 In a way yes because I'd already spent a year and a billion at Taurama Barracks when I first got there, then I had six months out station, I was likely to get another out station if I stayed in a rifle company, so yes, a bit disappointing, on the other hand, I was

24:30 engaged to Helen, we knew we were getting married in January, why should I treat her to more separation. So transport in a way, was interesting culturally, because it had some of the more

25:00 intelligent, street smart, call them what you will, the Bougainvillians, the Tollies and the Manis Islanders who basically made up of people from the islands, and they gave you a pound or two for a round or two, with whatever they had to say. And yes,

25:30 my platoon corporal for instance, a fellow called Corporal Towell, from New Britain, was a fine man, he I would trust with anything, and my sergeant, Sergeant Collin, good operator, but Towell, if you are running a transport company

26:00 platoon, imagine what it's like running a taxi company, you have to take bookings and all those kind of things, Towell would do that, and he also did a lot of my record checking along with Collin, and I learned a few things from him. Unfortunately I met him in the second tour in 9 Barracks,

26:30 and he'd gone down hill, teeth were red with buai, that's betel nut, didn't want to talk to me and I thought, "Ah shivers," but it was quite a good posting. Towell was also very good, our car had the habit of breaking down regularly, anyway, Helen's coming back from Port Moresby one day, the car

27:00 breaks down, and who rescues her, but Corporal Towell.

**How did she cope?**

She liked it, she's an infant's teacher, we had a school at Taurama, Taurama Barracks Primary School, and she got a temporary job

27:30 while she was there. I can always remember, there's one child she couldn't handle, he's name was Eppo Lesman, she'd go, "What do I do with this boy?" I'd say, "I don't know darling, it's not my job." So yes, she enjoyed it.

**These were ex-pat kids, or locals?**

No, no, the lot.

28:00 You had two streams of school, one was called the A stream, which had an Australian education and would take Australians and Papua New Guineans, I think the T stream was strictly for the Papua New Guineans, so naturally enough, all the bright ones went to the A stream. So she had

28:30 a composite class.

**Again, just the issue of malaria, was she taking stuff like yourself to prevent that from happening?**

Whereas I was compelled to, she, I'm trying to remember, it's levaquine, or chloroquine that they took once a week as I

29:00 remember, and we took paladin daily. And I think Helen was on levaquine.

**Just travelling a bit forward now, heading towards Malaysia, when you get there you join the 4th Battalion, can you tell us what your role there was and the type of training you did?**

Yes I was a regimental signals officer; they actually got a good deal from the guy they sent on the course,

29:30 1st Battalion formed on Australian soil,

**Where at?**

At Woodside. And we were lucky enough to get a married quarter, when I arrived my support company which holds mortars, signallers assault pioneers and anti tank or trackers depending on

30:00 whether you were using dogs or not, but I think we were using dogs, when I arrived they were away in Canungra doing a company exercise, first thing to arrive at my house before me was the double bed, someone saw it and said, "I hope you don't spend too much time at home," I thought, "Okay,"

30:30 then the platoon came back, and I just can't sing their praises too much, they were marvellous people, a lot had been to Malaya with 1 and 2 Battalion, because 3RAR was then in Malaya, very experienced signallers, superb

31:00 HF operators that's Morse code, and knew the rules of the game, but just didn't, I had a few roughies, and I'm sure they knew a lot more than Michael Morrison knew about signalling, he was only there to go to the ops room. Yes we did go on a lot of operations, sorry, we went on a lot of training.

31:30 **My understanding is that you've only done a six week course, did you do a refresher course or anything like that to try and?**

No.

**Familiarise yourself with?**

No the only refresher course I did came from my platoon sergeant, my radio sergeant or one of my corporals. I'm not afraid to ask.

**Just for the timeline sake, what year is it that you actually joined it?**

32:00 We're talking about June, '64.

**'64, Training, you've mentioned a little bit about that, but what type of training, is that out in the field, can you talk us through what training is?**

Basic training by the time

32:30 they all get to a battalion, is knowing how to fire a rifle, to navigate, to live in the bush and things that are peculiar to the individual.

**Training though for signals?**

Oh for signals?

**What sort of things were you doing to train your fellows up?**

33:00 Most of mine knew it, I was disappointed in the CO, because I really thought we needed to do a lot more HF Morse code, to the place we were going. I'm trying to set up things, "Oh no, this takes priority." But yeah, we would run local courses for people just come

- 33:30 into the battalion. Any advice that a company needed, and they had people called company sigs, or platoon sigs, who were soldiers carrying a radio, as opposed to being a trained signaller who belonged to my platoon and the sig platoon. No we didn't have much trouble.
- 34:00 **Just in respect of training, were you instructing or were you organising the men?**
- No, I did very little instructing, my training was, or the training was generally dictated by what the companies were doing, because you don't have this group of guys that at eight o'clock in the morning that you look at and say we are going to do this that
- 34:30 and the other thing today, they get detached to companies, so they are basically out with the companies. Yep, we'd come back and things when time was spare, we'd do navigation, we'd do, we had to do our PT [Physical Training] tests, we had to do our rifle tests and so on, but that's
- 35:00 about the only training we did together. For my position, because my platoon is dispersed, the good book says I am responsible for locating battalion headquarters. Well I didn't do that too many times. Forget who did it, but my secondary role was as an assistant operations officer
- 35:30 in the ops [operations] room. So really in the day to day running of the platoon, when we were out on exercises, and we started out with the company and then did a lot of battalion exercises, the platoon sergeant and the radio sergeant, weren't really responsible for the day to day running of the platoon. While I was sitting in the operations room,
- 36:00 which was commanded by my boss, the Officer Commanding Support Company.
- Can you share with me one of the more memorable exercises that you went on during that time?**
- Yeah, I'd like to give you two. One was at Nelson
- 36:30 in Victoria, and all our three out of four of our company commanders had to go and do a mandatory course which is called Tak 5, run at the then jungle training centre, so the 2IC has to step up and take over the company, and that's great stuff.
- 37:00 Because it means that here is someone who gets to think one up, has the experience as well. Nelson was as flat, as flat as you like, hardly any features, and I think we learned more through one very fine warrant officer, Les O'Keefe, who happened to be the
- 37:30 CSM, company sergeant major of Support Company, my CSM, we learnt more about navigating from him, that stood us in good stead for the next four years, he was absolutely great, how it came to pass I don't know, but as a battalion we became above average
- 38:00 navigators, just because there were no features, map, compass, protractor and count your paces, and how did we get smart about counting paces? There's a thing called a sheep counter, my brother uses it to get them through the gate, just put some electrical tape on the rifle, click, that's another hundred,
- 38:30 click, that's another hundred. And it was very important, my dilemma on that exercise was, somehow something happened with a message to go, we couldn't get through or something, anyway, it didn't get through to whomever, and the CO came in and he was ropeable, David Thompson, he said, "I'm even more ropeable because it's my 40th birthday."
- 39:00 Now the real test of skill, was when we went to Cairns it was called, exercise Downpour, and because South Australia is nothing like the climate we were going to, and we'd been warmed out from Malaysia, we went to Cairns for the first
- 39:30 period of time, the individual companies were acclimatising and doing all those sorts of things, and then we had this major exercise. And it was as the name suggests, it pissed down, it really pissed down. And it was a good jungle, when I say 'good jungle' it was typical
- 40:00 of what we were going to work in. Between the individual company warming up, the main exercise we were given four or five days break, I can't remember how many went AWL [Absent Without Leave], they were found in all parts of Australia,
- 40:30 from Launceston through to Darwin and whatever, but they came back. Then we went on this exercise, I think, I can't remember whether I guess we did what's called defence, advanced contact, and withdrawal, and it just rained and it rained, and it rained. As I remember, the comms [communications] were quite considerable,
- 41:00 but good, so you know, I got through on that score. We all learned how to throw bobbins into trees, because if, to put up an aerial, you've got to find a tree and hoof it over a branch, oh boy, even my own guys complained and I said, "That's okay I'm not having as much luck back to battalion headquarters."

## Tape 5

- 00:40 **You were just taking us through another interesting operation, you were explaining how it rained constantly, you were putting up aerials, can you just continue telling us about that?**
- Yeah, it was just a difficult area because the terrain was so close, some branches intermingled,
- 01:00 and you have this thing call a bobbin, which you've got to get over the tree first before you can secure the aerial. And this may sound ridiculous, but it was not uncommon for it to take people half an hour to get a bobbin over the tree, you just couldn't make. But once that happened, it worked pretty well, the rifle
- 01:30 companies and platoons did not use complicated aerials, they were generally a whip aerial, company headquarters would be more sophisticated, something like a dipole aerial, and better, gives them better range, it's easier, but battalion headquarters in particular, must have
- 02:00 very good aerials. But you got a number of sigs there to help you, but it's getting it right. One of the myths I found as soon as I went to Cairns was that VHF is not affected by weather, well I can assure you it is, particularity in the afternoon when it would really hurtle down.
- 02:30 we just were out of comms, and I had probably the blackest backside you've ever seen, I just said, "You can't do anything about it," so that was that. We had, I'll tell a story against myself, we had a visit from the chief of the general staff, the late General Sir John Wilton,
- 03:00 he came up to see how we were going, a newly formed battalion going overseas, and what it was like, and lo and behold, we were doing this attack when you when you have what's called a forming up place and an objective, and I was given the task of looking after it, well maybe I didn't think as much navigation from Les O'Keefe as I should have, because I lost the CGS [Chief of General Staff],
- 03:30 the forming up place and the objective, but that's one of those things. And at the same time, our first child was born, and by sheer luck, before the main exercise started, Katherine arrived, that relieved a lot of pressure from me. The chief umpire made it hard for us; we had a parachute drop of all our supplies and food
- 04:00 and it got stuck in a tree, there was no way that he was going to let us get up the tree to get our gear, we learnt what it was like to go without food and supplies for a couple of days. We used to say, "We could do that in a flash." Well, you're not going to. And then the exercise ended and I'm not sure whether any battalion
- 04:30 has ever had this happen before, but we got flown, civil air from West Beach in Adelaide to Cairns and back, and that probably cost the taxpayer a bit of money, but it was fantastic. And to set up basic things that you couldn't move in air in getting to them, in getting to the area we had a huge land convoy, that I think
- 05:00 as I remember went by Darwin, so that was the most memorable and big and best exercise we had.
- Was that named Downpour; was that what you called it before?**
- That was is actually the name.
- It's just coincidence that it rained.**
- It didn't disappoint.
- In those operations, those exercises, was there an imaginary enemy?**
- 05:30 Yes.
- In the early '60's what kind of imaginary enemy was it?**
- The imaginary enemy are someone from within your unit, or you get people if you are working as a battalion, you get people from outside. I'm going to let you down here, because I can't remember the name, I'm not sure if it was Fantasia and we had a complete order
- 06:00 of battle of the Fantasians, and that's very important that you have that sort of thing, because one of the great skills is getting the right intelligence. And if I may just bring that up to speed now, we are hearing so much about intelligence in terrorism, to me it is the most fundamental interest that you have got to get right.
- 06:30 Terrorism is never going to take over a nation, but it's going to disrupt our quality of life. So yeah, we had all that sort of thing.
- Those Fantasians though, were they modelled on a close Asian neighbour or an international Russian force or a Cold War enemy, what sort of thing were they?**
- They were local, they were you know, Southeast Asia at that stage and forward defence



07:00 was our bivouac so those sort of things.

**What did you know at this stage about what was going on in Malaya?**

Well I'd learned a lot from 3RAR because of the diggers there, I knew how the battalion was operated and my first platoon were essentially Malay diggers, without

07:30 a platoon commander, they were as rough as you like. Other than that, probably not that much, Singapore seemed the place to go.

**When did you get news that you would be heading over there yourself?**

I think it was, to the best of my knowledge, it was always known we were being raised

08:00 to take over from 3RAR in 1965. When we were on Downpour for some I think had the notion or the inkling or the spark from heaven that we were going to Vietnam, in hindsight I don't think that was ever the case.

**Were you keen one way or the other to head off to a conflict,**

08:30 **or some sort of active service?**

Have you heard the old saying, 'Always the bridesmaid, never the bride'? I couldn't get there quick enough, I'd also been to a number of Anzac Day marches and these old soldiers would look at my uniform, "Haven't got much mate." So yeah, I wanted to do my job.

09:00 **What was the situation that you were sent to relieve 3RAR, when you were in Malaya, and what were you doing?**

We were a military garrison, a town called Melaka, in the state of Melaka, and we were a part of the 28th Commonwealth Infantry Brigade, made up essentially of

09:30 three battalions, New Zealand, Australian, British, I think a composite regiment of artillery, with batteries from each of the three companies, the rest of the force as I remember was essentially a grouping of people

10:00 all from the same three nations, but organised in units and sub-units, that could operate to support, the headquarters was definitely composite. The rotation of the commander of the brigade was between the three nations in my time

10:30 the commander was Brigadier Terence McMeekan, later Lieutenant Sir Terence McMeekan. When he went the late Brigadier Peter Tancred, an Australian was the commander of the brigade. It was so welded in, I think in terms of outside

11:00 the army, operations they were basically British. For instance, the British medical hospital where our second child Phillipa, was born was British, the NAAFI [Navy Army Air Force Institute] is British, what else, ah, the schools as I remember were British.

11:30 **And what were your duties, as an Australian or British battalion in this war?**

Well at that stage, confrontation was, my understanding of confrontation was that Sukarno was trying to take the heat off himself, there was a real threat of Communism, and if you remember Mr Rider, that he just about

12:00 made it. So anyway, we were in the confrontation, Singapore had left Malaysia and we were, I think the name of the operation was Lergen, Operation Lergen, so we were on constant alert, we didn't do anything

12:30 to fend our patch. It was also at that stage, highly classified and that's what happened for the first six months.

13:00 And then we were, then we left the Commonwealth brigade in Melaka to become part of West Brigade or 99th Gurkha Brigade in confrontation, and that's when we went into action.

**Was there any action around Melaka?**

None

13:30 that I can remember, none to speak of, I don't think so.

**Where did you go with the Gurkha Brigade?**

99 Brigade was, hang on, the Gurkha Battalion was closest to the sea on the left, then there was the Australian battalion, then there was I think

14:00 the Argyle and Southern Highlands, and then 1RNZIR [Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment]. We went to a state called Sarawak, whose capital is Kuching where the headquarters was based, brigade

headquarters, and we were, our headquarters was based in a place called Bau, about

14:30 15 or twenty miles from the border, were our headquarters were. We had three forward company locations, they were at a place called Gombang which was on the east, Stass which is in the middle, and Bukit which was on the right, and the holding company back next to the

15:00 battalion headquarters in Bau.

**Where were you within it all?**

I was in Bau again; my full-time job then was assistant operations officer. I had one break from the job, in that we were sending people to Vietnam to get experience, and albeit we were an operations 4RAR was not missing out, so I had a two-week attachment

15:30 to MACV [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam] and was sent to 4 Corps for two weeks,

**We'll come back to that familiarisation, what was your role then as operations officers, what did you do on a day-to-day basis in Bow?**

Basically maintained the operations record,

16:00 took instructions from the ops officer who was Terry Sullivan, and that was it. I had domestic things to do with the running of my platoon to see that everything was correct. In terms of documents,

16:30 I had to put out a signals plan every month I think, but it was basically spent in that ops room.

**And how active was the operations that the battalion was engaged you in at that time?**

Very little, it was a matter of constant patrolling; the name of the whole deal was called operation

17:00 Claret, it's top secret, but I think it's now de-classified. We weren't supposed to go into Kalimantan, we did, there are a number of crossing points on a ridgeline, separating Kalimantan from Sarawak, and we used to go

17:30 across the border and if we were, if the Indons [Indonesians] caught you across the border, sorry about you Charley, but no helicopter that gets you out, nothing, if you got dead you've got to get them out and that was how highly classified it was. From my point of view,

18:00 because we were on a change over basis, a lot of procedures were established. There was a big hill called Crocon, which we had a re-broadcast system on, and we were responsible for that, as sig platoon commander, but

18:30 the platoon sergeant and radio sergeant ran it. And if we could reach patrols over the border then good luck, because we had the best of the best, if we couldn't, or there was a chance that we couldn't a lot of the companies, and I'm not sure if it was all, would put a manual re-broadcast station

19:00 on top of the crossing point, and then relay messages back to the company headquarters or to the battalion headquarters, depending on the instructions that had been given. For instance, in my book it is wrong to relay information back when an intermediate headquarters who owns the soldiers,

19:30 is not told of what's going on. But that sort of thing didn't arise; it was just a matter of trying to keep in contact. I think in terms of comparison, for the signaller Borneo was extremely harder, than was Vietnam. The terrain was tougher and the

20:00 jungle, whatever, and it was just fatiguing, and the communication for whatever reasons weren't as easy. A former president of the RSL [Returned and Services League], General Peter Phillips, has said, "The two great difference between Borneo and

20:30 Vietnam, was of course one Huey, the helicopter, and the second was communications." And again, like Downpour, people accepted that it was going to rain at four o'clock, so I had a pink backside rather than a black one. But I think we did pretty well, in terms of

21:00 comms, but over the border you just had to be so careful, I would think that the signallers carried nothing more than a whip aerial, which is about yay long, tied to the set, rather than a big aerial which is probably as tall as this room, I just can't remember its size. And communications in those days,

21:30 was far more difficult than it is now, in that, with digital, you can scramble, so you can put out a lot more power, we had sets that didn't put out that much power because security was so important to us. Now I ask the guys, "What's the output?" "Five or 10 watts." What was mine?

22:00 "One or two watts."

**Secrecy of communication was one of the factors that hampered the communications, what were the others?**

No, not at all, that was doing the job under the circumstances you had to do it, and I think Australians

have great initiative, and we managed. Let's have no bullshit about this; people have been there before us.

22:30 When you handover's on, you get told a lot of things.

**What sort of inside information were they able to give you that helped you out?**

Particularly the modus operandi of the enemy, how to use the land, where the better crossing points were,

23:00 I'm having trouble putting this into words, it's sort of, it's being street smart, and the experience of having done it. You know, if you came in with a big flash idea and this that and the other thing, you bet your life if you're going to do it they've tried it before.

**23:30 What were the purposes of these incursions into Kalimantan?**

Just to take the heat of us, I'm not sure, but we did have one major contact because they came into our area, and it's the battle of the Gerunggang, they were what were called Manja teams, I don't know what

24:00 the meaning of Manja is, and we pursued them 'round for a long time, and we eventually, absolutely smashed up their patrol, so that they didn't get to do what they were meant to do, whether it was only to gather information. And that was the only incursion we had. But

24:30 here diplomacy came into play, Australia always has its own headquarters overseas to look after its own infantry. And we had headquarters off Sayat we were not allowed to operate

25:00 at a certain distance back from the border, and we were just, the CO was told, "You can't do it." So for three weeks or so we had 2/7th Ghurkha Rifle attached to us, who really cleaned up that Manja team. I think we'd killed a few in the initial burst,

25:30 but in the end, it was the Ghurkhas who did it, and there was this really black village, when I say black I mean sinister, called Quandong, who seemed to hate every one, and I think the Ghurkha's took them out there.

**What was happening back at the operations centre during this battle, as you described it?**

26:00 CO's running his battle, he gives the orders, we carry them out. And that's that.

**Can you give us an idea of how that happened, I mean, what the CO's doing and who his right hand men are?**

The right hand man, well, you must look

26:30 always to the battalion 2IC, but in my opinion, the battalion 2IC is somewhere between a rock and a hard place, in that he's got to do all the administration, his meant to be the person who steps up and takes over, blah, blah, blah, but he doesn't really get involved in the day to day operations. Okay, what happens, you

27:00 have an initial orders group, given by the CO, who gives the concept of the operation and what he wants done. The person who runs the day to day, the operations officer, carries out those instructions,

27:30 visits the forward companies to find out what's going on and in my opinion generally coordinates it, so you've got the battalion 2IC, all the company commanders, and the other very important person is the intelligence officer,

28:00 and he has three reporting modes, I think there were three that they reported to, and I never queried Ian Hern on this, but primarily he reports to the CO. He got tremendous briefings from the in section in the Headquarters 99 Brigade, and

28:30 the third person he's got to tell of course is ops officer, so yes, he's a key man. I'm key in so far that I've got to put the communications in place first, if it's done properly, you don't have a worry, if it's got to change, okay you change it, but I've got nothing like the intensity of say

29:00 the intelligence officer. Now as assistant duty officer in the ops room, who did we have? The mortar platoon commander, because he deploys his mortars with companies, so he's got nothing to do, or that's not quite right, but you know, we are not daily day to day commanding our platoons, the assault pioneer platoon,

29:30 maybe some times, I think our assault pioneer platoon did a lot of work clearing helipads and the like, but I can remember that he was some times in the ops room. The CIO [Commanding Intelligence Officer] was also a duty officer, the tracker platoon commander officer, when he was in would be a duty officer,

30:00 the adjutant was also a duty officer. And you know, you are looking at a period of, in our case it was months, so you have got to have a fair pool of officers, rightly or wrongly my boss the ops officer, didn't

believe in having the signallers in the ops room,

30:30 and if I had to guess at the reason why, it would be because it was highly classified, top secret, albeit, our guys are down there listening in anyway. But we had a lot of documents there.

**You said that they had helicopters, that they were clearing helipads?**

No, no, the difference, when I mention the difference

31:00 between helicopters, or helicopters being one of the great differences between Vietnam and Borneo yeah the Brits had helicopters, but not in the mass, but the Americans had.

**How were men transported out into the field?**

Two ways, either by truck

31:30 no three ways, either by truck, or by helicopter, or a combination of both. The resources, the British resources, while they were not good, and it wasn't uncommon for people to walk for say three or four hours to a helipad, and then wait another six or eight hours to get picked up.

32:00 But that's just the name of the game.

**What chance did you get to see what was going on with your signallers in the field first hand?**

I was allowed to, all of my COs have always been very good, when I've been in support roles, they let you go, or as some may say, "Hey, why don't you go see your diggers for a change?" So yes, I could

32:30 go out. I only went out sparingly, I think I would have visited the forward company once every six weeks, I didn't see the need.

33:00 **What did you do on those visits?**

Talked, chewed the fat, see whether they had anything they wanted to discuss, if it was more appropriate they thought to discuss with me. Talk to the company commander, and see, not that I could satisfy every need, like when three company commanders want one particular

33:30 sig, you can't fix that, but any worries that would come up. Equipment was a big problem for us, and it was the most piddling little things, a radio set, we'd put plastic over the hand set but it was always the connection that went wrong, we seemed to go through hand sets as though they were going out of fashion. Now how my Platoon Sergeant Bull Burnett, fixed it,

34:00 I'll never know, but he did. Oh yeah, and if you are out on a company, go and talk to some diggers, always talk to the CSM, because he's the foreman and he knows the soldiers.

**In Borneo were they always deployed at company level, how did it work?**

34:30 Yes they were, the signal platoons original establishment as I understand it was that there was a radio section, and a line section, I don't think I ever used a line in my life, unless someone else had laid it and we just took over it.

35:00 So they all became radiomen. If you got a special patrol to take you out, particularly platoons like tracker platoon, yeah, he gets one of my sigs, or he gets one of the sig platoons, same with the assault pioneers, from company down to platoon, company's problem.

35:30 And when I say company's problem, there is a position for a guy on the headquarters, but he's part of the rifle company but he's not part of the signal platoon per se.

**Were there any casualties in your?**

Yeah there were. I think we got to the day when we wondered if we were ever going to run into the enemy, rather

36:00 than having our own dead. The first committed suicide, the second died of influenza, the third a tree fell on him, clearing a helipad, and that was it. I'm only guessing here,

36:30 I don't think we had anyone killed in combat, they were essential non-combat casualties. I remember I had to do the investigation into Corporal Peter West, who was felled by the tree.

**What were the circumstances of the bloke who committed suicide?**

37:00 I'd prefer not to answer that question.

**Was it something specific to his family situation, or was it something more about the army or?**

I just don't want to answer the question.

**We might come back to that later on in Vietnam, the issues of soldiers losing faith, or wanting to go**

37:30 **that far. You were able to go for a ten-day trip to Vietnam during this time, can you tell us firstly what the purpose of that was?**

Yes familiarisation, pure and simple.

**With the view that you would be soon be going there yourselves?**

No, not necessarily, to give people an understanding in both the regulars and the reserves,

38:00 of what the war in Vietnam was all about, it didn't necessarily mean that you were going to be posted there, now anyone who was say, the reliving CO of another battalion, he would take, I think he took a team of two or three but no, ours was just familiarisation to know what was going on.

**What did you find when you went over there?**

Nothing,

38:30 I think I went to the wrong place, I just saw a lot of helicopters, I think the core commander or whomever didn't want us to get involved, I don't think he, we weren't part of MAC V, we were Australian soldiers,

39:00 I saw things, I saw a helicopter assault, I'd never seen so many helicopters in my life. I spoke to a lot of people to get their feelings, mainly American, and this in 1964. They had some qualms at being there but they weren't angry

39:30 over it. I saw some beautiful architecture in Saigon the architecture is fabulous. Learned how to drink Saigon tea. Yeah, tactically

40:00 just how difficult the Mekong Delta is, the VC [Viet Cong] could hide in a number of places and they just had so much water to use. Oh yeah, it was sort of informative, but I can't say I really learned anything great.

40:30 The best thing that happened was, I had an R & R [Rest and Recreation] because as we arrived in Singapore, my wife arrived at Singapore.

## Tape 6

00:48 **Could you share, just coming back to Malaysia, a bit more about the suicide and the circumstances surrounding that?**

I think we knew that the person

01:00 who took their life had some mental problems, it was not generally know how severe they were, and the doctor knew I think in more detail than any of us did, and when it happened, he blamed a lot of it on himself. In my opinion, it certainly didn't happen

01:30 as a result of being in an operational area, it was related to his personal life. And that's as much as I know, my part in the incident, I heard the shot, I was on duty at the time, we all dashed out to try and find out what had happened.

**Did you actually see the body?**

No.

02:00 **Did you know the fellow?**

Yes.

**What was he like as a bloke?**

He was a bandsman, a bit tubby, probably a bit introverted as I remember, and just an ordinary sort of guy.

**You touched on his particular case, it may have been pressures from home**

02:30 **on a broader sense, did many fellows get 'Dear John' letters [letter informing that a relationship is over] from home and those sorts of things?**

I can recall about two, subsequently but never while we were there.

**What were the circumstances for those two?**

I don't know, no idea, one ended in a divorce

03:00 and I forget what the other one was.

**Given the suicide...**

I can give you a more general answer though, lots of divorces happened after Vietnam, it is in many ways attributed or blamed on post traumatic stress disorder, and we gave our wives hell.

03:30 But mine came out very, very late. After the Vietnam War, yes we got a lot of suicides, and we couldn't explain it. And particularly through the diggers more than the officers, I'd have to say that the officers behaved more in an RSL tradition and took the accepted course,

04:00 the solders on the other hand were very, very angry, and they formed an organization called the Vietnam Veterans Association, and I think that did a lot for the healing of some of the wounds that had been suffered both corporately, and mentally, and the other element I would put it down to

04:30 was the reaction in the United States. That's a very general answer to your question, but that war affected so many families. And I said to my psychiatrist once, "How many do you think have got PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder]?" "Well I wouldn't be surprised if the percentage is as high as 25."

05:00 That was his opinion, and he's seen lots of it.

**We'll get to discuss it a little bit later obviously, more delayed effects. Just coming back to this particular incident, the doctor, what happened to him since he was inclined to blame himself?**

He just, he showed his distress, and then he got on with

05:30 his job. And he was a balanced man, very balanced.

**Who cleaned up the site where the fellow?**

No idea at all.

**Did the chaplains play any particular role in this particular situation?**

No I don't think they did.

06:00 I can't even remember if we had a chaplain there. But the guy was either agnostic or an atheist, no very little, I don't even know where he was interred, whether they took him back to Terendak Garrison and interred him there, or whether he was taken back to Australia.

**How did the incident affect the camp?**

06:30 The old question, "Why?" We didn't understand, we were young men, not many of us had ever witnessed a tragedy like that in our life, and the question was, "Why?"

**07:00 What was the army's response to the situation?**

Sympathy for the family, but a more realistic view, it happens, you've got to live with it.

**What was the family told?**

I've no idea. The procedure in those circumstances is

07:30 that on behalf of the unit, the commanding officer writes a letter to the next of kin.

**Who takes care of the men's possessions?**

We do, in this case it would have been whoever was in charge of admin company, you sought the possessions, made sure you've got everything, and then

08:00 they are dispatched through the chain of command, but there is one very special rider, and I know this only because I was OC 'Pogoland' in Vietnam, they take out anything that is either offensive or embarrassing to the family, or what you think can be. You have to make a judgement.

**08:30 Michael, to get an understanding, your reluctance to talk about this, obviously it's a gruesome thing, but could you just share with me your feelings in that respect?**

Yes, I think it was something that is tragic; it happened, I was there on the periphery,

09:00 while I have sympathy for the person, I want to get on with two parts of my life, my spiritual life, and my military life. That is not to say that I don't expect to be killed myself or see others be killed, it's war, I know that's part of the contract.

**One final question**

09:30 **surrounding this, can you just give me an idea, when you heard the shot, what your immediate**

**reactions and what you did in the following half hour, hour?**

The first one was one of surprise, had someone blown an exhaust, fired a weapon, where did it come from, and we just continued on.

10:00 And then I can't remember who it was, but someone came into the ops room, which was literally a sealed area, and told us what had happened. And the war can't stop without being too impersonal about it, we had our own work to do in that ops room. Better that we do

10:30 because it doesn't occupy your mind right at the point. It does after, you know, you keep asking why and so on. But not at the time, what is it, "Crikey, why did he do it? Get back to work."

**This might be sort of a difficult question to answer in respect to hindsight,**

11:00 **but pretending that there was in Vietnam, do you think there was trauma whether it be this event or other events from your time in Malaysia?**

I think there is a very one-eyed view about particularly PTSD, that it was invented in Vietnam, that's bullshit. It's gone under several names or phrases

11:30 one's battle fatigue, another is shell-shock, it wasn't until it was given some sort of analysis and had a tag tied to it, post-Vietnam that post traumatic stress disorder is recognised as a disability, for example a lot of people who came

12:00 back from the Second World War were in the same boat, what happened to them is, it was almost draconian, but they were put in institutions, given a drug I believe was called largactol, and left. Post Vietnam, now, we are extremely well looked after.

12:30 I've nothing but praise for the government through DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs] and the Australian population of how well we are looked after, and to try and give us a decent quality of life. Be that physical or be that our medical bills. And there is a host of counselling services that are available.

13:00 **So what were some of the traumatic effects from Malaysia?**

I think very few from Malaysia because we only had on really big contact on the Gerunggang. Which is close to the border, but I don't think there were. Least we had the

13:30 satisfaction of going home and saying, "We won." And with my other overseas tours in PNG and Vietnam I can't say I won, so that, sorry that's pretty cynical but, yeah, it was good.

**Sorry one quick question,**

14:00 My only involvement in action was...

**In the Gerunggang?**

The CO sent me up in a helicopter because we had the intelligence that suspected infiltration, we'd seen lights, we'd heard all the typical sounds of an enemy, and I went up, I spoke to one of my college friends, who happens to be my college grandfather, General Cole,

14:30 and trying to be very secure we tried to speak in pidgin, so anyone on the other side wouldn't know what we were talking about. And then shortly I think, the following day, I left to go to Vietnam. And it wasn't until the RSM Paddy Brennan met me at Kuching airport, and told me what had happened, so I had very little to do with it.

15:00 **Given that you said you had very little to do with it, what did you see from the helicopter and what did you say, what was the conversation?**

It was more a matter of communication to try and find out what the company knew, I don't know why it wasn't done on the radio, but the CO said, "Pronto, up you go and go and talk to the company commander." Which I did,

15:30 I didn't even land.

**Did you see any of the battle taking place?**

No, none. In fact, strangely where they had the initial concern was came from the east at Gombang and the actual action happened on the west around the Bukit area.

16:00 So no, but that was some time later.

**What details though were being passed on to you during your conversation with this other fellow?**

I asked the questions, he gave the answers, "Do you think maybe there are," "What causes you to think that there are?" "At night we saw some lights we hadn't seen

16:30 before." What else, smell is a factor; we smelt smells that we hadn't smelt before, and those sort of

questions.

**You did loosely throw away the phrase that, “that was the battle we won’ whereas Vietnam, as sort of no, in what respect was New Guinea not something that we won?**

17:00 We did very well as ‘colonialists’ but it’s the way Papua New Guinea is today, very disappointing, I think in my case, I really put my heart and soul into that country, it was just more than just soldiering, particularly when

17:30 independence was on its way, and it’s just disappointing. And, but now it’s their nation and there is buggar all we can do about it, except when the government’s good enough to help them in a crisis. I think the first echelon of

18:00 administration officials and politicians were good, then things like corruption set in, as did law and order, which is a major factor. I think the defence force got stretched far, far beyond the limit, the PNG Defence Force that is, over Bougainville, we were there for something like eight years.

18:30 Meanwhile where we had a budget aid policy the budget was going in the wrong place, like into people’s pockets. Instead of to the public, and I know from what people have told me, that people in PNG Defence Force suffered heavily. So that’s it.

19:00 **Finishing off just a few questions in respect to Malaysia, what was that like?**

Posh, good for a married, great. You got a house in the garrison if you were on key staff, like if you were the brigade commander or a CO, you got had to live there, if you held a key appointment that required you to be somewhere at short notice, you

19:30 got a married quarter. I got a married quarter for the second year because I was the adjutant of the garrison, then we had a number of enclaves, two enclaves between Terendak Garrison and the city of Melaka if I remember, the one we lived in was Jalan Tabor Sing,

20:00 which was a new housing estate, the other ones name escapes me, but it was a bit older. Then the diggers lived down at a place called Bukit Bulat, while we were required to get ourselves as officers to work, the diggers were always taken by bus. The housing was good, and the wonderful thing is you didn’t have to bring your own clobber, sorry, furniture

20:30 and stuff, all you had to bring was enough things to make it look personal to the particular family, and it was really good.

**What did you do to relax and rest away from engagements and work?**

The officers beach club

21:00 was pretty popular, a lot of us spent time there, I’m not sure what the diggers had, but I know they had something. While you are in Southeast Asia, take the chance to travel, and Helen and I certainly did, we went to in 1966 we went to Thailand to Hong Kong, Japan,

21:30 Philippines and back home and that was great, and yeah, Singapore was always a popular place, it wasn’t a fine city then as you’ve heard the pun, you get fined for everything, it had it’s nice seamy edge, I can remember sitting down outside a café once having sate and it was

22:00 really good. And then you had the thrill of Boogie Street, the red light district of Singapore and it would be quite remiss of me to say that people didn’t go there, ‘cause they bloody well did. We did a lot of entertaining, sort of parties in our home. The second year

22:30 was more free than the first, so we tended to mix more as platoons and companies socially, as I remember than we did before when we were under Op Lurgen, because that was regarded as full on. Sport played a big part, and the national rivalry between three nations can be quite daunting.

23:00 Of course, if you follow rugby union, when the Kiwi’s played the Yanks all the battalions turned out to see that match, unfortunately I think on both occasions the Kiwi’s won and my CO Colin East, who was pretty rugby mad, he put the battalion team on a special diet.

23:30 We played a lot of cricket, a lot of swimming; I was in the battalion swimming team. And that was that.

**You touched on the red light district in respect to Singapore, what can you share just for a social side in respect I mean of brothels and those things during your time in service in Malaysia?**

24:00 I think the army takes a very sensible view towards it, it realises it can happen, it gives all of us extremely counselling, and, “Don’t forget your rubber mate.” I can’t recall too many people who ever served

24:30 with me or under me, at any time getting venereal disease, no doubt some did, but I just can’t recall them, like that suicide.



**Do you remember any of the sex education classes given or that you may have attended?**

25:00 I wouldn't call them sex education classes, that's the click word or phrase for today, and I don't mean to be rude to you, nope, the doctor just told us, in groups, "This is the situation," blah, blah, blah. And one of the more salacious incidents that happened to the officer

25:30 class was, they were taken down to the brothels of Melaka, again by the doctor, and shown, this is what it's all about, you guys haven't been here before, so be it.

**Were you amongst that group?**

No, I wasn't unfortunately, because I was still being tail-end Charlie moving the families out.

26:00 But you know, I guess at the behest of the CO, the doctor took people down and said, "Here's where they are, here's what they are like, and be advised what they can do to you."

**Just so I understand, your wife was actually overseas in Malaysia with you?**

Yes.

26:30 **And there were no concerns for her safety or other women in?**

Because we lived off base, I think we were careful in what we did, I can't remember going to places that we were told we should never visit in terms of safety. No I'm not sure, and in Helen's and my case, the subject

27:00 hardly ever arose. We were so flat out, so glad to see one another, and when we did it was of a secondary concern, and I'm not saying we were cowboys, but the real threat wasn't heavy, if anything it was light and you could get on with your life as much as normal. If there is a thing called

27:30 normality with an operational area.

**This section of transcript is embargoed until 1 January 2034.**

30:38 **Okay let's travel forward, after Malaysia, what happened, where did you go to from there?**

To Brisbane, because we'd been warmed out to go to South Vietnam in 1968.

31:00 So we had something like eight months at home, reformed the battalion, trained and went to Vietnam. Then things started to change, particularly in manning, the Australian government said, if we are sending people overseas, we are going to have a fifty-fifty mix. Now there's no difference, once you've trained, of a

31:30 national serviceman to a regular, the difficulty I eventually found was, or not the difficulty, but the change, whereas in our battalion we'd served together from 1964 through to 1967 when we came back, and a lot of people knew one another pretty well.

32:00 National service was not the case because they would come through on a trickle basis and where you knew a lot of diggers before, some of your diggers in national service you never got to know. Some of them weren't in the battalion that long. That's a significant change. I don't think we got overly concerned with

32:30 the press tending to report more on what was happening to the national service than the regular, we just found that when we got together if we were going to do well and achieve our objective and not get killed, we'd better cooperate. And I can't recall any sense of great feeling against the

33:00 National servicemen, in fact some were so good they got up to be brigadiers eventually. And the person I showed those contact photographs I showed you, Jimmy Rule, was one of my platoon commanders, and he went on to be a commanding officer. And the same with some of the diggers, I always seemed to be

33:30 running to section commanders when I was a rifle company commander, and guys would just have to step up and take their place, and they did.

**You've come back from Malaysia to Brisbane, who did you actually join in Brisbane?**

Same unit, just changed the CO, and the CO was Leigh Greville,

34:00 brother of Phil Greville who's better known in the Australian Army for his exploits as a POW [Prisoner of

War] in Korea.

**And if I understand correctly, you are now preparing and training for Vietnam?**

Yes.

**Just so I understand the timeline, Terendak, where's that?**

Terendak is in Melaka

34:30 in the city of Melaka or close to the city of Melaka in the state of Melaka.

**Before we come to Brisbane, I understand that your role there was dealing with some of the dead that had come in through from Vietnam?**

The government policy at the time was that the war dead would be buried in Terendak Garrison.

35:00 And that was very unfortunate because if you ask some of the diggers who were with us, they absolutely loathed it, okay, do the best you possibly can to give them a good burial, but not for a unit that's overseas,

35:30 and in the interim been on active service. And I think the most famous we buried was Peter Badcoe VC [Victoria Cross], and the commanding officer would act as the chief mourner and we'd do the job. I don't think the time factor bothered us a bit

36:00 in terms of okay, it's going to take a day and a half, go to the train, half a day to get ready and inter the body, but it was just the sentiment of having to do it. Fortunately the government saw the light, later anyone who was killed in Vietnam was air freighted straight to Australia.

36:30 **These particular funerals, can you just describe what happened, the events, the formality of them?**

First up the unit is notified, in my case I was usually one of the first, the RSM would go up to the BMH, the British Medical Hospital, to

37:00 the mortuary find the body, probably through identification tags and whatever, and that is as formal as you can get in terms of the next of kin not being there, a very responsible man to do it. Meanwhile, I'm not sure whether it's the company or a platoon, but the platoon is warned out to stage the funeral

37:30 they practice the funeral arms positions, like 'rest on your arms', 'reverse' and so on, then it's just like any burial except that the coffin is draped with an Australian flag

38:00 as is a diggers right, and there's three volleys fired and then the bodies committed to ground and that's it. Without trivialising it, it's no different from any military funeral that's held in Australia, it's just how it happened was very

38:30 distressing, or where it happened was distressing for us.

**Was there a feeling amongst some of the soldiers that it was letting these soldiers down?**

I don't know because I've never asked the question, and they've never asked me the question. I don't know.

39:00 But I know there was a sense of relief; I can't even remember if it was still there when the government said, they go home.

**Well let me put it back to you this way, if you'd died in Vietnam would your wish be to be returned to Australia or?**

Oh yes, but it wouldn't be up to me, it would be up to my wife.

39:30 Yeah, okay. I don't know much about the War Graves Commission, but they have got so many people buried overseas, in France, in Papua New Guinea and so on, and they are wonderful cemeteries.

## Tape 7

00:40 **What information were you given while you were in Brisbane about what was going on in Vietnam, what you'd be doing when you went over there?**

Oh very regularly, you through the military system you got

01:00 tons of information about what was happening, and that's formal information of changes to the style tactics to meet the opposition, who the opposition were, that is, I think you had three main groups of enemies, the North Vietnamese Army, the real professional crack soldiers, not often

- 01:30 seen down where we were sometimes but not regularly based there. Then you had the Viet Cong proper who were South Vietnamese and then you had the local militia, so you had three levels of soldiering skills to put it
- 02:00 another way. NVA [North Vietnamese Army], by far the best. We were told about things like tunnels, we had a magazine called The Army Journal and a lot of people would write about that. In the first battalion that went over there was 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Army, taken over by
- 02:30 I can't remember, but he got sick and then Colonel Priest took over, anyway they lived with 173rd Airborne Brigade, the Australians were like we fitted into Commonwealth brigade, they fitted into 173rd and for training and expertise on helicopters,
- 03:00 there is just one guy in 1RAR his name is John Essex-Clarke, and I have never been so impressed with a man, we as company commanders had to go to Canungra, which is the jungle training centre and he told us all about air mobile operation, and I think the first time many of us had seen a helicopter
- 03:30 of the Huey type was when we were in Adelaide, we were loaned one for an exercise, then we saw a few more in Malaya, Borneo, but boy, then we got the big concept, it was a big helicopter. So those sort of ways briefings, military documentation, as I remember in Canberra we had a team
- 04:00 called the Battle Analysis Team, which Colonel Priest eventually took over.

**What about jungle training, yourself, did you go through Canungra as a company commander?**

No I avoided that, I'm one of those terrible exceptions because I've spent so much time on the field, the first time, this is going through

- 04:30 I got exempt from, was what's called core three for your arm that you are in, so I didn't have to do the school of infantry because I'd been to Borneo. Then I didn't have to do, oh yeah, because I was in
- 05:00 pogoland, at that stage, admin company didn't go to Canungra, but the rest, everyone else did. Later when we had I'm not sure whether they were mine incidents or accidental, whatever, the government made it mandatory that everyone would go to Canungra, before they go to Vietnam.

- 05:30 **Just one term that you've used a couple of times and is quite common in the military but people watching the archive might not be familiar with is 'pogo', can you explain what that meant?**

Yeah, it's the slang that the people feel the sharp end for the bases who never get to see a shot fired.

**Was it used as a term of abuse, was it used in a friendly way, how does it?**

Both, depends on the

- 06:00 person involved, and on the situation. When it goes wrong, "Bloody pogos have stuffed it up again," or when you get on re-supply as we did, I think say every three or four days, the rifle company commander, you'd think, "Whew, thank god for the
- 06:30 pogos, here's a fresh roll and a bottle of chocolate milk."

**Thank you for clearing that up.**

In very basic terms, it just means 'basic'.

**While you were, while 4RAR was preparing to go over, the Tet Offensive of '68 happened, what did you hear about that back in Australia?**

- 07:00 I think I learned more through the newspapers and the news and what my friends who were involved told me. Yeah, that's as much as I know, not being sort of up with Vietnamese style of life,
- 07:30 I didn't know what Tet meant, but, what is it, Vietnamese New Year, it's along with Kong Hei Fat Choi, the Chinese New Year which was so I understood a lot about that, but not much about Tet, but that was a particular festival for the Viet Cong to make a very strong stand,
- 08:00 which they did.

**How was that news reflected in the Australian media, was it a positive or negative light?**

I can't remember whether at that time

- 08:30 the Americans had reached their peak numbers which saved over half a million, and that's a pretty good guess. I think it scared the socks of me, I think the Americans sent more numbers, I think we were glad, glads not the word,
- 09:00 we hadn't been over run. And then there is always the political circus shall I say, that goes on. We are

winning the war: No we are not winning the war. And after that, we reckon, I think it's fair to say in the late '60's,

09:30 '69, we thought we were doing pretty well in the pacification of South Vietnam and the Australians thought they were doing well in their province. On the other hand, you may have heard people like General Pierson when asked say, "Should we have been in Vietnam?" General Pierson once said, "No." And when asked why,

10:00 "The aim of the game against Communism is to win the hearts and the minds of the people." Now we were given a specific province to look after and that's called Phuoc Tuy and it goes down in Australian legend: And there was one Australian task force up to speed and more. But on a lot of occasions, the

10:30 regard for the brigade or the battalions of the brigade were called upon by the Americans to go out of province, to major battles and no doubt you've hear of the Battle of Coral and that involved two out of the three battalions from in task force. Given that situation, Sandy's remarked something along the lines of,

11:00 "If you are not there, how can you pacify them?" To come to grips with Communism is a very difficult and tortuous task because you have to keep doing it every day, it's a change in battle from what I call conventional because you had your fronts and flanks, you planned what you were going to do,

11:30 Vietnam and CRW [Counter Revolutionary Warfare] were completely different.

**With that all in mind, what contact did you have with public reactions against the war while you were in Australia in '68?**

None,

12:00 I would say partly because it is characteristic of Queenslanders that they are pretty conservative and they tend not to make a fuss unless there is a real fuss to be made, no, none.

**After the war or at any time did you?**

Yes, I think I felt, I know I felt

12:30 I don't want to use the word, angry, when for a while we weren't allowed to wear our uniforms to work in Canberra, we had to wear civilian suits. And I thought that was very unfair, here you are, you've served the nation, you are a soldier, you can't wear your uniform. I think Stormin' Norman

13:00 sums it up best in his autobiography, he said, "I came back, came to Washington and the scene is getting ugly," and No Time for Heroes, that's his autobiography. And

13:30 yet we had similar situations in Australia, but I don't think ours were quite as serious as the Americans, I may be wrong, but I don't think so.

**How did you get to Vietnam, can you tell us about going over there?**

Yeah sure.

14:00 To go and relieve a battalion, you've got to have an advance party so I went in the advance party, we flew civil air and I guess it was Qantas [Qantas Airways], I think at some stage we got on as civilians and when we got out at Singapore, we wore our army uniforms, as I remember. But there was some hassle getting through Singapore and I can't remember

14:30 what it was. Cruising at twenty eight thousand feet in a Boeing 787 is shit hot mate, lying back there thinking to myself, "Morrison VC, MC [Military Cross]." And then you hit Tan Son Nhut, whoo boy, as much as being a civilian airport, it was

15:00 military, and the amount of American military aeroplanes that were there was incredible, and it was noisy, absolutely noisy. And then we were, we flew in what I think is called a C120, and it's similar to our Caribou, it's the noisiest aircraft I've ever flown in, you felt all the bloody nuts and bolts were going to

15:30 fall apart. And then we arrived in Nui Dat to take over from 2RAR and at the same time, meet our New Zealand counterparts who had different staggers anyway. They were staggering from Torrender Garrison as I remember.

**Who showed you around Nui Dat?**

The person I was taking over from, called Keith Howley,

16:00 who's the OC of Admin Company.

**And what kits or information was he able to give you that helped you out?**

Just again, the experience of being on the ground, what to look out for, what to do, what not to do, and particularly with the RSM,

- 16:30 the importance of getting things like ammunition crated up correctly, so the digger, when you throw them out of the plane in an emergency doesn't have to unwrap things and whatever, when it's thrown out, it's ready to use. And things like that. But I'll always remember the brigade commander thought we were somewhat of a cocky battalion, and we probably were.
- 17:00 Been there done that, knew it all. You know, "You'll find out." But I had this again, Warrant Officer Les O'Keefe, who had specialised in running a helipad in Borneo and a helipad in Vietnam and I think because we were, we'd come out of Queensland it had been called Eagle Farm.
- 17:30 And he was the best man in re-supply I have ever seen, not because he could do it efficiently or whatever, but anyway, he was the greatest con man under the sun. If anyone could butter up a RAAF helicopter pilot it was Les, but things ran on time, and I didn't have to get involved with the running of the helipad
- 18:00 because O'Keefe was just so far better than I ever was.
- Can you just explain where it was you worked in Nui Dat, what the situation and layout was?**
- Yeah, from memory we were on the north east of the perimeter, then you went 'round to the south and south west, and that had 3RAR and on the west north west you had 1RAR, that was our battalion area.
- 18:30 And that's really enough, all the rifle companies were in the forward position, and all the support staff and admin company were set back from the perimeter.
- And what was the admin companies' area specifically?**
- We had the
- 19:00 transport platoon, we had the quartermasters platoon, what other, I don't know where the medics lived, but they were all part of admin company, I think a lot were attached to companies as stretcher-bearers. Then because we had New Zealanders in the task force, and the most senior New Zealander happened to be our
- 19:30 battalion 2IC, by agreement, I had this New Zealand settled down with me, geez, they probably queried the way we did things, and I queried the way they did things, but that was basically the make up of my company. Oh, and the ammunition dump was there as well, it had to be next to Eagle Farm.
- 20:00 if you've got to move quick, you've got to get ammunition, on occasion, ammunition wouldn't come from your base, it would be flown in directly, if it was desperately urgent, and you needed more than say a first line.
- Transport, quartermaster, medical, ammunition, maybe just break it down for us and tell us what each of those platoons**
- 20:30 **did? Obviously it's a little bit explanatory, but transport platoon, what were their main roles?**
- We had a fifth company that always occupied the horseshoe, sorry, the horseshoe feature was as it suggests in name,
- 21:00 it partly had the responsibility for guarding the minefield we put from Dat Do down to nearly the coast, and the ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam] was to patrol it, we were to look after it. So a lot of re-supply out there, not
- 21:30 infrequently they had to do highway patrols in Saigon, I think they did a lot of traffic between Nui Dat and Vung Tau and it was the brigade's logistics headquarters, other than that, no I can't
- 22:00 remember, they certainly didn't carry us into war. If we went, we went by chopper.
- You went from a helipad at Nui Dat?**
- Yes, there was a main, there were two main air facilities at Nui Dat, there was the task force helipad
- 22:30 which was next to the headquarters of the task force, it was smaller in space than Larksome airstrip, which could take both fixed wing and rotary aircraft. I think from memory if we were deployed on a battalion operation it wasn't uncommon to be flown out of Larksome.
- 23:00 **So the transport there just mainly had trucks?**
- We had some trucks, I think they were mainly Land Rovers, remember we had a transport company that supported the task force, you know, the heavy troop lifts they were done by the transport company.
- 23:30 **The quartermaster platoon, what was in that?**
- Supplies all your gear, uniforms, furniture you name it. To put it in a very flippant way, it's like going down to

- 24:00 the supermarket. And within each company, they had what was called a quartermaster sergeant, and mainly he's responsible for all the weapons and ammunition. There is also a very important element, the electrical and mechanical engineer section and I tried to
- 24:30 say to my fellow company commanders, "In rotation, when you come back, go down and take the company down to see Beaky Greaves the sergeant armourer and get your rifles re-zeroed, get anything that's wrong with them fixed up," well they did the latter for sure, but I'd like to see that there was some provision to keep the weapons in good order.
- 25:00 Yeah, it was the RAEME detachment, and of course the other group are the cooks. No, the cooks didn't live with the platoon, they lived in all the company areas, companies had their own cooks, their own medics, and that was that.
- 25:30 I had the warrant officer caterer and he probably had a few 'round the area to, 'round the company area to provide meals for us. Then we had the chaplains, when I was there we had a very, very fine chaplain, Huey Verko, Huey was accused one day of shooting at the enemy,
- 26:00 said, "Padre, you're not allowed to do that," Huey never answered the question. And then the gran old attachment, the Salvation Army, I don't know whether people know, how much these people do in combat, but I had this grand old Queenslander called, Arthur Gillam, and he was a slow moving sort of fellow.
- 26:30 But he did wonders, and that was basically it. Arthur never got involved in your operational plans or patrols or whatever, he just made sure if a digger said, "Hey, can you send some flowers to my girlfriend for her birthday?" He'd say, "Yep, it'll cost you so much," he said,
- 27:00 "Arthur I don't care how much it costs, just get them there." The Salvo's are just great.

**You said no one know exactly how much they did, maybe you can tell us more about it, how did the Salvos role differ from that of the chaplains, what were they, apart from getting flowers for your girlfriend, what other services did they provide?**

Basically welfare,

- 27:30 and you could say the chaplain's done that, there's the good old Salvation urn, that you are getting soft drinks and chocolate out of, I know, I find that, Michael [interviewer], very difficult to answer because the Salvation Army is a religion in its own right. The Salvation Army volunteers
- 28:00 to come to the army and we give them nothing. Padres, we give them a whole lot more. I don't know, it's just something of an Australian myth that has been there forever and a day and they do the job so well. As a legacy, let me tell you, who gets the bequests in the whole country, the Salvation Army.

- 28:30 So many ex-veterans plan for the help and the support that they gave, they give them tremendous bequests, when they die.

**On that subject, was there a church or chapel at Nui Dat?**

No I think we were pretty open air as I remember, you know, who cares,

- 29:00 you can pray to God in a school, but in the field I think we just did it in camp. And of course when companies were on operations it was not unusual for the padre to hold services, when I think of the mix, and I'm not saying that in terms of Catholic, I know we had an Anglican
- 29:30 padre in our battalion, but I don't think we had any other, 1RAR had a Catholic priest, Father Tinkler, and I can't remember who 3RAR had, but I guess from, you didn't get three chaplains in each battalion plus the field regiment, which would make 12,
- 30:00 I think they had a wider responsibility to the task force than just the battalions they were posted into.

**What was your job then on a day-to-day basis as the admin company officer?**

- 30:30 To see that things ran smoothly and properly, to be very careful on re-supply, it didn't affect me that much because Les was there, fight with the New Zealanders.
- 31:00 When the battalion was out, we had to man the perimeter at night, that is your last line of defence, sorry, your forward line of defence outside the wire, and I was responsible for the patrol programme, I took that very personally, I briefed the patrol,
- 31:30 I debrief the patrol, and I made out all the patrol plans. Now that would have happened probably a third of the time that I was in admin company. As frequently as I could, I would fly out to visit a company
- 32:00 to see how things were going, and it's very hard for someone to complain over the radio, it's far easier to get a basic to go out and talk to someone who's got the problem. But I had some pretty good instruction from my CO he said, "When they ask for it Michael, supply it." And we got on fine from there. But my soldiers

- 32:30 were a lot older or sorry the soldiers of admin company are generally older than those in the rifle companies, mainly very experienced some can be rogues, others can be champions. Well they certainly messed up on me on a few occasions, to do with alcohol, so I closed the sergeants'
- 33:00 mess, I can tell you I was the most unpopular person in my company for a while. Mr Diplomat O'Keefe came along and said, "Now look," I said, "Yes, I've done it for the following reasons," he said, "Yeah, okay, will you re-open it?" And I said, "Yes." I'm not saying grog was a
- 33:30 complete problem, if you get people doing a pretty fundamental job, day after day after day, it can get pretty frustrating and of course, the same happened with the soldiers, I don't think I had alcoholics per se,
- 34:00 it was people who were bored out of their wits. And no doubt you've heard the old phrase, "War is 90 per cent boredom and 10 per cent furious activity." Occasionally we had swimming carnivals down at the Badcoe Club down in Vung Tau, so I availed myself of that, won the diving on the first time and
- 34:30 got absolutely thrashed by a West Australian National Serviceman, but generally we didn't play much sport. Another thing I don't think you'll hear much about, is the rubber tree, the rubber tree to the average Vietnamese is absolutely sacred if he or she owns it, and you know,

- 35:00 someone cut down a rubber tree, well it wasn't like that at all, it was up to the deputy commander to find out what happened and why. We were very careful of the rubber in our area.

**Nui Dat was in the middle of a rubber plantation?**

Yeah there were rubber trees there; I can't remember to what intensity, I guess they were all over the task force area

- 35:30 but they are people's property.

**I'd like to have some more details of how you made things run smoothly in that job, any examples you could give us, one you already mentioned I'd like some more details of was stacking the ammunition, what was that all about?**

That's the RSM's responsibility to have his ammunition prepared, particularly in case of a crisis, what did we call it, either a contact or an ambush

- 36:00 and you've got to get it out to the field quickly. In other senses, you can just leave the ammunition there and do nothing about it, and would you believe, in the tropics it rusts and that's pretty serious you know, when a guy goes to put a round up the spout and it's all rusty.
- 36:30 And just being careful, the normal re-supply, no sweat. The CSM looked after us, but the overseer of the ammunition was the RSM. He worked in my area, was not responsible to me, but it was there. What else did we make sure worked smoothly and effectively? Yeah re-supply,
- 37:00 average turnaround was four days, and we had a complete code for the articles that were required; and they'd come over the admin net, and the company clerk from the company who wanted it would then
- 37:30 get it over to the quartermaster who was responsible for supplying it, other than ammunition. So you needed to know that that was working well, and I guess you found out pretty quickly if it wasn't, because they'd complain, and in the role I was given by my CO, he said, "I if they want it you supply."

- 38:00 **What were the perpetual problems you had around that area?**

I'd say motivation; it's all very well to send someone away to do a job,

- 38:30 but to be repetitive all the time is hard. And I unfortunately are not one of those persons who's the fun of the fair although I may seem so today in some instances, but to keep and try and make it interesting for them. Certainly the training was no problem, we had a bit of on
- 39:00 the job training as you go, but generally our army is very well trained. And I asked Sir Thomas Daily once, "What are our real strengths?" and he said, "I think our training and discipline," and I'd add a third one, I'd say our spirituality, not necessarily through overt religion, but the things that we believe in are right. So that wasn't a problem.

- 39:30 No one is going to go AWL in the middle of a war so you didn't have that problem. I guess grog was a bit of a problem but no, boredom and motivation mainly.

**Did you have any problem with getting hold of things in the supply line?**

No we didn't not that I can remember.

**Where did they come from, your supplies?**

- 40:00 I guess in bulk they came out of Vung Tau, from whatever supply unit was responsible for providing them, and then they were delivered to us prepared to go on a train

- 40:30 and sent out. A couple of things, or one thing I have learned, since being on operations with overseas forces, just how good the Americans and the Brits have been to us, we can't provide a lot of the equipment that's required in
- 41:00 operations in huge scales, we are not logistically as a nation capable of doing it, so it's done on a payback basis. So in Vietnam in particular, you could get a lot through American supply. One I'll quote is the ten-man ration pack, I think to break the variety of
- 41:30 the Australian ration pack, and to have something between fresh food and ration packs, and it did that. I guess the government duly paid for that. How else did we get supplies?

## Tape 8

- 00:42 **Michael, can we begin by sharing with me you about your commanding officer in Vietnam, what he was like, the freedoms he allowed?**

Yes, I enjoyed being under him because he issued the orders, he told me precisely what he wanted

- 01:00 and then let you do it. And also, being a major infantry company commander, and I've discussed this with other people, it's one of the most satisfying jobs you can get, because you are only responsible for five lines under you, three platoon commanders, a 2IC and a CSM gives you immense brief

- 01:30 and it's so tight knit that you are calling the shots, that's the first thing. And I just think that Colonel Greville treated us as people who knew what we were doing, accepted the level we'd got to, and let us get on with it, and that's the way I like to work. And that suited me fine.

- 02:00 **You mentioned that he was immensely capable.**

Yeah, for instance he'd been, the appointment was the director of military art at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, so that doesn't come lightly to anyone, they select the right people to train the young men of the future.

- 02:30 **Off camera you used the word 'lazy' what did you mean by that?**

Probably non-interference is the best; he just gave you your independence. I'll qualify that remark by saying, our battalion never had any major contact, we didn't have a Battle of Long Tan, we didn't have a Battle of Coral or Balmoral,

- 03:00 we didn't have the Battles of Baria and Long Dien, we had our fair share of action, but no really big ones.

**How did he compare to the other officers in command there?**

Too personal to answer, and I didn't know intimately the other officers who were there, oh perhaps

- 03:30 Brigadier Carn, who was later the CO of 5RAR, who was an instructor at the Royal Military College, J. J. Shelton I didn't know very well when he commanded 3RAR, I knew my namesake reasonably well, Alby Morrison, no, it's just a very difficult question to answer.

- 04:00 Okay a man is given a difficult task, he takes tremendous casualties, is he a bad CO? Who knows? One thing I will say about the CO's is, the Australian army chose to choose more

- 04:30 elderly lieutenant colonels than they did younger. Generally the CO's were over forty years of age, the two exceptions were probably Colin Carn, and the other one would be Major General Ron Grey.

**Were there occasions when you actually visited the headquarters and met**

- 05:00 **some of the other commanding officers there?**

Oh yes, sure not only CO's. The infantry core is very tight knit, and you've got mates all over the place, so we'd go to their mess they'd come to our mess, you'd be very close, but I never, in one way my career has been so interesting,

- 05:30 it's not funny, in that I have always served with Australians, but I have been fundamentally with the unit that I have been posted to. I have never served with the ARVN, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam; I have never been on American headquarters or served as advisor to them. So yeah, I'm probably,

- 06:00 while I'm experienced, I'm not laterally trained as an infantry soldier. I don't think that affects my performance, that's the way my postings turned out.

**Just to give me though, an idea of HQ [Headquarters] there at Nui Dat, can you describe it for me, the layout and what you saw when you went there?**



- 06:30 Headquarters task force? Probably would have had in the order of say eighty people it had a defence and employment platoon, but it
- 07:00 we are under command of an American core, and this was 3 Corps so the brigade commander who is directly responsible to a Lieutenant, or three star general from America, by the same token, by looking after, while fighting the war, the national interests have to be looked after, and we had an
- 07:30 organization called COMAFV, Commander Australian Forces Vietnam, so the brigade commander on matters political and national had to report back to Saigon, and if it was considered not in the interests of Australia politically to do a certain thing, then we didn't. And I don't know where COMAFV went to
- 08:00 to tell the MACV Headquarters, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, but he sort of had two reporting lines. So, you've got a headquarters that's based on dealing with an Australian task force, liaising with Americans,
- 08:30 and just running the battle. Pierson was different to Hughes, but Hughes mainly commanded from the base, when a big operation was on, Sandy Pierson, as task force commander would often go out and live in the bush, and he'd live there for six weeks.
- 09:00 He'd say to his deputy, "You can handle the base, I'm going out to run the battle."

**Are you contrasting to say that one form of leadership is better than another?**

I'm not saying that at all, I'm saying it's a matter of style. So long as you get the job done, no one minds how you do it. Gosh there is something that's slipped my tongue.

- 09:30 No, ah yeah, the heads of the various sections on task force headquarters, we were then into what was called 'G' Branch, snobs, they were god, then you had
- 10:00 the personnel officer looking after all matters personnel, in this case only for the Australians because I had my New Zealand cell down there looking after us, and then you had a Q [Quartermaster] person, and they had to coordinate the various functions of what the task force did. For instance particularly when a
- 10:30 battalion was out and all the re-supply was done from the base, the three admin commanders, who strangely enough, were all in the same class at RMC would have a daily meeting with the person called the DAAQMG [Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General], Kev Gurney, to sort out all our administrative problems,
- 11:00 things we required on particularly re-supply and so on. And there was an intelligence cell on the headquarters, as is natural, one of its most outstanding members, not only then but later, was a fellow called, Jim Furner,
- 11:30 Major General Jim Furner, and he went on to be the head of one of the government departments in Canberra. So that's roughly what you had on the headquarters.

**You mentioned, just coming back, with the ammunition, the tropical conditions would rust out, can you just share with me the use by date and I guess the sort of constant**

**turnover of ammunition?**

I can't remember if there were use by dates.

**Just use by dates in respect to how long they would rust out?**

I think it was more by sight that, and yeah, if it had been there

- 12:30 from, don't like the look of this, get rid of it. And I don't know, you'd have to talk to an RSM or a CSM on that, the in depth details.

**Where was the ammunition taken to get rid of it?**

No idea. My guess would be that

- 13:00 being what engineers are they like blowing up things, probably had to dispose of a lot of ammunition. I can distinctly remember when I handed over my rifle company 4RAR to a fellow in 6RAR; I had a very thorough going through all our ammunition, done by the RSM. And if we
- 13:30 thought it was safe, down it went to the ammunition depot. And another agency that is so important in ammunition, was the ordinance corps, and I guess in a very high way, they would know
- 14:00 how long certain lines of ammunition had been in the country. But I'm only surmising that because I'm not an ordinance corps officer. When it went out of our area, I knew nothing about how it was disposed of.

**What frustrated you in your role?**

Nothing,

- 14:30 no really, I was there to do a job, as I said, quite selfishly, I wanted to see how I performed under fire, and I did. One thing did frustrate me; we didn't have any decent practice firing ranges in the task
- 15:00 force, and I really thought to myself, "If we are going to go out there and kill people," and let's be quite honest, that's what we were trained to do, "we'd better make sure that we've got some good shots." You can get people who go for eight months in a rifle company
- 15:30 but never fire their weapon, but they never have a chance to practice. It's assumed, it will work at the time, I'm probably puritanical when it comes to that, we should have had a rifle range. What else frustrated me? Oh there are bound to be things.
- 16:00 Yeah, I think in a way, and perhaps I'm contradicting myself, the media gave so much attention to the national servicemen and here's the poor old regular army, okay that's his job, he's got to get on with it, and I thought that was a false impression
- 16:30 that was going home. I think we were all able to do our jobs equally. Other frustration. Yeah, Leigh Greville didn't make me a company commander sooner, a rifle company commander sooner.
- 17:00 This is way out of my league, or my sphere of influence, but I've said we laid this huge minefield, that ran from around the place like Dat Do where our headquarters was down to the sea, or to the Long Hai Hills I think, and the ARVN promised to patrol it and they didn't.
- 17:30 So they promised to patrol it and they didn't meet the task, it's not so much that they didn't patrol it, it's the fact that the Viet Cong took the mines out of it and used them against us, so that cost us casualties. And that was very much a whole
- 18:00 thing of the war. But to counter balance that, in Tet '69, the province chief who was a major or Dow Wee, I think, is a major in Vietnamese, said, "Okay you guys are only here for a year, and you make a name for us, remember that we've got to keep going all the time." So on. But
- 18:30 not protecting that minefield, no way. Not to me personally, I think the Americans dropped too much ordinance and try and do it all from the sky, as if to say, to win the war is to bomb the hell out of them. I reckon I've seen three wars now it doesn't work.
- 19:00 The first was the Spanish Civil War, the second was the Second World War, particularly both sides bombing, Hitler didn't bring London to its knees by bombing it, neither did the allies, and one of the strategic aims of the bombing was to lower the moral of
- 19:30 the Germans, and that didn't work. And I think we did the same thing in Vietnam, and again, of course you get things called a UXB [unexploded bomb], an unexploded bomb, and that's used against you. If you get a 750-pound bomb, and the Vietnamese were
- 20:00 great, very intuitive and had great initiative, they plant the bomb, and they have blown up an armoured personnel carrier, or a number of armoured personnel carriers. One of my mates got, two of my mates got killed this way, and that was frustrating. Whereas I think, of course we haven't got the ordinance
- 20:30 to do it, we tend to think more in terms of people and wining the hearts and minds. One day you may see on the [British] Channel a B52 dropping a hundred and five bombs out of a plane, it's awesome it really is, I've seen it from a distance, but you know, for heaven's sake.
- 21:00 **Just a few more questions surrounding this before we go on to your rifle company, you mentioned the Tet Offensive, the one in '69, how did that actually affect your role and your responsibility when that was on?**
- I think I'd just changed at that time; I may have been there,
- 21:30 hang on, no sorry, I was on the warship wasn't I. Through our preparedness, no one wanted to see another Tet '68, and whether as an ally force we did it by sheer numbers or Ho Chi Minh and General Zia tried,
- 22:00 weren't going to pull it on again because they had a bloody nose from the last one, albeit they had done a lot of damage, they had really achieved in my opinion, their strategic objective. So why try again, so yeah, we would be very careful.
- So what were you actually doing, you mentioned that you were at the horseshoe?**
- Well I must have just taken over the rifle company. So I
- 22:30 went from Nui Dat to the horseshoe and I was a rifle company commander then.

**Just again before we go forward, you also organised regular patrols, with cooks and everything can you tell me about these make up patrols?**

Guarding the perimeter, to be quite honest was not a great threat.

- 23:00 After the battle on Long Tan, Charlie hardly came near the Australian base until just after I'd left, but yeah, you had to put together a group of guys who's primary trade was not being a rifleman, but was being a cook, but in our army we all insist, or the system insists
- 23:30 that everyone is trained in minor tactics, so you are that far in front. I guess it was pretty hairy, nothing really went wrong, I think at the time I was told some funny stories, and the best is told against me. I'd briefed this Kiwi patrol and then I debriefed them,
- 24:00 and one of my diggers came and said to me, "Hey, you know something," and I said, "No, I never know anything, all you guys know everything," He said, "They did their patrol from the wet canteen." Now whether that's true I'm not sure, but that became routines stuff, and General Pierson, when he was the task force commander, also said
- 24:30 that the infantry battalions are under a lot of pressure, some of the other base units can join them, so I would, I think I'd get a, sometimes I'd have a patrol based on say, couple of people from an ordinance core, maybe the post, under a command
- 25:00 of an NCO [Non Commissioned Officer], 4RAR, and away we went. But to be quite honest, I don't think the threat was that great. If all hell had of broken loose, we would have changed the system very quickly.
- I have heard stories, where on night patrols, rumours where fellows have just gone out to the edge of the bush, waited until**
- 25:30 **the end and then come back in, have you heard anything like that?**
- Probably, probably, I don't know, I hope it didn't happen, I hope people have ethics, they are not only letting themselves down, they are letting their patrol down. I don't know, maybe we better wait for the next set of novels.
- 26:00 **Now you mentioned that one of your frustrations was that your commanding officers wouldn't get you into command of a rifle company soon enough, could you just share the story of how you finally got what you were seeking.**
- Yeah, it is not uncommon in operations to change people in positions, in the main
- 26:30 it will usually occur because someone gets posted out or that means the system says he's got to go somewhere else, like he's got enough college, there's an important posting for him overseas we'd like to shorten his tour, or some for compassionate reasons, sickness in the family and so on. We were lucky as a battalion in Vietnam, we stuck
- 27:00 together as company commanders, none of us got wounded or shot, and any need to change it, so Colonel Greville said, "Let's share the joy." And one of my really best friends came and took over my job at admin company and I took over at Charlie Company. Delta Company, John Deighton and Terry Sullivan changed, Terry Sullivan went back to the
- 27:30 company that he'd originally raised in D Company, and John went in as the ops officer and they were the changes. Oh hang on, yeah, my transport platoon commander, Bob Safe, got moved from transport to the tracker platoon, and I'm glad he did, he's one of the finest young men I've had the pleasure of commanding.
- 28:00 And there're is also a lot of changes amongst the junior officers, so you know, I got my go.
- So can you share with me of entering into, I guess the first few days of coming to command there?**
- Yes, as soon as I was warmed out, I started running 'round our battalion area like crazy,
- 28:30 Here I am 31 and the majority of my diggers to be are 20 so angry ant's not going to get caught here, going to be fit enough to keep up. Then I went out to the horseshoe and again I was fortunate, I had a marvellous company second in command, called Max Chambers.
- 29:00 He knew more about field soldiering than I will ever know, he'd been a platoon commander in 3RAR in the battalion in Charlie Company in Boca, he'd been the tracker platoon commander in Vietnam
- 29:30 and then he'd gone on to 2IC, he's very skilful. And I'm not the sort of person who's going to come in and say, "Okay, were going to do it my way." I took some advice from people, not that I was going to change my principles or standards, or the way I operated. And the other one was the CSM, Doug Bourke, and I thought
- 30:00 "I've got worries about keeping up with these youngsters, God, how does Bourke do it?" He was over 40, he'd fought in the Second World War and he'd been a regular soldier ever since, and he'd finished up the CSM Charlie Company. I think I made one mistake on the horseshoe, in that I should have gone out on a couple of patrols

- 30:30 just to feel my way in, but I didn't. Okay, that's my loss, and at the same time I was champing at the bit because I'd been nine months in the country and my R & R came up, so you know, of course you're down the backwater, off I go to have a week at home with my family. Yeah, I guess I spoke to people,
- 31:00 I think sometimes you chastise yourself for not knowing everything, but at the same time, you are not paid to be there to know everything, you are there to make the decisions when they are required. You are there to make sure that
- 31:30 your company functions efficiently. You are there to make sure that, and I hope this doesn't sound cowardly or gutless, there is no unnecessary loss of life. And to me there is a complete difference in me to being a cowboy as compared to not making the right decisions.
- 32:00 So yeah, that was generally how I learned.
- You mentioned how you didn't take the opportunity going on a couple of patrols beforehand, how did that actually affect you later, not taking up that opportunity?**
- Oh not physically, I think morally it did, that's all.
- What were your views and opinions of**
- 32:30 **the people that you were now in command of?**
- Getting towards the end of the tour, one thing they certainly knew their job, I had a guy, a couple of machine-gunners, one I can remember was Gabberish, I think he went to the police force, just very
- 33:00 high standard, and that ran throughout. While the national service edicts and falls happens, you get, lose them today, get some more tomorrow, not easy because any time for the first time under
- 33:30 fire, is hard for anyone, and we used to notice it with the changeover of battalion, for the new battalion coming in, there would be shots all over the place, then it settled down, and I think it was much the same. It's the way they use the bush, and we weren't allowed to walk on tracks, that's pretty impressive.
- 34:00 If there is a sudden quietness, or there is a foreign smell it was 'be on the lookout' and the Australian soldier just has a very good instinct for that sort of thing. I think the very disciplined
- 34:30 commander who later became my CO in Papua New Guinea, Laurie Lewis, went the whole way, he said, "You will not smoke, you will clean your teeth with salt, I cannot stop the way you smell, because as you smell,
- 35:00 that affects the Vietnamese and there is nothing I can do about that 'cause that's the way we are." But you know, good secure patrolling.
- You mentioned earlier that one of your reasons to actually join a rifle company was to know how you reacted under fire, when you came to your first engagement how did you react?**
- Well,
- 35:30 it was about day one out of Bien Hoa I think, I think it was out at a support base called Anderson, anyway, I'd tootled off on a reccie by myself, which was rather stupid, had trouble getting back and I thought, "Oh Jesus, sorry Helen, you just lost a husband," and then we had this ferocious contact
- 36:00 and the medics patching up my bum because my pack was starting to ache like hell, anyway I looked 'round and I was the only guy out of the pit, and I tried to get in, no way, so I thought, "Be a bit more careful," then the CSM says to me,
- 36:30 "Boss, you'd better be better than that," I said, "Look Doug, you had a combat guide spot," which is a pre-arranged dropping of a bomb over an area as harassment fire, "You had a bomb dropped on the headquarters and you were pretty lucky then," because a piece of shrapnel must have just missed him and he's now got it as a
- 37:00 bow tie, so I just said to him, "Look, don't worry about it, that bullet didn't have my number on it." That's the humour of it, the humour of it is, it masks something else called fear, I'm shit scared. That's what I had to do. A national service platoon commander summed it
- 37:30 up so well, and for them, for the platoon commander he's one of the hardest working in officers in the whole of the Australian army when he's doing his job, and Garrage has said, "Anyone who said they are not afraid is lying." So yeah, we were a bit scared. I tried to,
- 38:00 no one had ever told me how to dispose of the dead, well, the enemy did, I knew what I had to do with mine, I said, "Outin said, 'Bodies, intelligence, blah, blah, blah.'" I didn't get much of a reaction from that, I said, "For heaven's sake, I'm the bloody company commander," and this wise old guy said to me,

- 38:30 "Sir, you know what it's like, how the Viet Cong booby trapped the bodies," which they did in certain cases, see the top side, roll it over and bang, you're gone. The main aspect was not necessarily fear; it's the concentration
- 39:00 that's required, it's not like going on an exercise where you are pretty sure something is going to be scheduled for the morning and something's going to be scheduled for the afternoon, some buggers going to keep you awake at night, in our expertise in patrolling, there are no time frames, you can't look at your watch and say, "It's quarter to five now,
- 39:30 Charlie must be due for something." You were always on the alert, and that's very hard. Hard in that the longer you concentrate, it sort of saps your mind. I felt particularly, not sorry for that's the wrong word, but
- 40:00 concern for our signallers because our battalion instructions were that you had to give a sit rep, situational report every day, so that while the rest of the company is resting, this sig, he doesn't get much of a rest at all, he's on the blower and established communications with battalion headquarters, I've got to say what we are doing.

## Tape 9

- 00:42 **I know how you were talking about how you reacted under fire for the first time, but I'd just like to go back through that experience as to exactly what you were doing and what happened and just to put that on the record.**
- 01:00 **What was the company doing when you first came across the enemy?**
- Again, we'd been the shot troops of 3 Corps, we were up outside the province and I can't remember where, all I can remember was it was in the area of the last Tet Offensive called, Fire Support Base Anderson, I went into a defensive perimeter, and
- 01:30 did patrolling on a platoon basis, then the CO said, "I want you to go and search this particular area, take two of your platoons and leave one behind." So I was duly ferried to a drop of point by APC or armoured personnel carrier,
- 02:00 and then we started searching the area of operations that we'd been given, from memory I was dropped off at say, two o'clock, and at four o'clock, I was having my first contact. That was a reasonably good size
- 02:30 contact, and that's the one where I got caught with my trousers down. We harboured, we kept going, and we had a few more contacts and my guys were doing tremendously well, anything that popped its head up, got a hit and died.
- 03:00 Then I decided to split the two platoons I had, one had a officer with it, Jimmy Rule in 7 Platoon, he went off on his own, then I put myself behind 8 Platoon, which was commanded by a fellow called, John Scott, and we searched, searched, searched,
- 03:30 and then the 'shand really hit the fit," and Scott's platoon really had to look out for us, with us not very far behind, well, really just about up his backside, because my batman saw Charlie behind a log, he said, "Sir,
- 04:00 what do I do?" I said, "Shoot the fucker Rodney," which Rodney duly did. Then we went on and I think the assessment was made at battalion headquarters that there wasn't really that much to worry about in that area that I was searching,
- 04:30 so we were called back to our perimeter. I don't know whether this is the right thing to say, but I felt like I was being used as bait, okay they had everyone to back me up from artillery to Puff the Magic Dragon [AC-47D gunship] in the air or Spooky or whatever, but there was concern that
- 05:00 there was a big NVA movement, but fortunately, not so. So we went back, I think we had a couple more contacts, we went back to the base.
- When you say the 7th Platoon, the shit hit the fan, do you mean by that, did they come across a lot of NVA troops or?**
- No, we came across
- 05:30 I would assess, at least section or two sections, which is not a bad sort of enemy to meet, and there is lower firing. And one of the, the vile thing is we are taught what's called, contact rules and ambush rules, you don't think about a thing, you just do it.
- 06:00 One of the most scary things in a firefight, is the noise. You can't talk to anyone and it's just suddenly

from this concentration, there's this tremendous burst of noise and you just don't know what's going on.

**What is that like for an officer in command,**

06:30 **that sense that you just don't know what's going on?**

I always think back to what my first company commander, Peter Richardson, said it, the RMC, a digger said to him in Korea on patrol, "Sir I'm scared," and Richard looked at him and said, "What do you think I am son?" You know eventually, you've not been brainwashed,

07:00 but you've been taught and assessed on how to do a job, and you do it, mistakes happen, I think one of the worst mistakes I ever made, was we have a thing called a night harbour where you form a clock with one platoon going from one to four, the next four to eight, and the next eight to 12, well

07:30 we had to go somewhere on day and the front platoon, one to four, hadn't done much, so I said, "Okay, it's their turn to move," but I had to go back that way and you can't see that far in the jungle all the time, so I said, "Go up 400 metres, go out 50 metres, then turn round and come back."

08:00 Well, I nearly stopped one in the guts, or nearly got shot up, the forward scout of the leading section had gone off track a bit and he's finished up looking at me. Boy, did I learn from that.

**What did you do?**

Waited about 10

08:30 years till the next reunion, when we were all civilians, and let him give it to me. I didn't do anything at the time because I just got on with the job, thought to myself, "Stupid bastard," and just did it. I know I made a mistake and that was that.

09:00 I hope it didn't reflect badly on me amongst the soldiers. If it did, that was my problem.

**Just to take you back to the contact we were talking about a moment ago, you encountered a couple of sections of NVA, what are you doing in your position when you hear that firing, when that contact's going on?**

There is in our unit, there is a very strict procedure,

09:30 the platoon commander would ring up and say, "This is 3-3 contact wait out," everyone gets off the blower, and you just wait, if he wants to ring you up and say I've got to do this that and the other thing, if at certain

10:00 time, well this was the way I would handle it, if a certain time elapses and there is still a lot of noise, I'd ring him up and say, "Ay, what's going on down there?" But generally after say five, 10 minutes, the platoon commander will ring you up, give you a signal,

10:30 tell you where he's at, give his estimation on what the enemy's doing, and of course vital, did we suffer any casualties. But there is a wonderful story from either Victor or Whiskey, the New Zealand company, contact happens, platoon commander rings, "contact made, wait out"

11:00 and this goes on for about 10 minutes and the company commanders heard nothing again from him, so ring him up he says, "What's happening, what's the situation?" The guy says, "Were being shot at." There is a bit of humour at war.

**What sort of information did the situation report usually contain?**

11:30 In a contact situation, what's happened and where, a very quick assessment by the platoon commander of what he thinks he's hit, in terms of size, is it big enough for me to handle, or do I need someone else

12:00 to handle it, if there are casualties, depending on how serious they are, he may call for the company medic, but he's also got a platoon medic, I think Chris [interviewer], as much information as will stabilise the operation, but it's the actual contract drill, or if you are ambushed it's called

12:30 an ambush drill that is engrained into everyone's mind, so it happens automatically. You know, it's not as though, "Oh, what do I do?"

**During your time in Charlie Company, how many casualties did you suffer, what happened?**

He was the

13:00 artillery forward officer's sig, and he got hit in the shoulder, somewhat badly, so he had to be evacuated. From my own guess, I'd think in my time in Charlie Company I would have accounted for something like 15 to twenty of the enemy.

**What were you doing on that occasion that the sig got shot in the shoulder?**

13:30 That was the one when I was 8 Platoon with Sergeant Scott and that contact went on for quite a long time, and unfortunately Gunner Gorrick who's back in my headquarters with me and the fire officer and

the artillery officer, got hit. And I got to say, for that action

- 14:00 Scott was subsequently awarded the DCM [Distinguished Conduct Medal], I remember writing the citation, sorry the draft of the citation, and I recommended an MM [Military Medal] and it came back as a DCM which is tremendous credit to him.

**What sort of responsibility does a commanding officer bear when one of his men is injured, or indeed killed?**

- 14:30 My boss or me?

**You specifically, you are the company commander, you are not in charge of everyone, but...**

Okay, in the company, if he's wounded through either the 2IC if he's with you, your company 2IC or the CSM to arrange very quickly for a

- 15:00 dust off and that will happen automatically. A dust off was always on stand by and just get him evacuated from the area, thereafter it is not my responsibility as a company commander any more, other than generally commanding officers write letters to next of kin, and he may well ask you to draft

- 15:30 a letter for him to sign, and he may embellish it or whatever, but no there is not much you can do. You hope you can get a replacement pretty quickly, and we had a unit there that was just for that, 1ARU [Australian Reinforcement Unit], 1 Australian Reinforcement Unit. And of course, when you get back to base,

- 16:00 if he hasn't been evacuated to Australia, he's in the hospital down in Vung Tau, some of his mates go and see him, I may have seen a few, but the formal responsibility had ended. There's nothing draconian about it,

- 16:30 that's just a fact of life.

**Is there a personal responsibility that you've taken on above and beyond that formal responsibility a feeling of guilt perhaps or something akin to that?**

No, I was standing by my credo, while I am here to close with and destroy the enemy, which is the infantry motto

- 17:00 provided I have done the job and made correct decisions, nothing other than to say, "Bugger, it had his number on it." And then to say, "Thank heavens it didn't have mine on." No, the guilt probably comes after,

- 17:30 when I say after, long after, when you get home.

**Speaking of recommending that guy for a DCM...**

No I didn't recommend him.

**Recommending him for a military medal, you received a mention in dispatches for something, what was that for?**

A mention in dispatches is the lowest form of decoration you can get.

- 18:00 In its purest term in days gone by, a person could be awarded a dispatch without a citation. When we were in Vietnam, citations had to be written and they were graded accordingly, first by the CO,

- 18:30 then the task force commander, then the commander AFV [Australian Forces Vietnam] and then army headquarters which made the final recommendation. It's a very touchy subject, decorations, so many people believe that they didn't deserve theirs and other people deserved theirs, and so on, I don't know. Maybe it's like being a test batsman,

- 19:00 sometimes you are given out when you shouldn't have been given out, other times you are definitely out. And it all evens out, I don't know.

**What was the conduct or action you were mentioned in the dispatches for?**

I don't know.

**You never found out?**

No, unless you get the formal decoration, such as the Military Cross or the Military Medal, DSO [Distinguished Service Order], MBE [Member of the Order of the British Empire] or whatever,

- 19:30 you get a citation, and I'd love to know what as much as you are asking me. I think it was for being a good boy and not getting caught.

**Were there any occasions in Vietnam, or indeed in your entire military career that you witnessed incredible bravery?**

20:00 Probably Jack Scott, 8 Platoon, was a hell of a platoon to handle, the platoon commander, I don't know how many platoon commanders they'd been through, and you were always changing and here's a senior non commissioned officer doing the job of a platoon commander, probably in a sense far more qualified than the platoon commander, and he just handled that contact so well.

20:30 That's about the bravest I've seen.

**What about the other side of that question, did you witness people who couldn't cope?**

Yes once, in fact it was the first day of the operation after this reasonably heavy contact involving 7 Platoon, this soldier cracked

21:00 he was off his tree, yelling and screaming and whatever, and to make matters worse, the people, some of the people around him were giving him a really hard time, calling him gutless, yellow, whatever, as if to say, "You're not a man," and Bourke, with all his experience just stepped

21:30 in, pacified the guy, spoke to them and said, "If I ever hear anything like that from you guys again, whoever in it, will be on the next chopper out." And then he brought him back to our company headquarters,

22:00 bedded him down, probably in his own hoochie, sleeping thing, and then as quick as we could the next morning, out, but that's the only one that I saw in Vietnam.

**What sort of mad behaviour was he going on with?**

Just the old thing, "I can't take it, it's too much."

22:30 I can't remember the actual words all I heard was the screaming and I'm running a contact, so I'm not worrying about one person. I'm trying to make sure I win, at a minimum cost to me, sorry minimum cost to the Australian army.

**What about your own nerves**

23:00 **what was the occasion you were most frightened in Vietnam?**

Probably two, the Scott contact, 'cause boy that was for real, just wondered when the noise was going to stop and I was going to find out what was going on.

23:30 And knowing that I'm going to have to make some pretty harsh decisions here, if it is big. Yeah, and I wasn't frightened out of my wits, but I was a bit scared. The other time was when I came in from the horseshoe because

24:00 bless the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], thought there was a group of Charley in Cao Lanh, and I got told to scuttle off from the horseshoe to Cao Lanh in which is a village very close to the task force perimeter and do it. So I duly did it and it was absolutely stupid exercise,

24:30 the whole operation, Charley could hear us coming across the plains, we were as subtle as a kick in the teeth, and we drove through Cao Lanh in daylight, I was thinking, "Who gave me these sort of orders?" Anyway, the day went by and it finished, but I had to harbour around that area just

25:00 to keep a eye on it, and the following morning, I got up, did a walk around my perimeter, and the sentry was asleep, and that really did worry me. That together with an operation later where as my first operation the soldiers

25:30 fired excellently. When there was a contact, they got a result our way and killed a lot of Vietnamese and probably wounded a few more. After that sentry incident, it's about month 10 of the units tour, and I knew my people were getting tired, you just don't

26:00 do those sort of things, you don't miss when you are at reasonably close range, sentries don't go to sleep on watch. So it made me a bit careful.

**What did you do, were you vicious in your response to the sentries?**

No not to the sentries, but I was to the platoon commanders.

26:30 I gave them one hell of a burst, maybe I should have gone around it the other way, and asked them what happened, but I said, "You realise the gravity of it?" And they said, "Yes, we do," I said, "What is it?" "You know, some guys didn't do their job," I said, "It's far more serious than that, you put our lives in danger."

27:00 And then I just let it carry on. Yeah I guess essentially you should lay a charge, if you do it by the book, but I wouldn't have known who to charge. I'd have to do a thorough investigation of every changeover in every platoon for the night, and I wasn't prepared to do that.

27:30 Just to be human.



**How did the physical conditions out in the field take their toll on you and the other men?**

Because I'm small, I carried the minimum that I possibly could, and I didn't probably again a bit selfish, I didn't share carrying the sig batteries,

28:00 but other than that I was fine. At thirty I found out you are not an old man, you are still a young man. One of the big advantages you've got with being the boss, is that you call the shots, you know where you are going, the soldiers around you don't necessarily, so you know, I'm not saying that I

28:30 think there were times when we'd better have a rest, but I've got my plan for the day, whereas these guys have got to react instantly. And I guess there was a bit of competitiveness in it, I thought, "Well Bourke, if you walked around Phuoc Tuy Province and out of it for nearly 12 months and you've survived, there's no way I'm gonna

29:00 let anyone down," and at 40, I still admire the man for what he did.

**What about the weather and the jungle?**

Yeah sure, wet season, let's say April or May through to I think it's around September, and then it really does rain, it pours

29:30 down, and I went out one day when I was in admin company, to I think it was the Firestone Trail and we were literally sleeping in mud. Then the dry comes when I had my turn as company commander, and it was dry, it really was, and importantly in that,

30:00 you must drink a lot of water, I forget how many litres it is that the medics say you should drink, so you've got to drink a lot of water. The big thing about the dry, as far as your personal hygiene is concerned, you stink, sometimes I really didn't want to live with myself, if only in recent life,

30:30 you got a clean set of greens and you could actually live with yourself again, nostril wise.

**Did you shave and wash in the jungle?**

When I say shave, it's a contested point as to whether people should shave every day, I think the army's policy is that you do,

31:00 so we all did; wash, probably on re-supply if you can just get up and go behind me, you'll find a green rag,

**Okay. We'll pretend we've seen it.**

Okay, that's your life's blood, you wash in it, it's your sweat rag, you come round and whatever, and that's your wash,

31:30 on re-supply you were always flown in fresh water for washing or water if you need it, or both. That's when you do get a decent wash; you can actually fill your whole pannikin up and soap yourself down.

**Having been a pogo yourself, you are now on the other hand, other foot, what problems did you have with the**

**supplies and what you were getting?**

Oh I was very loyal, I used to defend the pogos and say they did a good job, no we got resupplied. I don't know how other soldiers or other officers felt, but three were sort of three categories, there was the supplies inclusive of clothing and ammunition, we went through a tremendous amount of clothing and

32:30 you'd get that buck shooting, you know, throw away this set of greens, get another set of greens if they were torn. Then the second part of the supplies was the ammo, then your food and lastly your mail. I couldn't have cared less if I didn't get a thing to eat for three days, I couldn't shoot at anyone, so long as there was a letter from my wife.

33:00 Critical, and I think most people feel the same way for what's going on at home. Because by geez, along the way, I'd just like to put in an aside, it's not only us as soldiers; it's our families and particular or wives, the unsung heroes of

33:30 the world, they put up with separation, probably instances it's better where I am, where she is concerned I'm facing the threat, she doesn't know the treat and worries. And a funny story, and Helen will never forgive me for saying this, but we had to have some sort of welfare network in Brisbane

34:00 while we were overseas, and part of it fell to the padre, not everyone lived together, and we lived remote, when I say remote in a suburb, anyway, one day Helen saw the padre coming through the gate, and she took the kids, hid them under the bed, got under the bed with them until he had gone away. She thought she was going to get the invariable

34:30 telegram. So there, that's there for you.

**What did you do when you got R&R?**

Went home, one daughter could sort of recognise me, I think Kate was three when I went overseas to Vietnam, Phillipa thought, "Who was this monster come in to muck up my life?" 'Cause she'd hardly, I think she's about eight months old when I left.

35:00 What did we do, we spent some time at home, very fortunately Helen's parents lived on the north coast of New South Wales at Ballina, near Byron Bay, so we spent a couple of days with them, and tried to act normal, which is hard, but I wouldn't have had it any other way. I had two

35:30 specific aspects about my R&R, I would leave it as late as I possibly could, to about nine months and secondly, I really didn't want to go to Singapore or whatever, straight back home, and fortunately the government again had changed policy, I think in previous years

36:00 when the first units went over there, you weren't allowed home.

**A lot of officers who went home from Vietnam for a short R&R say it was a big mistake in a lot of ways, can you understand that point of view?**

Yes, sure, but I loved my wife too much.

**Was it more difficult coming back after that R&R for you?**

Yeah, in a way,

36:30 but I looked upon it as I'd near as damn done the whole tour, and yeah, I wanted to go and finish the job, I wanted at least one or two more operations, to say that I'd been a genuine rifle company commander.

**What about the shorter periods of leave, when you came back from leave, what did other officers do then?**

37:00 First up we were always given a slap up feed, it was great, we had clams and steaks you'd never seen, then you've got to clean up your mess, when I say, you know, just reconstruct, just can't think of the word I'm trying, sorry

37:30 you've got to recondition everything, from individual things to collective things. And that's a must, so people should never touch a company coming in, just wait at least one maybe two or three days. Then you get a lot of extra curricular tasks to do, like Saigon

38:00 guard or attached to an ARVN tour unit or something like that, that's not a good example. And I was always running out of section commanders, my corporals who really are the grass roots of the command system in the army, they were taken here there and everywhere. On my behalf it's okay to do the operation,

38:30 but it's a real bitch having to write the after action report. And they could get quite long, so that was the bureaucratic side. And when those things didn't prevail, just to have a rest in camp, you can't keep going, going for 12 months without decent breaks, I don't think.

39:00 The physicals one thing, but again to me it's the concentration and the mental reserves, and of course towards the end of the time, in camp you are briefed for the next operation. And that's that.

**What role did alcohol and drinking play in getting over the stresses of patrolling?**

Very little, because we

39:30 were allowed two cans of beer per man, per day, if people really wanted to find it they could, I think, I don't know, something sticks in my mind, when we went to parties when we got home, I think some of us might have got a bit boozy then, R in C [Rest in Country] on a formal basis,

40:00 down at the Badcoe Club at Vung Tau, people could really let fly if they wanted to, they could drink as much as they like, we naturally had a curfew, but you only got one R in C in 12 months, no, I don't think it was that bad.

## **Tape 10**

00:41 **Towards the end of your tour, after you had come back from your R&R, did you start to count down the days, how did you,**

Yes I did

**what's that like?**

- 01:00 I don't think I was as enthusiastic to go out on an op in the last thirty days than I was previously, at that stage as well there is a lot to be done in terms of wrapping up your own battalions personal stuff and having the advance party of the relief to arrive,
- 01:30 and to clean up your lines, to make sure that your barbed wire entanglements and your perimeter fence are in good condition. To make sure that the for man hoochie that the company had, each hoochie had four men in it, were decent for the people coming in,
- 02:00 a lot of celebrating, and let's be quite honest, because the pressure's off. I guess to a certain extent, still, are we winning or are we not, and you don't know. But I was firmly under the impression that in the year we'd made a big dent
- 02:30 in where the NVA and Mr Ho Chi Minh and General Diep were going, I don't know.
- And yet, in a war like Vietnam and especially the Australian situation in Phuoc Tuy there was no frontline, enemy everywhere, they move them around, how could you tell that you were winning?**
- You just make a judgement,
- 03:00 do you do it by the number of contacts and major battles that you've won, Americans like to be very statistical and they have what's called the body count, so I guess when they've reduced the NVA or the Viet Cong from 60,000, to 20,000, they could say they were winning. You never know.
- Where you ever**
- 03:30 **of the opinion that maybe this war would go on forever?**
- No, had a different perspective, for what everyone said, I believe we should have been there, because at that time we faced the first deal with Communism in Korea, we'd spent a lot of time in Malaya during the Malayan
- 04:00 emergency and confrontation and then, South Vietnam looked to be under threat. And it's of course, the old domino theory. I'd think the more aggressive of us looked at that and said, "Well, we could stay there as long as you like, but you aren't getting to Australia, when the
- 04:30 domino's fall over. " Hearing it subsequently, the Americans said that by 1969 they considered our task had been done, and fair enough if we wanted to go home. And I don't know how you feel, but under the ANZUS [Australia, New Zealand and United States] Treaty I think we've
- 05:00 done extraordinary well by America, I accept the Nixon doctrine that says basically if you are not prepared to help yourself we are not prepared to help you. Okay we go and help the Americans, let me tell you they helped us in East Timor, but not many people know it. So yeah, I rather looked on it that way.
- Same question in hindsight from where you are now, do you still feel the same way, was the**
- 05:30 **war worth it?**
- Thirty is not young, but I was not a strategic or diplomat or that sort of thing, and I can't appreciate it. The one thing I appreciate as I've kept on saying, for my selfish end,
- 06:00 I just wanted to see how I performed under fire. Because I've got PTSD and because I'm a TPI, I just bear no bitterness, you know, I could look at it one way and say, "Well, if that war hadn't happened, I wouldn't
- 06:30 have the PTSD, I wouldn't be a TPI, and I'd still be married and living with my wife. Albeit we are the greatest of friends now, but my conduct was something shocking. When I really hit PTSD.
- What was your reception like when you came home?**
- Good because we had a march
- 07:00 through Brisbane, I think if I had to do it again, as much as I wanted to get home to our new house in Canberra, I think that the battalion should have stayed together, in company groups, for about two or three days. I can remember distinctly getting off the grey ghost, that's the HMAS Sydney, at say eight o'clock in the
- 07:30 morning, marching through Brisbane at 10 o'clock, back to Enoggera barracks and three o'clock I'm off, no time to say goodbye to my soldiers, no time to meet some of the guys that I didn't meet, I know it would have been an unpopular decision, but I think people are starting to look, in a certain way that
- 08:00 may that is the way to go. That the unfortunate thing about the grey ghost is, you can't put groups of various ranks together, the admiral's on the top, then he's got his petty officers, then he's got his able seamen. So after having served together for a year, we had the sort of a few weeks off, when we
- 08:30 out of ops, we really didn't get to do much together as a company on a social basis. I don't know.

**Some veterans say of coming home, they were coming back to a country that didn't appreciate them,**

Most definitely,

**they can tell stories that have examples of that.**

Most definitely, unfortunately I've had to spend a lot of time in clinics

09:00 for depression, and the idea is horrendous, I think it applies more to the national servicemen, because his marble was grabbed out of a barrel, he had to give up his job, get scared out of his wits and then nobody appreciates him when he gets back because he's on his own.

09:30 Whereas with me, I was a regular soldier and I had a career to come back to. But I think what's changed now, is we are getting highly rewarded by the Australian public, any time I wear my medals, and I don't wear them often, I'm greeted with gratitude. Can't

10:00 ask any more that that.

**Is there an argument that that's slightly hypocritical to be grateful so long after the fact?**

No, I'll give it to you another way, time heals everything. But I must say, when it was bad, I never had paint thrown at me, like Colonel Priest did, or someone being drunk and pissing on me in a bar or

10:30 making rude comments, and I was equally fortunate that my whole family, both immediate and extended, were a protective influence for me. They were proud of what I'd done.

**All right we will have to leave aside your postal career for the moment and jump ahead to what you talked about a couple of times today is**

11:00 **this thing that is labelled PTSD, what for you was your experience of the reality of that?**

I'm going to tell you this in hindsight, because I didn't know, the occupational therapist with the, down in Cremorne, clinic that I went to,

11:30 said, PTSD in many cases doesn't show itself while you are working and you are active and you've got a job, lift that away and it starts to show out. Mine I think started after I'd lost my job, I'd been unemployed for a bit of time, and I started hitting the grog, I won't say I started hitting the grog badly,

12:00 I never did anything utterly stupid, but I started to drink a bit more. You get feelings of loneliness, you just want to be by yourself, and that's mad when you are in a nice family. And then it all starts to show out, and I guess I'd heard of the term, I thought, "That's just a digger's

12:30 disease, not going to affect me," and when I found out about it from a very good psychiatrist Dr Graham Altman, whom I mentioned before, I was very ashamed of myself, you know, here I'd been to war, been sort of decorated in a minor way, and 30

13:00 years on I can't handle it, and that's what happened.

**What elements of your experience in Vietnam are the focus for you do you think?**

I think the fear of the unknown, and the fear of the unknown could be pretty gruesome, particularly the hidden mines.

13:30 Also, to make sure that you made the right decisions at the right time, while admitting your mistakes, I suppose a mistakes okay if I can say, "I didn't kill any bastard killed." I don't know, but I can rationalise it with myself now, and say, "There is nothing wrong with me,

14:00 else I would never have got into the army, with the searching psychological tests that we had to do."

**Are there dreams that you've had?**

Yes, I've had nightmares, but luckily with medication, a lot of it's stopped. I haven't taken my wife into the bedroom and put my bayonet in her guts or anything like that.

14:30 **Were they the same recurring dreams or just?**

No, different situations, and absolute situations that you can never ever get into, you wake up and think, "Geez I'm glad I'm here, I thought I was gone." No I think for me the main one was depression,

15:00 and it really hit like a brick, and the cutting off of the feelings of warmth, and as I said to a guy, I met him up in Hornsby the other day, and I'd been in the clinic with him, he said, "You got any romantic feelings left Mike?" I said, "Yes I have, I've got

15:30 a lot of care for people but I still love my wife, but I can't express it."

**All right, we are coming to the end of the interview, so just a couple of more general**

**questions. How do you feel about war in general today?**

First thing, defence is a sovereign responsibility of a nation,

- 16:00 in this country as I understand it, there are two others, one is foreign affairs and the other is trade, and if you've got to defend yourself or follow a course which you believe is right, then ours is basically democracy. Then that's fine. On a more professional basis
- 16:30 I think I've seen three styles of war, the first is conventional warfare, which was the Second World War, I've seen counter-revolutionary warfare, which was in Korea and Vietnam, and now I'm seeing another type of war called terrorism.
- 17:00 I think I'm not sure that we are doing enough constructively about intelligence against terrorism, because as I said earlier, it's the root, now I'm the soldier, terrorism is unlikely to affect my life, than the chance is of yours and Chris's, so if we've got to go to war to combat it,
- 17:30 that's fine. So yeah, I have no troubles with war, if you really look at it Mike, we are starting on the back foot, we are always on the back foot, we suffer tremendous casualties initially like the First World War, Gallipoli being one, Second World War, no not a worry.

**Why have you decided to contribute to**

- 18:00 **this archive, what can people learn from compiling the stories of war's gone past?**

Oh you've answered the question yourself because it may be important for historians and yeah, you get it from the grass roots, you get it from a person who's been in

- 18:30 particular situations. As a regimental soldier I think I'm very experienced, and I'd just like to pass it on together with the fact, again a personal reason, I didn't think of it until the other day, one day, and I've never sat my family down and really talked about it, because they don't want to listen, God bless them.
- 19:00 I can get copies of this I can give it to them now or give it to them later when I kick the bucket, just so they know what their father did. Stuff ups as well as the good things.

**Any last stuff ups to get off your chest before we finish?**

No, it's been enjoyable,

**Well with that in mind and keeping this for a hundred years time**

- 19:30 **maybe some future grandchild of yours might be watching this or somebody else, is there anything else you might have to say to someone watching this in the future?**

Yeah, as I was particularly evasive about suicide, I just don't want to have said things that may have offended people, or may be taken out of context. If I've got to take the risk with that,

- 20:00 that's fine.

**Well I hope they won't take your words out of context. Thanks very much for talking to us today. It's been a pleasure.**

**INTERVIEW ENDS**