Australians at War Film Archive

Raymond Stuart (Ray) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:41 **Well good morning Ray.**

Hi. How are you?

Thank you for giving us your time today and for telling us your story. Can we begin today by asking before we do the interview proper can you just give us a summary of your service?

Sure. As far as I can recollect

01:00 at ’56 to ’59 attended Royal Military College Duntroon. Graduated ’59. Served 1960 and ’61 with the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment at Holsworthy. Then I went to Papua New Guinea where I served with the Pacific Islands Regiment 1961 to 1964. ’64 I was posted to Adelaide and joined the staff at headquarters on Keswick Barracks. When the Vietnam

01:30 War got a head of steam on I went up to Woodside in 1966 to join the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment. I went overseas with them late ’67 to late ’68, came home, was reposted to the infantry centre in New South Wales at Ingleburn where served for two years and then attended the Army Staff College at Queenscliff in Victoria. I went back to New Guinea in ’71

02:00 to ’73. Then reposted to Canberra where I served ’73 to ’75 and then to the Philippines where I attended the armed forces of the Philippines Commander General Staff College 1975–76. Returned to Canberra where I worked as director of army recruiting and in other jobs until 1981.

02:30 That was my military service when I resigned to join CSR [Colonial Sugar Refining Company], the sugar company, in Sydney. Okay.

And what did you do with CSR?

CSR employed me as a senior personnel officer with a focus on recruiting school leavers into the undergraduate education program and also meshing those school leavers through university programs and then meshing

03:00 the recruitment of new graduates from university. So I was virtually a graduate recruiter at that level for CSR. And my background in army recruiting helped me in that job.

And what about family life; any children along the way?

Oh yes. I was married in ‘61.

03:30 And my two daughters were born in ’64 and ’66 here in Adelaide while I was serving with Keswick Barracks and my first wife died in ’83. And my daughters still live in an adjoining property to here and I remarried last year and now have a step-

04:00 son and stepdaughter in their teens.

Fantastic. Thank you very much or that. We might just stop for a minute. Okay Ray. We’ll just pick up where we left off and I might just ask you, where were you born?

Penshurst. It is a suburb on the Illawarra line. It was in August ‘39.

04:30 **And where was your family home?**

My family home was in Oatley. My father worked on the travelling post office in New South Wales. My mother did home duties but was a remarkable woman. She ran a dress making shop in Market Street. Women didn’t handle that scope of enterprise in the early ’30s so spent my childhood an early teenage years in Oatley until I joined the army

05:00 at Duntroon. The family subsequently moved to Ingleburn in 1958 but my home as a child was mostly in Oatley.

What was the area like in Oatley as a child when you were there?

It was a very happy childhood. A nice little community. A lot of regular things were done in Oatley. The local salt water pool and the river was the

05:30 focus of kids in the area. Kids and dogs and typical Saturday afternoon at the movies. There was a very innocent sort of gang warfare at the time. The guys from Mortdale were the bad guys and they would conduct raids into Oatley and mammoth rock fights at various battle grounds in the bush round there. Very happy childhood. Happy family

06:00 but it was centred in the summer on swimming. I can't remember what went on in the winter but it was a very nice little community. Always a pleasure to go back there in fact. I went back there just recently and it is amazing when yo go back to your childhood haunts just how much it shrunk. The Georges River was a mighty river at that time. Now it is a little thing you can almost jump over.

06:30 A very happy childhood.

So was the suburb open paddocks or?

No. It was a very early settled suburb or Sydney so we are talking open paddocks and new houses from memory. And it has adopted a new character now of course. It has a lot of town houses which has cut down on the character of the place.

07:00 But the little pockets around the foreshore are very much as they were then I was there. So it was an older suburb and very scenic. It had aspects and misters across the Gorges River. Very pleasant spot.

And those tousles between the boy gangs that you mentioned. What were those fights about?

Jus tribal warfare I think. There was

07:30 no catalyst to it and apart from a tribal warfare between the Mortdalites an the Oatleyites there was internal feuding of course. Your mates would take a set against another group of guys and you'd have it out and one place that was suitable for having it out was an old disused railway cutting where the train went.

08:00 It had two sides that were a convenient stone's throw [close by] so the two sides would line up on each side and have it out, you know. And it could get reasonably serious. Someone much get hit with a rock behind the ear and carried off bleeding so they were all ingredients of the warfare. You know. But I think it just banished from the scene when people got into some sort of

08:30 advanced technology. Someone bought an air gun and that had the capacity to really hurt yo so maybe parents had a say from then on. I don't think it exists. I would be surprised if it exists in early teenagers now but it was just a feature of the '50s. I'm not saying that every day you woke up and went and had a rock fight but it was a feature of life in those days. Fishing. I was a very keen fisherman and I

09:00 used to fish a hell of a lot on the Georges river. It involved getting up in the very early morning and going down with my dog and huddled up to him sharing his flees while I was on the river and coming home very proud of my catch and having my mother cook my catch and all that sort of thing. So a very normal childhood.

And what sort of father was your father? What sort of man was he?

09:30 He was a country boy originally from West Wyalong in Western New South Wales. He was a very gentleman but a very strong man. He served in the RAAF during the war and died at 90 about five years ago with his mental faculties still very intact. Very rarely raised his voice. He was only physical

10:00 to me once. I swore at my mother for some crime. I think she was spending too much money on herself and not on me or something like that and I swore at her and he lifted me across the room. He gave me a back-hander which put me across the wall and he just said, "Don't swear at your mother again, son." And that was the nature of the ban and I never swore at my mother again. He

10:30 was a man with very poor education but a great sort of an inner strength. I remember going to Duntroon and the family taking me to Central Station as a dewy eyed sixteen year old and my father's very last words as I got onto the train were, "Don't let them bluff you man." That was the nature of the man. Very, very dry

11:00 sense of humour. A very dry man. For instance he was an icon of the local RSL [Returned and Services League] and when he was in his 80s a young fellow came up to him and asked, "How old are you Bill anyway?" And he said, "I don't really know. My birth records were destroyed in the great fire of London." This guy went, "Oh what a terrible pity." "What was that?" Fifteen hundreds or sixteen hundreds or something like that.

11:30 Very, very dry man. Very gentle man and a good fall for my mother. My mother was a lot more (UNCLEAR) than me.

And who meted out the discipline?

I don't think there was any need. Admittedly I left the family at the age of sixteen to go into the army so they didn't experience me as a teenager

12:00 so to speak and if they had there might have been another system but apart from my father lifting me across the room for swearing at my mother I can't remember any disciplinary ambience in the house. I think it was a very civilised sort of existence. I had a younger brother, or have a younger brother, five years younger to me and we

12:30 used to get involved in brotherly fights and that sort of thing but not involving family discipline. That was between the two of us, so to speak. So no nothing looms out from my childhood from the discipline side where my mother or father had to take me under control.

And where did you go to school?

Sydney Boys High School. I went there until fifty-five.

13:00 I travelled from Oatley to high daily. It was interesting. Ten or fifteen minutes walk to the station at Oatley. Thirty minutes by train to Central you flirted with the girls from St George Girls and whoever got on that train on the way in and then you caught the tram from Sydney to Moore Park where Sydney Boys High School was.

13:30 An interesting feature of that was you could also walk from central if you organised yourself properly. You could walk through Surry Hills up to Moore Park and then do the same coming back and that could save you your tram fare which you could spend on a Horehound beer at Central Station. There was this little Horehound beer store there and it was non-alcoholic but nevertheless it was the mark of a man.

14:00 It looked good for a fifteen year old to have a Horehound beer on the way home. So Sydney High for five years. '51 to '55.

And how did you get on at school?

Quite well. I think I blossomed early and faded. I was dux of my local primary school at Oatley and then won a number of prizes

14:30 in my first year at Sydney High and in particular languages were my forte and then I think I had an undistinguished academic record at high until my leaving certificate which I had to pass to get into the army and my leaving certificate was undistinguished. I was lousy at physics and maths which were prerequisites. I scraped through in both those subjects to get to Duntroon so I

15:00 blossomed early and I probably got distracted by girls and other teenage distractions. So I was not a brilliant academic student. I probably burned myself out early.

Well it probably is interesting to hear about your blossoming into your teenage years in the 'fifties…'51 to '55. Can you paint us a picture of what those years were

15:30 **like?**

'50 to '55. Apart from the things I mentioned. Naturally drugs weren't in existence apart from the influences of alcohol. I must have been drinking under age at some stage

16:00 there. I can remember myself another bloke trying to seduce two young girls and using a bottle of sweet sherry, which we understood would have the desired effect. It did. They were a complete wake up to us. But that was one thing. There were no drugs to destruct us. Social activities…Apart from the swimming and

16:30 that then translated as you got a bit older to the surf and going to Cronulla and I was on the track between Oatley and Cronulla for some time because that was a great mecca. That was where you would meet with a lot of people and we would all have a surf. There were dances and that was a feature which seems to have disappeared now. But Rockdale Town Hall was a Tuesday night

17:00 dance. There was the Regent at Hurstville. School dances to mark the Head of the River Regatta finalisation and all that sort of thing.

And those dances, for example at Rockdale Town Hall, what sort of music would be played?

They'd play pop tunes of the day and then they would get into these traditional things like the barn dance,

17:30 where you would rotate in a circle and change partners. Jazz waltzes and that sort of thing. And they had a tradition at Rockdale town hall that they would turn the lights down during the jazz waltz and that's where you would make your move to for someone you wanted to take home in an innocent sense and the smooth performers would get a girl to take home there. And others

18:00 would lose out. There was no heavy sort of music. I suppose the heaviest we would experience is the band would do Woody Herman's Golden Wedding which was a jazz peace that had this incredibly high

note from the band. So that was one

18:30 of the features at that time and then rock and roll. So that was sort of pre rock and roll. 'Rock and Roll' came in in 1955 from memory so I suppose the dances got a bit more active from that time. So there were dances. Not a great deal of mobility. None of us had cars.

19:00 At that stage cars were normally something you acquired in your twenties. And what else? And girls of course. That was something you developed an interest in. And girls was going to the movies, holding hands, and having a pash so to speak at home. I had a teenage girl friend in

19:30 Oatley. But not a great deal of promiscuity and that but teenage friendships so to speak. Reading. I think there was a fair amount of reading and of course at least in the early teens so no TV [television]. So that traditional memory of listening to the radio.

20:00 We heard the great tennis stars. Hoad and Rosewell defeated the Americans. It is hard to get hour head around it but you were actually glued to the radio to listen to sport. Does that give a general feeling?

And did you surf yourself?

Yes I did. Not to any great expertise. I didn't have a board. I body surfed and

20:30 I wasn't particularly good at that. South Cronulla was a bit tame but North Cronulla was where most of the body surfers went and Bondi Beach further up was where most of the board men went. So you did a bit of surfing but I would never qualify myself as a professional surfer. It was just what you did at that time. You strutted your stuff of course. You developed a

21:00 magnificent sunburn, well suntan and kept your eyes on the girls.

So you did have an attachment or a liking for the surf culture?

Oh not really. It just became a more exciting place to go in your late teens when the local swimming hole stayed at a ten-year-old, twelve thirteen year old

21:30 background but the surf was where the action was. There were dances at Cronulla on a Saturday night and that sort of thing. So it was just a progression of that love of outdoor activity and that sort of thing.

And would you have called yourself a bit of a rebel?

No. Not really. A bit of a dreamer more than anything else. I think the army saved me in that regard. You know.

22:00 In my last year at school I don't think I had any real idea what I wanted to do with myself and it wasn't really important in those days. The employment situation was just really healthy. You could take your pick of what you wanted to do and Sydney High in particular produced a lot of Duntroon cadets and a lot of people went on to medicine and law as well.

22:30 There is almost a kind of triumvirate from that school. So the gifted academically could just decide where they wanted to go. So in my case I had no firm idea. I think broadly speaking I said I would become a teacher. That will do. And so there was no rebel in me. I can develop that a little bit. I think there is more rebel in me now than there was then.

23:00 And my father just came up to me in my last year of school and said, "What are you going to do when you leave school?" And I had no real idea. I had been in the school cadets and he said, "Here's an advertisement for Duntroon. I can't afford to give you a good education through university but this is a way you could get a good education and you have been through the cadets." So I drifted into the army on a very casual basis. But to get back to your question I wouldn't

23:30 define myself as a rebel in any way at that time. I was more conservative and a very shy boy at that time.

And you've mentioned the girls. How shy were you around girls?

Oh, reasonably, married. A virgin till I married so I was physically shy which wasn't unusual in those days but you had a

24:00 distinct split between boys who went around as lovers and always boasting their physical conquests and the others who doubted what was actually achieved. And the others who lived within that ambience where it wasn't a particularly promiscuous society at that time.

And during your high school did you have any particular pocket money of your own?

24:30 I honestly can't remember. It is an interesting point because in my marriage now my stepson and stepdaughter have a fair amount of pocket money and they need it to keep up with their social lives. And I can't remember how much but I had enough pocket money to catch a train hither and yon and to have something to eat in my travels but

25:00 my family weren't very affluent at all so I doubt if I got any pocket money at all. It is just a blank so I

don’t know what happened there.

Well I was just wondering before you went to Duntroon whether you had any jobs through school or whatever?

Well I worked….My father was in the travelling post office in the days when the mail

25:30 was picked up at central and travelled by mail van to various runs in New South Wales. It was sorted in a van and dropped off at stations and the incoming was picked up. So he had a background in post offices and through that he got me a job at the local Mortdale post office, in the enemy territory with all those bad guys. So I worked there as a post boy and it was picking up the mail and riding around

26:00 on your little bike delivering mail. And the nice ladies would come out and say, “Anything for me, postie?” Idling up and down having not seen a young boy for a time. I also had a job as a mail officer in central which is that lovely old sandstone building near Central Railway Station. So sorting mail at various levels. And one of the things I remember

26:30 about that is that I think the mail might have come in at a higher storey and there were shoots coming down for parcels and they slid like a slippery slide down to say country New South Wales or overseas. And one of your stupid teenage tricks if you got a fruitcake in a tin you could hurl it down the chute hoping it would slice off the fingers

27:00 of someone about three storeys down so I worked there and a lot of my memories there…you took your lunch and went and sat on the roof there and looked out over Railway Square in Sydney. Yes, the post office. But that was short lived bearing in mind that the army came at sixteen so my teenage was cut at sixteen before army.

27:30 So realistically my availability to work was only as a fourteen year old or fifteen year old before the army.

And you mentioned your own father had some service. What did he tell you about his?

He was an amazing man. He had a notebook that he kept until he died and he could recall his war service weekly.

28:00 Broadly he enlisted in Sydney in about 1942 into the air force. Came over here. He was actually stationed not too far from here at a place called Sandy Creek as a transport driver. He went up to the Northern Territory and then one of his bosses from the travelling post office

28:30 met him there and asked him to remuster. Changed trades and he became a postal sergeant and went over to join in the invasion of Borneo. He went ashore after all the fighting had died down with his little postal unit and worked on Borneo as a postal sergeant and then at the conclusion

29:00 of the war in 1945. And then to cut a long story short someone said, “Can you move tomorrow.” He jumped on a Catalina flying boat in his shorts and little else and came home via Darwin and Queensland. Landed at Rose Bay, had a beer at the Bat and Ball and went back home. But he has documented that in a lovely way and he can remember what he was doing weekly…and

29:30 so a very self-effacing men. He was a sergeant but he liked to conceal that. He liked to be with the fellows more than with the sergeants. But he didn’t dwell on that war service as an old man. He wasn’t a reunion man but at the end of his life when I realised he had

30:00 some three or four years left in him I would visit from South Australia and we would talk a lot. He would talk about he was service and I would have heard the stories hundreds of times. That’s what we did and I would thrown in some of my experiences. And that was the highlight of his

30:30 kind of manly experience and he never stopped talking about it. I’m a bit the same. I bore people with my experiences as well.

It is great that you got a chance to talk to him?

Yeah. That was a very treasured time to talk in those penultimate years.

And as a young fifteen-year-old going on sixteen how influential was your father in your decision to apply

31:00 **to go to Duntroon?**

It was a very causal sort of arrangement. Well he obviously picked up on my interest in cadets at school. I had become a cadet (UNCLEAR) officer. A man of power as a sixteen year old so to speak. He probably picked up on that.

And before we go on had you joined the school

31:30 **Cadets of your own volition?**

Yes. It was just one of your options, you know. I wasn’t a great sportsman. I played football for the school in an imperfect way. I was a very good target shooter and I joined the cadets and from the cadets

went into the cadet rifle team. It was just one of the things that you did. It didn't have any

32:00 …it was a fairly innocent occupation compared to the school cadets of these times. It didn't have a focus of not concentrating on warlike things but in hose days you were firing weapons and being instructed by regular army men just back from Korea. It was

32:30 a militaristic sort of thing that was quite acceptable in the ambience of those times. So yes. So that was I think just one of the options. There was no pressure like my parents saying you must join the cadets or anything like that. It was just something that was a nice thing to do at the time. And you had a couple of masters at the time who were your cadet masters so to speak. It should have turned you off the army.

33:00 You went to camps at Singleton which were quite barbaric in their Spartan nature. You slept on small palliasses and ate fairly disgusting food at the time but I think there was something about it that appealed to me. There was no pressure to join the army but I think there was a predisposition to or a fondness for that sort of life.

33:30 **Well how did you go about applying for Duntroon?**

I think at that time my father said, "Here's the application form." Whether it was in the newspaper and he got it for me. And you applied on paper. There then followed a selection board. They must have done

34:00 some preliminary check on you that you were doing the right subjects and then they would interview you and accept you subject to you passing the New South Wales leaving certificate. I guess it would have been sometime latish in 1955 when I was invited, along with other applicants, to attend a selection board at Randwick and there they put you though…

34:30 There was a panel of about five people. They put you through various written intelligence tests. I can't remember these but they put you through some initiative tests. They had a series of concrete stepping stones out in the paddock at Randwick and that represented the crocodile infested river and you had two planks of wood and you had to get you and your body…There might have been ten guys being interviewed. You had to get you and

35:00 your ten guys across the river using this riddle arrangement of boards and they stepped back and watched who would take the initiative and they also had a large wall and they had a forty-four gallon drum and the I think the sentry patrolled the wall every ten minutes and your mission was to get the drum over the wall before the sentry arrived. And then

35:30 they put you in some sort of social environment. We had lunch together and I think they might have been working out whether you could peel an orange and there must have been a psychological tests and some physical and mental tests and then you were advised that subject to passing the leaving certificate you were in. I can't remember that exact point but I had the exciting news in the mail that I had passed my leaving certificate and off to Duntroon in January

36:00 1956. Yes. So I can't remember filling out the application form but I was at Duntroon for a reunion about five years ago and they allowed us to go into the archives there. It was interesting to see the parental consent form that my father signed and it virtually released you…

36:30 You know, you passed over your son as a sixteen year old… I forget the words but it was quite a quaint document. You 'release' your son to the army. And you took an oath of allegiance in those days to the Queen and all her allies so you were totally committed and your parents had to release you to that commitment.

37:00 **That is interesting because you were still a minor.**

I don't know what the legalities were then but you took an oath of allegiance to the Queen and all her enemies so to speak before you went in. There was no written engagement. There was a gentleman's agreement that you served for life. That was just the ambience. It caused all sorts

37:30 of trouble later on with people who realised that the army didn't love them and they didn't love the army but we weren't. I'm not sure what exists at the moment, whether officers were signed on for a particular term but it was a lifetime career at that stage. But when you think about it it had knobs on it. You are asking a sixteen year old to commit to a lifetime of service. But that wasn't the issue. It was just

38:00 what it was. The realities of the time.

So you didn't sign on for a four-year cadet ship. It was just a lifetime.

Yeah. There was some provision. I think if you didn't like it in your first six weeks you could get out but you didn't sign on for a specific term. Where as the enlisted men or other ranks would sign on for a three to six year period of engagement. I'm not quite sure what they do now but

38:30 the officer body through Duntroon it was on the expectation that you were wishing to make a lifetime career of the army. And I think if you did get out for any reason during your Duntroon time you had to repay some sort of bonding arrangement. There was never any undertaking

39:00 that you would serve x years. It was just that general agreement. It sounds quite amazing now but that's

the way it worked.

It does sound amazing. Our tape has just come to an end so we will just swap it.

Tape 2

00:30 **So Ray. Just setting off for Duntroon. Did you have any farewells before you left?**

No. Not that I can think of. I farewelled my girlfriend at the time over the back fence I think. But there was no special thing to mark my departure. My family drove me to central station in a little Vauxhall car they had

01:00 and then my father said, “Not to let them bluff you son.” My mother cried all the way home losing her son and her grief was compounded by my young brother who had the same room as me and he said, “When can we move his bed out.” So that was his sole interest but my mother was sure I would be home in a week. She didn’t know how I would handle the army because I rarely

01:30 made my bed and rarely cleaned my shoes so she was grief stricken that I was losing my son and she said in later years that I realised than that you would only be a visitor to the home and she half jokingly said, “He’ll be back. They’ll wake up to him.” So there was no big all singing and dancing farewell. I got on the train, off…

02:00 **And did you travel by yourself or were there others?**

I don’t remember others. I think that’s because I stuffed up. I arrived a day early when I got to Duntroon. Had I gone on the appointed time…I must have misread the instructions. So no. There was no one on that train.

And you mentioned that your mother was worried

02:30 **because you never made your bed and didn’t clean your shoes and all of that.**

Yeah. But I think that was just a normal teenager. You had to cope with making your bed and getting dressed on time and ready for work. I had only had that short experience with the post office but I had no work ethic at the time. Apart from exposure to the school cadets and realising

03:00 what sort of discipline might be involved. But I think it was just a genuine motherly concern. My mother went on like that right until older years. You know, her son, as far as she was concern should have always stayed home. That was her attitude.

Well how did you cope when you first got to Duntroon and you had to look after yourself?

Oh I don’t think…It was more a concern of my

03:30 mother than a concern of mine. Duntroon was very much from the frying pan into the fire sort of thing. To go as a sixteen year old into a highly disciplined environment so anyone who went there had difficulty coping with the sheer mechanics of army life. You arrived and

04:00 you had this whole kit and caboodle dumped on you. Your clothing and virtually the next day you had to appear in some semblance of order in the allocated equipment for what we were going to do. Everybody was the same and I think as a truism anybody who had

04:30 been in the school cadets at that time had an edge because you were at least familiar with certain trappings of military uniforms and military equipment. You had handled a rifle before. Having been in the school cadets was a definite advantage. The other thing abut advantage that sticks in your core is the New Zealanders, their cadets arrived

05:00 before us and this was a tremendous advantage. You arrived and were inundated with your equipment and these New Zealanders were there and organised and they seemed to have been there for years. You know. It was one of those little comparisons which were rather obvious at the time. No, everybody had that same requirement to get on the ball very quickly and

05:30 have a very strict routine.

And where were you accommodated?

You each had an individual room and the college was organised on a four-company structure from memory. So I went to Alamein Company. Each company was named after a famous battle with which the Australian Army was associated. So you were allocated a room within your company and

06:00 you were a junior member of a section. I think the section might have been about nine or so cadets or different classes. You had a couple in first year, second, year, third year, fourth year and in fact it went in reverse order. The fourth year were first class and you were lowly fourth class.

06:30 It was set up on that structure and you had a senior class men as your kind of section leaders and we merged into platoons and it was a company structure so during parades that's how you appeared as…in that company on parade. And so that was the formal

07:00 structure and you also had a grand father, father structure. In other words the cadet with a regimental number one hundred below you was your regimental father and the guy with the number two hundred before you

07:30 was your regimental grandfather and they supposedly were tasked informally to look after your social welfare and your progress through the college. If you were having trouble settling down on some issue you could go and speak to your regimental father or your regimental grandfather and the cadets who performed those functions did it either perfectly

08:00 of imperfectly. Some weren't interested in their responsibility and some were. In practical terms your regimental grandfather had to organise your first blind date. You weren't let loose into Canberra society until you had finished six weeks of the training. You were locked up. I'm not sure whether it was six weeks but a period of time.

08:30 Then they had your baptism by fire, called the fourth class tennis party. There was a tennis party and young girls would come out by bus I think and your regimental grandfather organised your first blind date and that was useful. So you had that informal structure as well as your formal structure. Accommodated in a single room within

09:00 the complex and I think the company might have been…I can't remember the actual figures but I think it might have been four hundred cadets. Our class went in with about eighty and four times eighty is about three hundred and twenty cadets split into four companies and you lived in that room for the rest of your four years. Apart from you would

09:30 at some stage later in an accommodation restructure move to some other room within the college but I stayed in that company for four years and in a single room somewhere in Duntroon. I changed my room once during that time for some administrative reason. I forget what.

It is very interesting to read about the regimental grandfather and regimental father system.

10:00 **What was the point in having a grandfather and a father?**

I'm not quite sure. I suppose logically because the regimental grandfather is more progressed through the system. For instance my regimental grandfather was three years ahead of me through the system. My regimental father was one year ahead of me. So

10:30 the grandfather was a bit more savvy with the bigger picture and he might be one person you could go and discuss jobs after graduation because he was thinking of his graduation he would be better placed to talk about what he might think of going into the infantry or whatever.

11:00 The organisation, you could probably ask that question of Duntroon these days. Why was there…I guess there was a more formal answer but I guess that is logically so to give you a perspective on the two different levels in the college because after all your father is only ahead of you so you could relate in

11:30 terms that with your rights of passage you weren't really an independent operator until you were in your senior class so I think that touches on one of the reasons. Just a gradated support system within the college and as I say some people handled It very well. My regimental father handled it better than my regimental grandfather who I didn't see much of. He was occupied by a number of things. And it was by no means a thing where you had regular access. It was just set up

12:00 **How much did they make themselves available?**

Not much. Not much. I can't remember much contact with either of them and that's the nature of the beast. I think it wasn't until very much later in my career that I saw the advantage of going to people for advice. I have always been bit of a sole operator

12:30 in that regard until later in my career. So I was a reasonably independent self-contained sort of a guy. I can't recall ever having a need to go and see my regimental father or my regimental grandfather as opposed to seeking communication with some of my classmates.

13:00 It wasn't an absolutely necessary facet of my life at Duntroon.

And the rights of passage that you are talking about? What are the sorts of rights of passage that you went through?

Well we went through an introduction in that initiation was a feature. It has always been a feature of my life at Duntroon.

13:30 Very significant ups and downs. And at its most innocent it was just harmless boarding school type initiations into…In its worst stage in the hands of someone who was a bit sadistic it could have unpleasant

14:00 characteristics. As I recall in 1956 we had an episode where it resulted in bastardisation being banned. It had some unpleasant implications at that time and as a result my class had a little bit of a disadvantage in that it was seen by the other classes as not having gone through my rights of passage.

14:30 Although some of those initiation ceremonies. So we weren't exposed full bliss to those sorts of initiation ceremonies. They did exist as a junior class man…You went through things that were on reflection harmless but annoying and unnecessary at the time. Maybe eating a banana with Worcestershire sauce and ice cream or something like

15:00 that. Or you sat on a table in the mess where there were eight cadets on a table, two from each class, two seniors and two down and for sweets there would be a tray of ice-cream and trifle and the senior class could have as much

15:30 trifle as they liked and it got down to…And it depended who was managing the table and what kind of attitude they had. The junior class could have as much as he could fit on the four matchsticks of the ice cream. All terrible nonsense. I don't think it ever hurt anybody but it was little more than what we call bastardisation or

16:00 …And there were things which were deemed to be useful. In other words before you could eat you had to brief the senior clansman on the news of the day. You would have a radio in your room and before you had breakfast you had to be up to date so you could brief the senior man. There were various conventions where the back of a chair was defined as a

16:30 place where the fourth class cadet would sit inches from them parallel to and it rotated things and it went to the stage that it was to stop the senior class man falling over, you know. You always had to sit correctly and so all these little funny things would go on. There were some routines

17:00 and…One I seem to remember is that the senior class member would ask you, "How's the cow, fourth-class-man." And 'how's the cow?' meant 'how much milk is in the jug?'. You had to reply with this kind of code of 'she walks, she talks, the female of the bovine species is prolific to the sixth degree' and that was

17:30 saying there was some milk left. You had to perform in these things. Humorous in the main, annoying in other senses, but it could get…could verge on rather sadistic in the hands of a bully or something like that. But as I said we didn't have a…My class because it was

18:00 …it had fallen from favour at that time, was possibly deemed as not having gone through the proper rights of passage. I'm repeating a perspective of a classmate of mine who put it to me in that way. It didn't affect me in any great sense. I wasn't exposed to any bullying as such.

18:30 It was just funny or annoying disciplinary measures. Deprivation of ice cream.

Very harsh. Was there a particular incident that prevented your class from?

I can't remember the particular details but I think a Western Australian cadet had joined and he took

19:00 exception to the way he was being treated in the first week and he went home and I think the question was then it would be documented and my memories vague and it was then raised in government or high levels in West Australia what they were up to.

19:30 This lad has been unfairly treated and as a result I think the commandant at the time ceased bastardisation as it was commonly called so it had been a feature of Duntroon life for years where you went through an initiation ceremony before you were deemed acceptable sort of a fellow and

20:00 in the history of Duntroon there had been cyclical exposures of the bastardisation process over the years with some very significant results but I think in '56 it was based on a West Australian cadet not liking the system and going out of the system and then it being exploded

20:30 in the press or whatever in Western Australia and it came back in the army. Mind you as a young cadet in the system that was my understanding at the time.

Yeah. You were young. But I'm wondering whether you can recall understanding as a young sixteen year old that bastardisation was to weed out.

21:00 No. I don't think there was a weeding out in it. It probably more accurately would be based on the army's desire do reduce people to a common factor, which correctly employed had been a strength of armies over the ages.

21:30 Armies are trying to get a disciplined unit operating and sometimes they have to knock down a bit and then build up from there so there was an element in that. I don't think it would…Well it certainly was not officially sanctioned as a weeding out process but when

22:00 it comes down to it bastardisation was not necessary at all. I mean you could barely argue that it made a better man of you. I mean you could eat a banana with Worcestershire sauce and quote some of these 'how prolific the cow is' but it didn't make you a better man. And I wonder would the Israeli army have some

22:30 system like that but it is an army that performs admirably. It was just the culture that developed in military colleges. It was called ‘hazing’ at West Point and I think it was more to reduce you to a common factor and build you from there rather than to say we’ll see

23:00 what his breaking point is because I think that would have been terribly, terribly wrong and when I say bastardisation was in the main harmless and useless sort of stuff that could be performed within your more formal training.

23:30 It was just a feature. Almost a boarding school feature of life in the military college. That’s my perspective.

Well given that example of comparing it to boarding school were you homesick in those early days?

No. Nothing compared with say Vietnam service where you are missing your family and that sort of thing.

24:00 I think you are too busy to be homesick. You are always glad to get home on leave but you didn’t feel that isolated and you were surrounded by your classmates and once you got finished with your initial training you were surrounded by your social life in Canberra. There were lots of things going on socially and you

24:30 had a girlfriend in Sydney and you would bring her down for balls and dances and things like that. Surprisingly because I was a homebody right from that time up until the time of joining the army but as I said an independent operator too. I had a happy home life but homesickness wasn’t

25:00 to be compared with say later on in the…

And who were your teachers at Duntroon?

You had a…in the ’50s Duntroon took you through to basically second year university level. You went into an arts, science or engineering stream dependent on your leaving certificate. And the arts course

25:30 would take you through some graduation with some credits towards arts type subjects and you went into some less technical sides of the army, infantry, arms, artillery…The science and engineering people would go on and finish their degree at the institute of technology appropriate at the time. So you had a

26:00 professorial academic staff teaching you according to your civil subjects. In arts there would be economical history, political history, Australian New Zealand history, literature and the like, general mathematics and then science and engineering had their science engineering things. I was an arts graduate and so you have those academic

26:30 staff headed by the top professor so to speak. The head of academic studies or whatever and then you had a….

I’ll just interrupt and ask you while you are there. Was that streaming into the arts based on your school subjects?

Yeah. It was based on your school subjects basically.

So you didn’t get a choice of streaming?

Not that I can recollect. I think they just said, arts, you,

27:00 science, you, engineering, you. Later on when you got to your final year and then you got to chose which corps you wanted to go to then you could state your preference but the big streaming works were, “Needs of the service are paramount.” So you could elect to go to infantry but they might say, “No we are short on artillery this year so you go to artillery.” So

27:30 no I think it was just based on your achievement in the leaving certificate. I mean your army instructors were generals down to captains. Significant at the time is that most of my instructors were Korean War veterans, you know. It was the late ’50s and the Korean War had finished in ’54 and ’55 so there

28:00 were a number of Korean War and then Second World War veterans at the high ranks. The major and colonel ranks of the college. The commandant at the time had been a prisoner of war on Crete I think so he was a Second World War soldier. And of course you…Interesting talking about perspectives of sixteen year olds. They were all very old men and the reality is they were in their

28:30 forties. And when you are now a forty year old you realise what a funny attitude these guys had when they think you are old. Yeah. And so you had officer instructors and then you had at a lower level a band of warrant officers, non commissioned officers, instructors in infantry, minor tactics, weapons training, vehicle training, how to

29:00 drive vehicles, basic engineering and they were some of the most influential men on a young man because they were arguably closer to you than was the officer. And some of those guys are indelible in your memory. So you had the academics who were

29:30 influential to a degree but not as colourful as your military instructors but the emphasis was on your becoming a military leader so that's where your kind of main focus was as opposed to say the college which went on to reach a state in the '70s where that ratio was reversed where you did one year and about a quarter of your time was military and the rest, three years

30:00 were devoted to gaining a degrees. Which meant it became a degree granting institution in the '70s. It reversed over the years but in the '50s it was a very military orientation and of course as it always has been in terms of the split of academic and military studies there was more military than civil bearing.

30:30 Mind you of course the science and engineering graduates did go to university afterwards.

And those military instructors that you had. You mentioned that they did leave an impression on you. What can you remember of that impression?

Very hard men. Professionally. Didn't let you get away with anything.

31:00 Very colourful people. They were obviously in the college because of their own proven leadership abilities. Two outstanding characteristics. Not a great deal of humour in them. It was always a sort of grim faced tight lip stuff but already

31:30 creeping in to the system was the fact that the army does have a very well developed sense of humour in it which is in the nature of anybody deal into with adversely tough conditions. Humour in adversity is a big feature. They were just very professional people. People who

32:00 commanded battalions in action in Korea. People who served in the Second World War. One thing they didn't do particularly well is in the military history element of Duntroon; you dealt with things like the Shenandoah Valley Campaign in the American Civil War

32:30 as well as World War I campaigns in Palestine and Slim's campaign in Burma but you were surrounded by your instructors who had significant combat experience in Korea as well as in the Second World War. They didn't seem to speak about it. There was, for instance one of the directors of military art at the time

33:00 Colonel Frank Hassett. He commanded a famous battle in Korea which lives as one of the most professionally conducted battles ever fought by Australians against incredible odds. It wasn't on the syllabus and yet the man who commanded the battalion was there. In retrospect we thought that was a bit odd. There was such a wealth of

33:30 experience but you are studying what the confederates did to the union forces in the Shenandoah Valley and you heard nothing about…You were surrounded by these guys who had the brilliant experience bearing in mind that it was only five years before your entry into the college and the pacific war was only eleven years old or young

34:00 and how you come to speak of it and I think it might have been just an ingrained sort of approach to some of the military studies and an inherent reserve to grandstand performance. That was the picture of those times that the system said no we don't want them talking about their recent wartime experience because that would lead to

34:30 grandstanding going on but it….Over time and even now those veterans will go and talk to young soldiers in recruit training about those experiences in those battles but they weren't allowed to do it at Duntroon. So they were very professionally experienced people who dealt more with

35:00 subjects not within their own timeframe so to speak. It was an interesting comment.

It is very interesting. It was like it was too close.

Yeah. Too close. And maybe whoever was running the syllabus wasn't enlightened enough at the time to say, let's harness this experience while it is here. Or perhaps it hadn't been properly documented and analysed and able to be

35:30 presented in a textbook or in lecture type material. But an interesting comment. It was only come to light and discussions after the event, forty years after Duntroon we were speaking to some classmates of mine and getting their experiences.

And so you didn't even talk to them about their recent battle experiences?

Oh you might have. Just

36:00 in a very social informal sense and it wasn't part of your syllabus so to speak and you weren't really close enough to them to talk about their battle experiences. Particularly on a…You know, on behavioural characteristics. You didn't get on to the psychology of warfare or anything like that. They were there to teach you the craft of warfare and they did that in a very formal sense.

36:30 There is a general reluctance in the Australian soldiers to 'spin waries'…Sure you'll do it at an army reunion but someone getting up there and saying, "Yeah, I was there and I did this." That would be seen

in a certain context as spin. In the vernacular ‘spinning a warie’ [telling an often exaggerated war story]. As opposed to being quite formal in presenting your subject.

37:00 **Yeah. That is very interesting. So the end of your graduation then…This was a three-year cadetship?**

Four years. ’56 to ’59.

Four years sorry.

I graduated in December ’59.

And what sort of passing out or graduation ceremony did you have?

37:30 We had a formal parade where you marched around the parade ground and at the end of it you were presented with your graduation certificates by…it might have been Menzies at the time, the Prime Minister at the time. The Prime Minister at the time or some dignitary to that extent. You spoke about me being a rebel –

38:00 an interesting commend on my graduation, when you lined up on parade they called you forth individually to receive your graduation certificate and a friend of my family was down with my family for graduation and at the time was a very significant Australian poet. He commented to me later that, “You were the only one who didn’t swing your arms when you went to get your graduation certificate so I might have been a latent

38:30 rebel in me there. So you got your certificate and then you went to your room and met for the graduation ball proudly attended by your parents. Your girlfriends. My first wife was there at the time. I don’t think we were engaged. We were partners at the time and at the stroke of midnight your partner and your mother pinned your shiny (UNCLEAR pepellas) pips on.

39:00 So that was the graduation ceremony. My father got into terrible trouble with my mother. Being a man of few words they were driving back to their accommodation from the parade and he threw this watch over the…He was driving and I was in the back seat. He threw this watch over. “Here’s your graduation present.

39:30 Don’t spread the news around, I think it’s hot.” My mother was furious with my father for being so callous as giving me this hot watch for a graduation present so but that was it. So a formal parade and I didn’t swing my arms to get my certificate and a graduation ball. In fact I have a photo of the graduation ball there. And then the

40:00 next day you were a lieutenant. You were promoted. But no other celebration apart from that.

So you graduated as a lieutenant?

Yep.

Great. That is absolutely fantastic. We’ll just change out tape.

Tape 3

00:31 **After graduation you were a lieutenant. Where was your first posting?**

Holsworthy in New South Wales just outside Liverpool. I joined 2RAR. The 2nd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment. Infantry battalion based at that camp and I stayed there for eighteen months.

And you were not in control of a group of men. How did…?

We had…

01:00 In that organisation I was a platoon commander. A lieutenant platoon commander. We had a strength of somewhere between thirty-five and thirty-nine soldiers with a structure of sergeants, corporals and three sections below you. All regular soldiers. And that battalion had served in Korea,

01:30 had served in Malaya during the communist emergency there and so it was quite an experience to come as a twenty year old lieutenant at the time and your sergeant was a Korean War veteran. There were soldiers in the unit in their thirties with war experience and some of the corporals in your unit also had

02:00 war experience and one of the challenges was how you established your presence in that sort of company. And that was quite a rewarding experience. Aided, not hindered particularly by your platoon sergeant who was your key man. He was a help in getting you into that sort of system. And of course some of your private soldiers also had

02:30 experiences. So it was quite a baptism by fire without being exposed to combat.

How did you rise to the challenge? How did you earn their respect?

I think that's a hard one to answer without being trite. But being what you are of course.

03:00 I think I inherited a lot from my father. You might have got the impression my father was a very simple man and he got on very well with his fellow men and I think it rubbed off on me. The ability to relate to your fellow man was reasonably easy. Given at that time that I enjoyed the company

03:30 and have always enjoyed the company of my subordinates rather than my superiors if you want to put a fine definition on it. So there is an innate ability to get on with people. And then the system had trained you well. I will give that to Duntroon. They had trained you in the art of leadership.

04:00 And I think you came away with a very firm understanding of what leadership was about but it is missed out in other professions and it is missed out in that it is the art of encouraging people to achieve an objective willingly. People miss the willing side of it. So

04:30 I think that was instilled in you. To get a system going where people were doing quite willingly what you needed them to do to reach an objective so Duntroon prepared you well for that and then in terms of your ability to get on with people an acknowledgment that you were surrounded by some very experienced people in their own right and you had to tap into that

05:00 experience and use your platoon sergeant who was second in command so to speak as a resource rather than to say, "I'll forget what your experience is. I'm in charge now. You know. An open mind. So it was the ability just to be around soldiers like that and the ability to get on with them and suck their brains when you needed to and bear in mind the principle of

05:30 despite the fact that it reaches a stage where the army has to become very instinctively obedient there is a lot of communication that goes on before you reach that stage. But a reasonably easy process for me.

Do you remember being introduced to the platoon?

Not actively. I think you just turned up one day and the sergeant had a training program.

06:00 "We are going to the range today," or "We are going marching," or physical training. There was no right of passage so to speak. And you didn't make some sort of policy speech so to speak. I think you just sort of took it over.

What were the exercises that you underwent in that training process?

We would do our normal routine, training, drill,

06:30 weapons training, field craft, the art of movement across country and that would be done in barracks or at close training areas in training stands in a formal eight period session for the day and then from time to time you would go on field exercises. You would whip out to the Holsworthy

07:00 field firing race, a large expanse of bush south of Holsworthy and practise some of the things you had learned in that close training out on your own and you would either do that at the platoon level with your thirty soldiers or you would do an annual say, battalion exercise where the battalion would group together and practise as a battalion. You did things like

07:30 route marching. We did a route march from Sydney to the Singleton area, a hundred mile route march as part of that collected training so there was a combination of the individual sub-unit or small unit training and the larger training. Occasionally you would get together for a special beat a mill operation where the army would create a major exercise in Queensland and we would all whip up

08:00 there to train. So there was different levels of training.

And in those early years as a lieutenant were there any times that your leadership was called into question or challenged?

Not in a nasty sense. One of your baptisms there was

08:30 clearing the canteen. The other ranks would have what we called a wet canteen. An alcoholic canteen and it closed at ten o'clock at night and you did a duty officer round, you might do duty officer once ever two weeks where for twenty-four hours you were the duty officer. You had to make sure the camp was secure, make sure that the canteen was clear. So the scenario

09:00 you would go to the canteen at quarter to ten and you would say, "Last drinks boys. You are all out." And you would come across a group of soldiers and they would be six soldiers round a table with forty beers on the table. Forty full beers at quarter to ten and say, "Right. You've got ten minutes to move." And they would say, "You are not going to kick us out are you?"

09:30 With an insolent undercurrent, "Sir. It's Joe's birthday. We are just having a quiet drink with Jo." "Finish your beers and get out." And then there would be some muttering and you would hear some insult muttered and you would never be able to pin it. So that was a baptism of establishing your presence and

clearing the canteen.

10:00 At times if it really got rude you would have to call in the guard to come down and help you turn them out. So I guess the diggers were trying you out for size. It had a humorous undertone to it. One of my soldiers was an ex-Scottish coal miner, James Riley, a very rough man built like a coal miner and he was in the canteen when I was having trouble clearing it, dealing with the soldiers, and

10:30 he got up on a table and said, "I'll have you know. Stuart is my brother-in-law and if you don't get out I'm going to throw you out." You know. We weren't related in any way but it was a good example of soldier humour. Me having established some credential Riley wasn't going to see me being stood up to by his mates.

11:00 "I'll clear the canteen." That was a test or a little baptism. It wasn't done with any great malice. I can't think of anything where a soldier stood up to me or was insubordinate in any way. There are examples in New Guinea where that happened but not to my recognition.

11:30 But that first platoon I had there…I got more in trouble with my superiors. I didn't do what I was told a few times and I had a company commander who used to bring me in once a week for a solid ball tearing rocket as I would describe it for some laziness or some dereliction of duty. He was a

12:00 hard task master. Impossible to please in some respects and I was no different to the normal at times but he pulled me in. But I had no occasion where I had a significant man management problem. You always had normal customary things where your soldiers were late back from leave and you had to put them on a charge

12:30 or unshaven or dirty rifle and you had a formal system that they would be put under charge and given certain punishments. But no challenge to authority as such. So it was a fairly comfortable existence from that point of view.

From the other side, what were the areas that you were a bit lax on or that you company commander was

13:00 **pulling you up on?**

For certain. I am just trying to think of examples. Too much…Too much perceived freedom of action I think.

13:30 To demonstrate, while I'm on an action in the bush and we had to make very good time to meet our objective so I told my men, "You don't have to shave. We'll just get going." And when I got back my company commander took great exception to the fact that I was running an untidy mob of scoundrels. You know. I did it for my reasons but I got picked up on that or being

14:00 in a night situation waiting for things to happen and going to sleep and it was seen to be idleness and it was picked up quite rightly. Or on certain occasions where I chose not to do something discipline wise. I was picked up as undermining discipline and I didn't think it was.

14:30 Late back from leave, car breaking down having visited my fiancée in Melbourne and I wasn't prepared. Bearing in mind I am a twenty year old and I wasn't exposed to the system where the boss would pull you up for discrepancies in behaviour.

Well how did you respond

15:00 **to this transition from Duntroon which had sheltered you to a degree?**

Yeah.

Being exposed?

Oh delight. I think it brought on a thing that went on through my whole army career. A delight to be with soldiers. I always, as I said, enjoyed the subordinate side of my career a bit more than my

15:30 superiors so to speak, so an affection for my subordinates came very easily to me. So that wasn't a huge transition and bear in mind it was a peacetime environment. There was no significant threat around so it was very much a peacetime army. The battalion

16:00 went to Malaya to go into that patrolling phase of the communist insurgency of Malaya at that time and I didn't go with them. Apart from that Korea had finished and Vietnam was not on the boil so to speak so it was a leisurely army at that stage where people had to be on alert

16:30 to go and to deal with some threat and insurgency in South East Asia where you would practise and if somebody pressed a green light it was a ready reaction. But no significant threat around so it was a peaceable peacetime army at that time.

That's a very good point. There was no threat around so how

17:00 **do you keep the men alert and ready?**

Oh so I think you touched on a very, very good point. One of the most difficult times in commanding soldiers is when there is no significant threat around. To keep them motivated and I think you just have to exercise the full powers of your leadership and

17:30 remind them that you've got to be prepared for anything. So your level of training has the disadvantage that we are not training for x or y, we are training to be fit, we are training to be proficient in our weapons, we are training to know our basic tactics so we can adopt…And that was a significant challenge. It is made easier if you have a significant threat. As a comment on that

18:00 sometime later in my career I was speaking to a young officer, this is about 1980 and there was also no significant threat. Vietnam had finished and gone out of our overseas commitments and he produced a brochure to me on going climbing in the Himalayas and it was called adventure training

18:30 at that time and the brochure he showed me was endorsed by Prince Charles. I think he was the patron. And it had a statement in it. In peacetime a challenge is the mountains and I with my forty-six years put up my hands. "No." The challenge is the same as I experienced in 1960. The challenge is getting the best out of your

19:00 men in a peacetime situation. So there was a bit of a generation difference between my generation and the newer generation where in times of peace there was a focus on (UNCLEAR) and my response is not to go overboard with that because the challenge is to keep your men motivated without their being a primary motivator.

19:30 It was just a matter of being alert to that and getting as much variety and interest into your training programs as you could.

We are a few years off Vietnam but were you aware that something was happening that was intensifying in that region?

20:00 We are talking about the '60s. No. Not really. The system was aware of various flashpoints in South East Asia and they had little contingency plans. Nothing-large scale. It was to be sending a hundred and twenty men to be of some assistance in a South East Asian country. All hush-hush but you trained against that contingency. And

20:30 there was no feeling of disquiet or anticipation than of perhaps the domino theory that if we didn't take a stand this menace would come closer to us. It only came to a head in my experience in '65 when the government committed an infantry battalion to Vietnam and it was seen

21:00 by the people at that stage as paying the dues on your insurance policy to be siding with or to have the support of the United States. There was no deeper thought than that but no impending thought that something was about to happen or that the area was becoming volatile in that sense.

21:30 So in the ''sixties we were also training for nuclear, biological or chemical warfare. We had a vision or perhaps the armed forces had a vision that perhaps we might be involved in nuclear warfare. So that was as deep or as focused as the thinking was. I don't think there was any focus that things were going to turn bad in Vietnam.

It is interesting that biological

22:00 **and chemical weapons were on the agenda all those years ago.**

Yes. It was the aftermath…It wasn't so long since the Nagasaki and Hiroshima experience and the perceived threats of the time were that the Russians would develop those sorts of weapons. So it was a feature of our training program in that time.

What was the training that you were involved in at that time on

22:30 **nuclear biological weapons?**

Oh the ability to monitor areas for contamination. The ability to dress appropriately. Much further than that it was very much on the paper stage. We didn't actually thump around the possibility of being nuclear, biologically or chemically orientated.

23:00 and so I didn't have much over a textbook knowledge of it. I attended a course at the time with the Atomic Energy Commission at Lucas Heights to acquaint some officers with all aspects of it but it was more a preventative sort of thing as to what you would do in a nuclear attack if the bad guys dropped a 'nuc' [nuclear bomb] on you.

23:30 How would you cope with that? But I don't think there was anything further than that. And then of course later on in the '60s things like Vietnam came into the fore.

So how did your time at 2RAR wind up?

In the system the army normally worked out time on about a two year rotation and

24:00 your masters in Canberra would be taking some part in the planning of your career. Perfect or

imperfectly depending on your point of view. And they would say, “Ray Stuart has done two years regimental. He is now due for a training position.” Or something like that. And if your career progression was taking place professionally you would be put through a variety of say

24:30 regimental training, administrative jobs, grooming you for a broadly experienced officer later on. But temporary manpower shortages and a lack of manpower planning threw that out the window at the time. I finished up in 2RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] with a demand for officers in the Pacific Island Regiment at the time and

25:00 so somebody pulled you out of a system and said, “You have to go and do a psych test. You have to do a test to see if you were the right stuff to go and serve in New Guinea.” You have to have the ability to get on with Papua New Guinean soldiers. I’m not sure how practical it was. But I was called on to do my test. It must have been sometime in 1960 or

25:30 early ’61 and I went to do my test with two guys that were still hung over from a party and both of them vowing that there was no way they would go to New Guinea. I think they got away with it because they were probably incapable of doing the test at the time and I was at least reasonably sober. It was one of those funny tests where you were given say a map of New Guinea and fill in the blanks and where the capital is. I put in Port Moresby

26:00 in the centre of the island because I thought that was a pretty central place to have a capital. Such was your level of understanding. The main point was you underwent a test to see if you were the right stuff. Some officers refused to take it. They felt that they had been trained as an officer in the Australian Army and they were capable of serving anywhere you care to send me and some won, some didn’t. And so I must have

26:30 passed that test and I was posted up to Papua New Guinea in 1961 as part of the normal rotational posting system but perhaps early because 2RAR was going to Malaya and I thought I was going to Malaya. There was domestic upheaval because I bought a small car which was going to last me till I went to Malaya and then it had to last me until I went to New Guinea so the system wasn’t perfect

27:00 but they told me I had to go to New Guinea and that was the order of the day. You were just told to pack your bags and be on the plane so to speak.

How did you feel about not going to Malaya with your platoon?

It didn’t make a great deal of difference to me. I wasn’t married to the platoon as such as I had only spent

27:30 a short amount of time with them. But I had other commitments at that time. I married in February ’61 and I was dealing with a young wife and a young marriage so I had that to handle as well so probably the more time I stayed in Australia the better.

28:00 So there was no significant disappointment. It was just the nature of things. I was posted somewhere else at the time. I always thought that was a great grounding, my first platoon and I was a platoon commander for the first five years of my military life. And I think staying with that basic building block, whether it was New Guinea or Australia was the main thing that

28:30 kept me going at the time. So no great feeling of disappointment for not going to Malaya at the time. Malaya was winding down. There wasn’t a great deal going on there so off I went to New Guinea.

How did your wife respond to your posting in New Guinea?

It was very hard. This touches on another very general point. The army life…It was a hard life for the army wife because the army just

29:00 just sent you somewhere every two years and the wife and family followed. It was very much a situation of the camp followed. The husband went wherever he was required to go. I had been married, married in February and went to New Guinea in June ’61. My wife wasn’t

29:30 allowed to come with me. I had to prove myself for six weeks before they contemplated letting a wife join you and then she had to get her own accommodation because at that junior stage of service you didn’t have enough points to qualify to get an army married quarters. So it was hard as a newly married officer to separate after a short period of marriage.

30:00 So she came up to Port Moresby but then when it developed a bit I went away for six months anyway so it was a very hard time. Exposing a young wife to a new country and new accommodation and then disappearing for six months. A hard time in a young marriage and I remember one of the senior officers telling me that if you get through the first two

30:30 years of your marriage you will last, as a…as a general statement on army life. So it was hard.

And what was. You were with the Pacific Island Regiment? Is that right?

Yes.

And what was the role of the Pacific Island Regiment in PNG [Papua New Guinea]?

It was going back a bit; it had it's

31:00 genesis in the Papuan and New Guinea infantry battalions that served with such distinction in the Pacific War. They had local soldiers serving and they served with great distinction. It was disbanded after the Pacific war and started up again in 1950 as part of the defence force of the Australian administered territories.

31:30 And when I joined it, it consisted of Papua New Guinea soldiers and Australian officers and non-commissioned senior officers. It had a multi-pronged roll. It was the embryonic defence force of the country. It had a peacetime responsibility to patrol in Papua New Guinea and show the flag

32:00 so to speak. Support the government, explain government policies in the remote villages, and correct topographical information. They had a very rudimentary mapping system in New Guinea and we spent a lot of time in the bush doing rudimentary updating. Training the operational role. Retaining the ability to fight if you had to do it. So it was the embryonic

32:30 defence force of Papua New Guinea and given that it would take some time to develop an officer system of it's own it was manned by Australian officers and it continued like that until the late ''sixties when the devolution started to occur towards independence. 1975 I think

33:00 it was. Very short of going to war it was probably one of the greatest challenges a young officer could experience. I was a young officer at the time. You took control of a platoon of thirty Papua New Guinea soldiers who mostly didn't speak English. So you had to master neo-Melanesian or Pidgin to a point where you could communicate effectively. Quite different

33:30 behavioural characteristics. Dealing with the aspects of getting a young wife established there as well. But that was its basic role in the country with an emphasis on presence in remote parts of the country. We had two out-stations. One at Vanimo in the north part of the

34:00 country, one on Manus Island and one at Wewak. And you would rotate for six months in Moresby to six months on out station duty where you would be doing those long patrols updating topographical information and getting training in the operational role.

That is interesting that you mentioned behavioural characteristics because I was thinking what distinct difference could you find between the Australian soldiers and the Papua New Guinean soldiers?

34:30 Basically that the Papuan New Guinea soldier would do instinctively what he was told without questioning. But if your leadership was defective you'd pay a penalty for it in due course. They tended to bottle up anxieties

35:00 or lack of satisfaction with their leadership to the point where they would explode in a minor or a major sense. So you had a difficult or explosive situation on your hands. So it was …and the army didn't do it… it would be a bad place to go as a young officer initially but some did. Most had the benefit

35:30 and I think the system was good in this respect, of putting you though an Australian battalion before you went to New Guinea because an Australian soldier will tell you very quickly if he doesn't like your leadership style or if there is some perceived inefficiency. The Australian soldier will tell you whereas the Papua New Guinean soldier will probably not tell you until it reaches some sort of a crisis management situation. So that was the basic difference apart from

36:00 the language. Talking another language and understanding some of the tribal characteristics. Understanding what informal organisation existed in the battalion. For instance there was a formal structure and the army had split up the tribal groups right down to the lowest

36:30 sub-unit organisation where you had a section of nine soldiers. There would be no more than two from each tribal group so you couldn't have a tribe taking sway from down at that level. Given the fragmented nature of New Guinea's society. However, within the battalion there was an informal tribal organisation and

37:00 you might have someone like a cook, just a private soldier, who might be the line boss of the Polo tribe and my COs [Commanding Officer] ability was to understand that and in times of some perceived trouble and anxiety to know who to go to in the informal structure and find out what was really going on. So they were the face. And dealing with that

37:30 more superficially immediate obedience to instructions which would excuse poor leadership on occasions until it became a problem. So in other words understanding people as well. And I think that's the army's stock in trade, understanding how people work.

I would imagine that would be quite a challenge

38:00 **with the tribal structures. That point you've raised that they would just bottle it up and then suddenly it would explode. Is this where the sub ordinance would really come into play.**

Yeah. If your communications were as it should be then your subordinate, as in the Australian soldier,

your sergeant would say, the soldiers have this problem.

38:30 So to keep the communication open and practise the correct leadership styles was very important and it is important to understand that slightly different characteristic from their soldiers as to ours.

Were there any amendments to discipline in this situation or…

No. The

39:00 Australian military legal regulations applied equally to New Guinea as they did to Australia. There was no difference that I can recollect. It was exactly the same sort of thing. There was no intrusion for instance of any thought like in the ex-military

39:30 system that the Westminster System wasn't that good a system for a culture that was into payback and retributive justice and all that kind of thing. That didn't enter the army's experience at all. It was administered under Australian military law conditions.

And that was well received?

Yeah. There was no other system.

40:00 I…No, that was the system. There was no philosophical objection to it. There were harsh applications of it linked to the situation in New Guinea at the time. For

40:30 instance it wasn't until the mid '60s that the population of New Guinea was allowed to consume alcohol so consumption of alcohol was immediate discharge from the Pacific Islands Regiment. Well, if they had been detected. Whereas you wouldn't have been tossed out of the Australian Army unless you were a complete alcoholic. So there were some very harsh applications of

41:00 somebody letting the side down and getting on the grog or something like that. But apart from that there was no link between…No cry that this was an inadequate system in any regard.

Well we have come to the end of the tape so we will just do another change over?

Tape 4

00:31 **Ray we were just talking about the prohibition in New Guinea and when it was lifted. What changed did you see when it was lifted?**

It had no tangible results as far as the battalion was concerned. I have forgotten what the regulations were. There must have been a wet canteen, which the soldiers went to.

01:00 And now I'm thinking I probably wasn't there at the time of lifting of the prohibition so I am actually speaking from hearsay. So I can only report. I left in '64 and came back in '71 so it was probably '65 and '66 when it was lifted. As reported to me at that time the system went a bit berserk.

01:30 People weren't used to European type alcoholic beverages to that extent. The local population did have fermentation type processes from fruit and vegetables so there was a great splurge when the bars opened of having a whisky, gin and brandy with lemonade or something like that and with disastrous effects.

02:00 And so there was that initial settling down process and in terms of my second experience there in '71 when I went back to New Guinea and drinking was the norm. You had to watch certain social functions

02:30 because people would tend to see the affluence of the organisers and spirit away alcohol from the function. That was worked with diplomatically and there was a humorous side to it in that in the '70s when I was there there was concern about alcoholic consumption and an artist

03:00 was commissioned to paint a sign on the back of busses to cut down alcoholic consumption. And the logo was, "Say no to beer." He painted this beautiful glass of beer on the back of the bus in the tropics that had beautiful beads of moisture on it and he was just a fag. He took the mucky out of the system so it became a

03:30 catch cry in the country, "What will you have to drink?" "I'll have a glass of 'no'." That was the sign on the bus. It settled down and I guess that is all you can say. It was the settling down of some horrendous drinking practices. And mixes demanded in the local pubs and then I would imagine it settled down to whatever problem exists in any society with regard to alcohol.

Well where abouts were you

04:00 **based in New Guinea?**

The battalion had it's headquarters at Port Moresby or nine miles out of Port Moresby at a place called

Taurama Barracks and then it, as I mentioned before, had to man two outstations. One up on the New Guinea border with then Dutch New Guinea at Vanimo and one at Manus Island. Just to establish an army presence in those areas.

04:30 There were four rifle companies in the battalion so there would be two out on out stations for six months and two in. They rotated n that basis so you did in a three year posting I did six months on Manus Island and six or seven months at Vanimo. Soon the three years I was in New Guinea I did a year away,

05:00 unaccompanied. You went just with your soldiers and fellow Australian officers to the out-stations. And during your time back in Port Moresby you did normal training and you also did long patrols to other areas not associated with the outstations. I did a long patrol into the Gulf of Papua from Port Moresby so although you were in Moresby you spent a fair amount of time out of it. So that was the pattern.

05:30 Subsequently they formed another outstation at Wewak on the north coast of Papua New Guinea and then raised a second battalion and Wewak became the headquarters of the 2nd Battalion so in my first posting Wewak became the headquarters of the second battalion. So in my first posting there six months in and six months out.

And the patrols that you just mentioned. Where were they through? What areas did they cover?

In my…They covered most districts of

06:00 Papua New Guinea and in my instances I patrolled on Manus Island and in the Sepik District of Papua New Guinea. Vanimo which I mentioned was an outstation in the Sepik district, in the north west corner of the Sepik …North West corner of the Sepik district at a place across country into the top areas of the Sepik river. And other officers would be patrolling different areas of the Sepik,

06:30 different areas of Manus, different areas around Port Moresby so it was aiming to cover most of the country over a period of time and it wasn't purely the army's decision where to patrol. There was a close liaison as I understand with the Department of Native Affairs at the time. I imagine there would be some liaison there to say it would be good to have a presence

07:00 in that area in the country so there was that connection with the administration patrol officers at the same time as you were doing your army patrols as well.

No I was just going to ask you what was the presence to signify? What was the real role of the patrol?

It had about the…

07:30 The general roles were to correct topographical information. You had very rudimentary maps and so you would send back a patrol report at the completion saying this track doesn't exist and that village has ceased and this would be a suitable aircraft landing point etc. And it went back to an organisation

08:00 called the Joint Intelligence Bureau at the time in Canberra, voluminous reports and at the time we thought, "No bugger reads them. They are probably in a big musty heap down in New Guinea," but if we went to war in New Guinea again, Ray Stuart's patrol on day three out at Vanimo, it didn't go due south west it went west. It was probably no use whatsoever but that was one of the formal roles.

08:30 The informal role was to show the flag. In other words you were in support of the government. So you would turn up at some remote village and you would pull up the flag with a little ceremony and explain all the good things that the government was doing in that area, which probably impressed nobody…Two hundred miles out from anywhere. But seriously there was a health and education system. You spoke about the army's

09:00 role and then you interacted and formed good relationships with the villagers and moved on. The third was to train in the operational role. The battalion had a military role if necessary so you moved silently, you moved fully armed and you adopted normal infantry minor tactics on the move so you could arrive somewhere undetected.

09:30 They were the three-prima areas you performed in. And you might go out to find out specific information. Was point A suitable for an airstrip? We often wondered whether anyone read those reports.

Well what was the terrain like?

It varied. New Guinea is one of the most mountainous countries around and it goes from there down to the vast river swamp

10:00 of the Sepik River so it was all over the place. Going was very varied. On a good track you might make twenty miles a day in old measurement. In a bad day, particularly if you weren't on the track, if you were cutting bamboo you might only make eight hundred yards in a day. So the going varied very much

10:30 according to the undergrowth or the degree of the track and also the steepness of the track and also

certain areas became impassable in the wet season and other areas became inoperable in terms of performing effect after about lunchtime. In some areas you would start at five o'clock and finish at twelve so there is no

11:00 specific answer to that. It varied. A lot of water there so a lot of requirement to cross rivers. An improvised river crossing…The techniques and also you had to have the ability to operate for up to ten days without resupply so you had to be able to carry on your back everything you needed for up to ten days. Then we would get a resupply.

11:30 So organise carrier lines…whether you recruit local villages to carry bulk rations if you couldn't be guaranteed of a resupply within ten day by some other means. So you might carry ten days supply on your back and then another ten days in bulk in a courier line from village to village. So very varied terrain and I

12:00 don't want to ever go back to it and climb it again.

So were you ever able to see much of an aftermath of the war, of World War II?

Yes a physical aftermath. Manus Island in particular was heavily contested by the Japanese and you could still see the physical presence of the Americans there in terms of bullet nicks in palms, large quantities of

12:30 discarded equipment which was subsequently salvaged by Nationalist Chinese who salvaged a lot of say floating equipment, landing craft and the like. There were lots of Coco Cola bottles. You came across some of those sorts of remnants in the old American camps. The Kokoda trail or track which I have walked over…Old

13:00 weapons pits, old wires, and old ammunition. On the non physical side some ugly recollections. My platoon sergeant in my first platoon in the regiment must have been a young boy at the time of the Second World War. There were cannibalism atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers

13:30 coming across the body of a Japanese soldier and revealing in his knapsack two women's breasts or thigh meat wrapped in banana leaves and the Japanese army were on their knees in terms of they had run out of rations. I remember some time later, not associated with that service, going back to New Guinea for exercises

14:00 and we removed an Australian soldier from the exercise because he happened to be in the same area where he fought. He just couldn't deal with whatever trauma he had experienced in 1944. So there is a physical trauma there with people even not going back to salvage downed aircraft and that sort of thing, either Japanese

14:30 and allied forces. And the physical threats of war and some of the bad memories and the fond memories. What happened there and giving credit to what the native population did there. They had to bend to the wind at times. When the Japanese were in the ascendency they had to kowtow to the Japanese and when the Australians were in the ascendency they got on the winning side so to speak.

15:00 So yeah it was after all only 1945, some very short time after the Pacific war and there were those legacies still there. And of course there were soldiers still in the Pacific Islander Regiment who had wartime experience and a subsequent hatred of the Japanese.

15:30 There were some Japanese businessmen visiting my battalion and the CO conducting them round and the RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] a Papuan soldier, a highly respected Papuan soldier with a chest full of medals having fought with distinction in the Pacific war and he came up to my boss and whispered, "These only fight in Japan. I am more accustomed to fighting the Japanese."

16:00 So you know there were still those soldiers who remembered the Pacific War there?

So how did the natives respond to your presence?

Very well. In the '60s…'50s, '60s, and even through to the '70s it was a very proud position to occupy

16:30 to be a soldier in the Pacific Islands Regiment. Very proud of their service and very proud of their traditions so the army was held in high regard and I think it was a legacy also of the fact that the Australians' presence in New Guinea, colonial, was a reasonably civilised, non brutal,

17:00 experience. So yeah there was a, you know, a feeling of goodwill amongst them. Nevertheless there was also the more unpleasant aspects of the army. The military in the country in a minor sense. I don't think it was a great problem but going into

17:30 a village on patrol you always took a native policeman with you. He would be responsible for organising carriers and if you were operating across different language barriers making sure interpreters were onboard and that there were fresh rations and you'd have assistance…It probably wasn't a criticism but the policemen

18:00 would accompany you into a village and the policeman would say, "All right. You lot. Army's here.

Banana, Pineapple, Paw Paw for the troops." and some strapping lad would say, "The army look fit enough to climb their own coconut trees don't they." Whack. You know he'd get a slap across the face for being insolent. So there were some rough aspects to life in that time.

18:30 But mind you, it was the ambience of that time and I quote that example of the labour line wanting to fight the boss every morning. You'd have the fisticuffs and it didn't really matter who won as long as you had a good stoush in the morning. And there was always a kind of remnant attitude toward the German colonial experience. Very tough men. I'm not excusing it

19:00 but they were immune to a certain amount of toughness in their lives and towards their colonial masters. But generally speaking the '60s were the halcyon days of the Australian presence in New Guinea. We had that sort of remnant esteem of having been there and fought in the country with that growing recognition that

19:30 Australians weren't a master race. They saw Australians in very subordinate positions and operating in very subordinate roles. But I think more difficult times came closer to independence and post independence where there was more that system of them versus us grew, particularly

20:00 with a breakdown in law and order. But they were the kind of halcyon days and bear in mind that since the army had worked with the New Guinea soldiers since the Second World War and they had been exposed to common dangers and adversities there was a much closer bonding. We had a very treasured existence. We lived nine miles out of town in our own

20:30 commune so to speak, of Australians and New Guinean soldiers. We understood each other very well. We spoke the same language so we were a very favoured community compared to people coming up new into the country. They were exposed to new languages and a new country, say if they were working for a bank or something like that. We were a very well developed military community and there was no

21:00 threat to the security of your children or anything like that in that environment. It was distinctly different from Port Moresby so we lead a fairly charmed life from that viewpoint. It was much the same in the '70s when I went back there. We were a distinct army life, so to speak, when we went back into that country.

Well how did you control…I am thinking about this nature in which

21:30 **it seems quite aggressive on a natural basis…It seems quite normal for them to be aggressive towards each other. How did you control that amongst your own men in your platoon?**

I only had one minor example of a jack up so to speak when I was on patrol in the Sepik and we were very

22:00 tired, we had been marching out for quite a long time and I stopped at a Catholic mission during the lunch break and the missionaries were delighted to see an Australian face. And it was hard to get out of there and as I got out of there one of my subordinates started to be sarcastic in front of my soldiers. "The boss doesn't care what time we get to sleep tonight. He is happy

22:30 as long as he gets wined and dined by missionaries while we are waiting outside to get something moving." And at that stage I had no…I am not justifying that as correct procedure and I just had to decided that attack was the best form of defence and I said, "If I want to stay here for two days I will stay here for two days.

23:00 Now lets go." And there was a certain justification in what I was doing. I knew that where I was going I wouldn't have to strike camp. We were going to an administrative post and we had huts to go into. So it didn't matter that I spent a bit longer at the mission. That is a minor example of someone criticising me in front of the soldiers, which he should never have done.

23:30 He arguably should have taken me aside and said, "You inconsiderate bastard, you stayed too long at the mission." But it is of minor importance. We were all very tired and all strung up so it was an imperfect method of dealing with one of those situations and in the event of more deep seated

24:00 trouble or anxieties developing it was the ability to find what we call the line boss, the person who really had the control and say, "What is the problem here?" And then there were certain techniques for dealing with flashpoints and not the least of which was lowering your voice. It had a great effect, a bit like the old horse whispering thing.

24:30 On a horse property I noticed the same thing. Never shout at a horse if you want things done properly. Start speaking quietly. That's just a mechanical thing. But perhaps I might exaggerate the point but it wasn't a common occurrence. It related to the fact that if you weren't commanding

25:00 well that was the potential for things to get a bit explosive and bear in mind the army did put you through some selection criteria before you went up there just to make sure you knew your stuff as far as man management and leadership and certain people that didn't perform the army was quite ruthless in removing them if they found that they couldn't' handle that aspect.

25:30 Perhaps I exaggerate a bit. It wasn't a thing you dealt with daily but it was a thing you had to be aware of in certain times of stress.

Well how would you describe your men?

In New Guinea? Very loyal.

26:00 Unquestioning, without qualification. Tremendously good at field craft, I mean the ability to move undetected across country. Unknown in terms of their more deep seated spiritual and

26:30 cultural beliefs. Didn't expose myself a great deal to them so there was a certain unknown to them. They had a fierce pride to the point of perversity. I remember a deputation from some of our soldiers lead by a Sepik,

27:00 because Sepiks are a very proud race; around the time that the Indonesians were making some movements towards taking over Dutch New Guinea or East Irian as it is now. And there were nuisance penetrations into Australian territory at the time and Indonesian aircraft in particular were crossing to Australian territory and these soldiers said, "What are we doing about these Indonesians. They seem to be

27:30 a pretty disgraceful lot." Better go and (UNCLEAR doof) them over. And you know this was a big picture and there were a lot of them and even if we wanted to…And the Sepik (UNCLEAR scientist) said, "I'm a Sepik. We'll get rid of them." Because he is quite proud. We can't have these people taking over neo-Melanesian country and there was a disappointment at that time

28:00 in that although they were….I forget the legalities of, in practical terms, that part of the Australian Military Forces but they didn't get a guernsey in Vietnam. A number of NCOs came to us and said, "We are serving under the same flag so to speak. Why can't we go to Vietnam?" And I think the

28:30 system didn't allow it because of language difficulties and all sorts of other difficulties. But they would do very well in an area like Vietnam where they could employ that excellent field craft, the ability to move undetected and that's something that would be employed out of their characteristics in the more formal role but I think personally

29:00 that they didn't get some sort of guernsey in Vietnam just became they hadn't been blooded for a long time. The last blooding of the Pacific Islander Regiment had been in the Second World War and that's a militaristic view I know but it was nevertheless an understandable view that they have a proud background with the warrior influence and

29:30 I think there was a feeling of unfairness that they didn't get a go in Vietnam.

So how did your time in New Guinea wind up?

It came to a three year conclusion. Three years was about normal and the people sitting in high offices in Canberra said, "Where's Stuart."

30:00 Well he has done his three years there. We had better get him out of there before he goes mad or something. Pull him out of there and one doesn't know what the perfection of military planning was but I was sent to Adelaide and I had been promoted, during my time in New Guinea to captain so it was time to move on and the system decided it is time for him to do an administrative type of job so we'll get him out of the bush and

30:30 send him to Adelaide.

How did your wife feel about leaving?

Oh I think she was fine. She had relatives in Adelaide and once again this was still the 'sixties and wives did as they were told. Rightly or wrongly you know you came home and said, "Where are we going?" "We are going to Adelaide." It is not where you would like to go but that was the system and it was quite unquestioning, given

31:00 the army, unless you had some compassionate problem with children and we didn't have children at the time so perhaps I am being a bit critical of the army and it is much different to what the army is now as I understand it. But later on there was cognisance of the children's education, given the big flashing headlines that the needs of the service are paramount,

31:30 put it that way. They were always above you in a big giant balloon in the sky. You know, the neon sign. You know. So it was just a relief to get back to the niceties of life, the meat pie and the fresh milk and all those sorts of things. Bearing in mind, just moving forward a point, New Guinea is regarded with great affection

32:00 generally speaking with anyone who has ever served in the Pacific Islander Regiment because of our bonding with these very fine people. All young, all lieutenants, all reasonably poor and our wives had to club together because their husbands were away for six months at a time and arguably percentage wise my biggest circle of permanent old friends was made from that New Guinea

32:30 experience. It is further on but getting back to your basic point it was nice to move to civilisation. Not that we lived in mud huts but it was nice to return to capital cities and our relations and that sort of

things. It was good.

The flashing sign, the needs of the service are paramount. Were they part of your wedding vows?

No. Well

33:00 I think it was generally understood before we married, that's what we are letting ourselves in for. If we packed up and went to Vietnam our wives did a lot of the hard yards in the services and dealing with this and that. And that statement I referred to. Normally if you survive the first two years of marriage

33:30 you can….That's not singling out the army. Look at the navy. They are probably worse off in terms of the time their men are at sea. So yeah it was just a feature of the times and there was a kind of philosophical attitude. This will be a hardship posting and this will be a good posting, you know. You might have a hardship posting and then you might live in Victoria Barracks in Sydney for a couple of years in the centre of Oxford

34:00 Street in a big bustling city. There was a certain philosophical stance that you didn't always serve in the hardship posting. So friendships developed in New Guinea. It was a very hard place. Wives died there of tropical diseases and ailments and children died.

34:30 People came away with minor scars and permanent skin disorders and things so it was a hard life and the positives, you know, that was a huge positive, the friendships. They are still endearing friendships right until now.

35:00 **That does sound like quite a difficult time for her. But now you're back to Adelaide and you've got a desk posting now.**

It was for eighteen months at Keswick Barracks running training and administrative matters as a young captain. And virtually desk bound living down at Summertown part

35:30 and Edwardstown and that lasted for a reasonably short period of time but a significant period to time. Both my children were born in that time. '64 and '66 down at Calvary Hospital and so one of the reasons that I am back here is that an affection developed for Adelaide at that time. So a lot of things happened family wise. My wife at the time was related to…Her mother was a

36:00 Dunstan who was related to Don Dunstan so there was a family connection. Don Dunstan's father and his wife Molly perform kind of grandparent responsibilities so there was a time when a great affection developed for the state and jumping ahead, the Vietnam war then developed a head of steam up and so in perfect military planning

36:30 they pulled me out of there and said, "Go up to Woodside Camp and join 3 Battalion." It was just back from Borneo and eventually it reformed to go to Vietnam. Then another phase of my South Australian experience developed but I didn't get to see much of South Australia at all because I was preparing to go to war. And '64 to '66, about

37:00 two years in Keswick was peaceable family existence. Days at the beach and forming friendships and all that sort of things. Without getting too dramatic a bit of a lull before the storm. A nice sort of interlude between the hardship postings.

Well how did you feel being tied to a desk after the last two postings you had where you were tied to

37:30 **a platoon?**

Oh great. Not as much formal responsibility but in terms of being responsible exclusively for the health and well being and performance of a group of soldiers and understanding them very well to dealing with paper and dealing with another

38:00 set of human characteristics of the more bureaucratic aspect of the army which didn't sit easy with me but was part of your training. You knuckle down and I think one of my features which I pat myself on the back about would be the ability to adapt to

38:30 those situations and inherently the ability to adapt. If the job is not pleasing you that much then your outside pursuits come a little bit further up the totem pole like family and going fishing and going to the beach and that sort of thing. You adjust…If this job is not as pleasant as the last job, not as demanding and so you make these certain adjustments.

39:00 There…No it just seemed to be a necessary part of your development. The desk jobs had to be done and it was also a time when you were fulfilling some of the formal aspects of your promotion. You were studying for your promotion exams so the ability to forecast that

39:30 you weren't going to be away from home. The homesickness was a very significant factor in New Guinea so your homesickness didn't…You were removed from your homesickness at that time. So no it was as frustrating as any desk appointment can be but it didn't give me ulcers.

I was just wondering if

40:00 **there were any great challenges in your role at Keswick Barracks?**

The challenge was dealing with high bound people I guess. The army system allowed certain officers to stay in posting too long and you would get such high bound attitudes resulting from them.

40:30 In minor roles like, as a young officer, a young captain I would be responsible for running the duty officer roster where you were putting an officer on duty every twenty-four hours and you would sit down and get input from various people on the duty officer and then you'd put out your duty officer roster and you'd have your office door ripped apart and some old lieutenant

41:00 who had been at Keswick Barracks since 1945 would say, "You put me on duty on football grand final day. I can't do that. I've never missed a grand final." And I would say, "Well I've just spent six months in the New Guinea jungle and I missed out on a few things there so piss off." "Sit down and I will tell you my problems." So dealing with that sort of thing.

41:30 And then dealing with people who had never had it hard for quite a while and it was traditional and there was a feeling in the army of a division between the fighting men and the staff who would sit around polishing their bums in the offices wearing out the batteries in their calculators etc,

42:00 and we were out tramping round the jungle. So I was still a young…

Tape 5

00:31 **Just picking up the story there. You're at Woodside. It's now late '66, early…**

Mid '66, late '66.

So what rumblings were there about you going to Vietnam?

There were none at that time. The idea was that the battalion had some back from Malaya Borneo and

01:00 the confrontation with Indonesia and that was sometime in virtually '66 and it was virtually emasculated and much of it went into 7RAR. And that was at a time when the army was jumping from three regular battalions to eventually nine to meet the Vietnam commitment. So I was posted up to Woodside in

01:30 May '66, June '66 under the general understanding that this was an infantry battalion and would eventually go to Vietnam but that wasn't going to be for a while because it was very under strength and it would be some time before it would be built up to the stage where it was ready to go to Vietnam. So it was in the system but not warned for a specific date of service to go to Vietnam. So drawn on that basis. The

02:00 battalion was gradually built up over time until to cut a long story short they were ready to go overseas at the end of '67. So it was an eighteen month period with the battalion before it was ready to go overseas. And we weren't warned to go overseas, physically given the date, until late '67.

So you had been at Keswick at the desk job

02:30 **So where did you join three RAR?**

At Woodside. In the Adelaide hills not too far from here and so it was a matter of transporting my family into a married quarter situation at Woodside. One daughter was born and one daughter at the time and André my second daughter was born from Woodside. My wife was

03:00 pregnant at the time or was just about or close to pregnant.…So we arrived there into a married quarter with one baby girl and the other one was born into the married quarter at that time. In November '66. Shortly after I got up to Woodside.

03:30 **So what sort of…In the build up to Vietnam with three RAR how did you build up the?**

There were three aspects to it. Within the context of…in that last eighteen months of South Australia I saw very little of South Australia for two reasons. One was

04:00 although the battalion wasn't formally warned for overseas service until late in 1966 it was required to go to Queensland and form enemy for battalions being trained for Vietnam so we went up to Shoalwater Bay training area up north of Rockhampton for a number of months and performed as enemy there. So that

04:30 …And when we were back in South Australia there was a continuous sort of training program… Although we hadn't formally been warned there was the urgency of Australia being on a war footing. So it was quite a rigorous training program going on while we were back in South Australia and then it was sometime in '67, I forget my exact dates,

05:00 we went and did our final training, our sort of testing exercise in New Guinea as part of your normal progression to coming online for Vietnam. The battalion was being built up at that time. I changed jobs within the battalion. I went up as a captain and ran the signal platoon, the communications and then I became

05:30 an officer commanding an administrative company. So I was changing jobs in it and the battalion was gradually being built up and receiving more reinforcements. More soldiers. We went away to Shoalwater Bay in…It must have been sometime mid '67 and didn't

06:00 …In the eyes of our masters we didn't perform terribly well. And were told to go back and retrain to correct deficiencies in our operational effectiveness. So we came back to South Australia rather disgruntled because the battalion had always had a good name and we thought we were being unfairly treated. And it was at that time…I can't

06:30 remember the exact timings but it was at that time the Harold Holt thought he would commit an additional battalion to Vietnam…A third battalion. An additional battalion and three battalion, three RAR were that third battalion so we came back from a situation where you had to improve your battalion to, "We love you now and you're going to Vietnam at the end of the year."

07:00 So that caused all sorts of telescopic problems. We were told with incredibly short notice to go to Vietnam. There were implications in that it was also that time that the government made a decision that ever soldier who went to Vietnam also had to pass through the jungle training centre at Canungra. And so

07:30 there was a requirement in a very short timeframe to get all our soldiers through Canungra and because of that truncated timeframe and the distance we were from the major training areas, Shoalwater Bay and Canungra. We had instances like our drivers on the road were virtually (UNCLEAR) leave because they had to drive convoys there and drive people back.

08:00 And so that went on and then the battalion was ready for operational service and to go to Vietnam by December and some of the implications on a personal note. Each family had pre-embarkation leave. It was seven weeks to sort out your family affairs. My pre-embarkation leave was cut to two days because my CO at the time had

08:30 decided in that very short timeframe of being warned for service that he was allowed to do this and he would exclude certain officers with certain duties from going to Canungra. I was one of them because of my administrative responsibilities and it was at that time when the government became absolutely rigid. No

09:00 exception, everybody goes through jungle training or training at Canungra. And I was actually on pre-embarkation leave with my family on the Gold Coast and I got a phone call from Woodside, "Drop everything and report strait to Canungra."

09:30 And my batman had to break into my married quarter in Woodside and find me half a boot and that sort of thing. I physically dumped my family in Queensland and got on the bus to Canungra so they were hard times and they hark back to the family experience and on kind of a black humour note I arrived at Canungra on a Saturday afternoon and…to undergo my training. When I say I was trained this was the mandatory side of the training.

10:00 You had gone through Canungra and the CO of Canungra addressed all these people and it was doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, all sorts of people who had been caught in this grab bag that everybody has to go through and the chief instructor was a rather earnest fellow and he said, "Why are you here." And one person said, "Well I am here

10:30 to train myself. Get trained physically, spiritually, morally to fight our foe in Vietnam." He turned to me and said, "Why are you here?" "A political whim I think." So that didn't endear me. So it was a very… because we were pronounced unreportable in one breath and then exportable in the next breath and the battalion didn't fully recover from that until we were in action together in Vietnam

11:00 and proved how good we were. So that was '66 and '67 so we saw very little of our families in that time.

And from what I gather you are saying that your preparation was cut short before you left the country?

No I am more saying that our preparation had to be terribly compressed. We didn't

11:30 …We went away fully equipped to do what we were doing but it was at the expense of little people like Ray Stuart not getting his pre-embarkation leave, the drivers being on the road, recuperation because we had to do…I forget the exact timeframe but we had to do six months when we should have had nine months. And probably our experience is not that

12:00 different from any battalion doing that training cycle or that lead up to Vietnam except that Holt made that decision in '67 to increase the size of the task force in Vietnam. It was easy to make the decision in the corridors of power in Canberra but the implications of the decision had all these spiritual and moral implications

12:30 of the decision had all those incredible lead times it involved and it was just an incredible demand to get away in that time.

And was the battalion at full strength when you left.

Yep. At absolutely full strength. It was the manpower's planning responsibly to commit you fully equipped and at full strength.

13:00 **And was 3RAR at that stage all regular army?**

A combination or National Serviceman and regulars. The broad scheme was that the battalion would consist of fifty per cent National Serviceman and fifty per cent regular. There naturally had to be an imbalance there and most of the officers at that stage were regular officers. The National Service

13:30 officer scheme had just started to get a head of steam up and the private soldiers were fairly equally split between National Servicemen and regular soldiers. I think four intakes of National Servicemen into the battalion. It had to be planned that way so you couldn't cope with a massive influx at one particular intake. It had to

14:00 be carefully managed, particularly when you were training your National Servicemen to be specialists that you didn't lose a major proportion of your specialists because the National Servicemen had to go home at the end of two years. So in the active service time in Vietnam your planners in the battalion had to cater at ever level for a percentage of the National Servicemen going home

14:30 in March, June, or whatever it was. No it was a mix of National Servicemen and….But having said it was a mix it was very hard and irrelevant to distinguish who was a National Serviceman and who was a regular. I personally didn't know the difference. There was no compensatory allowance for the fact that you were a National Serviceman nor

15:00 should there be. They performed admirably and they were indistinguishable from the two.

Well how did you travel to Vietnam?

The main body, the bulk of the battalion went on the HMAS Sydney from Adelaide

15:30 out of harbour. I remained behind with a small rear party to tidy up the loose ends of the camp at Woodside and then we flew over and joined the battalion main body and at Christmas. Boxing Day we went and prior to that the battalion had sent an advance party over to meet the outgoing battalion.

16:00 In our case because we were a traditional battalion we didn't have an outgoing battalion but anyway to occupy the space. So anyway it was an advance party by air, the bulk of the battalion sailed, a rear party of myself a couple of officers and about twenty soldiers went over by air via Darwin after the battalion had arrived by ship. I think it took about ten days for the battalion to get up there.

16:30 So that was in the order of eight hundred soldiers and their equipment and vehicles so the bulk of the equipment with other combinations…the bulk on Sydney.

So you mentioned earlier that you are now part of the administrative company. Can you just restate what your position and rank is now?

In the battalion, yes. I'm

17:00 a captain and I was promoted to major before I went to Vietnam. And I was given the job of officer commanding the administrative company. The battalion is organised with four rifle companies. They are the fighting units and then you'll have the heavy weapons, the mortars, the tracker dogs and the supporting people and administrative company

17:30 is the company that is responsible for the daily resupply of the battalion in the field. The operational emergency resupply, casualty evacuation and in the case of Vietnam a defensive base area while the battalion was out on operations. That was my job given to me and it was a job

18:00 that I had to take command of a rather disparate company. You had your medics, your storemen, your drivers, your craftsmen, coming down to the Salvation Army rev [reverend] and all those sort of people that were supporting the battalion in the field to do it's job apart from the support weapons. So I was at that stage

18:30 twenty-seven when I was given that job and admin company had about a hundred and twenty soldiers. It also contained a padre and a quartermaster and as the name suggested I was the person responsible for the daily administration of the battalion answerable to the CO

19:00 ultimately and in routine matters to the battalion second in command. The infantry battalion structure was always there was a second in command in the system to take over if you've got a hole in your head of are out of action for some reason. Yeah. So that job was taken over at Woodside and

19:30 I was able to practise in that job or rehearse that job, in that final exercise in Queensland I could really get on board in that short truncated system so only a few months after getting that job to be able to perform it in operational conditions in Vietnam.

20:00 It was a job which relied heavily on the ability to…one again know your people. Jumping ahead once I got to Vietnam with that organisation I realised that it wouldn't operate effectively if it relied on me exclusively. So you

20:30 had to set up a duty officer system that had to run twenty-four hours a day. So you identified key operators who were responsible people and it didn't matter what formal position they held in the company, they could be the tailor, the sergeant tailor or a warrant officer caterer who was responsible for rationing the battalion that had a level head and could perform in

21:00 routine in operating the command post which had communication with the battalion in the field taking operational resupply requests and dealing with emergencies. Thereby freeing me to be the fellow with the oil can making sure that the machine worked and not having a formal hands on responsibility so that when emergencies developed

21:30 I was free to handle it. So that required a lot of hard work for the first three months in Vietnam. But at the risk of running down my job it was an oil can treatment after that to keep things in order and operating. I mean with all that in mind, your leadership, your man management and prior planning sort of thing. So that's essentially what the job involved.

22:00 The routine occurred primarily in two distinct phases. During the morning I would have to brief the patrols who were outside the wire that night. When the battalion was out we had to make sure there was early warning of an attack against the

22:30 base. They had to be briefed on what they had to do. Then all sorts of routine would occur. Then during the day, in the context that there might be five hundred soldiers out in the bush and a hundred and fifty to two hundred soldiers in the base, people going on leave, people performing that transport, supply system and at night

23:00 once the battalion had stopped moving you would start getting your radio messages in about what they required in terms of rations, ammunition and water and whatever for the next day, organising loads, making estimates, conveying those estimates for the task force headquarters who would then order the helicopters to be at the time and confirm delivery details and get that forward. So this would be happening mostly at night. Then

23:30 the system would roll in the morning. The choppers would appear. The company storemen would be producing their stores and resupply items on the pad and out they go and that routine went on twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week for a year. Quite apart from the emergencies when there was a major battle going on and supplies had to be got forward and emergency supplies replaced damaged equipment so there was

24:00 always some degree of emergency going on. You didn't see the casualties because under the operating system in Vietnam although my company owned the medics who went out with the companies and the doctor you didn't see them because they were always out in the field and the casualties would be picked up by the US [United States] Army evacuation system

24:30 and delivered to either the Australian field hospital or in the case of an emergency to a specialist hospital. So although you owned those people you didn't see the casualties so it was very much defending the base and making sure that system of resupply worked for them.

25:00 That was basically it. Have I jumped a bit too far ahead?

It is great getting a rundown on your job. I will come back to that. Just one question I had about your preparation to leave Australia were you required to in a sense get your affairs in order and make a will?

Oh yeah. All that sort of thing. Make a will. Make sure your life insurance was up to date.

25:30 Making sure that your wife had all those support systems in place. There was a military allotment system where most of your pay was allotted to others. I think the ratio was you just retain enough for living expenses in Vietnam. Deciding what the family was going to do. There was no…

26:00 In other words my family were in a married quarter in Woodside which they retained until I got back but they had to decide what they were going to do. They didn't want to stay there all the time I was away so they went travelling. All those domestic things had to be sorted out. Schooling wasn't a major issue because my children were two and four I think at that stage. So yes. All that had to be dovetailed in as well.

26:30 **I ask you that because you are going into a war zone and whether you had it in your mind that something would happen?**

That I wouldn't come back. Oh yes. Yes. I'm trying to remember the implications of that. Of course that promoted another growth industry of insurance reps visiting the battalion. There were eight hundred customers and they were making sure you had a

27:00 valid will and there was some…I can't recall the exact details but you had to be alert to some of the

rogues in the business. Yeah so you had to make that provision that you lived in a period of optimism. You didn't really consider that you wouldn't come back but of course you had to make that arrangement.

27:30 **So where did your flight touch down in Vietnam?**

Vung Tau which was the seaside logistic base in support of the Australian forces in Vietnam. We touched down there after an overnight in Darwin but that's another story.

What was that story?

Darwin. There was a very…

28:00 Can I draw on that for a minute. It has a poignant aftermath. We arrived in Darwin on a Hercules aircraft. I think there were three officers and there might have been a dozen soldiers onboard and we overnight at the RAAF base in Darwin. We went onto the town after dinner for a couple of beers and they were to be our last beers in Australia and we were in the Hotel Darwin which from memory is a very long L shaped bar and we

28:30 the officers had distanced ourselves from the soldiers, up this end of the bar just so that we could have our fun and they could have theirs and there were no politics at the time. The barmaid was telling us to give those commies hell when you get over there boys. And there was an Irish dwarf at the bar. He was a fitter and turner. A fitter and turner by trade and we'd had our share of beer and

29:00 just as we were preparing to leave three jugs of beer came round the corner. The barmaid said, "This is from the diggers for you." And so we sent beer back and that was the end of the night. We started shouting the bar and I got back to the RAAF base and the police rang and said, "Do you own Private Coles." And I said, "I do. He is on my party to go to Vietnam." They said, "Well he can't go to Vietnam.

29:30 He is in the slammer. He wrecked the milk bar." I said, "He's got to go to Vietnam. I can't face my CO one man short." So I paid fifty pounds of my own money to bail Private Coles out of gaol and got him onto the flight. He was a West Australian, rather reprobate, and we got to Vietnam and the sound aftermath of it, I hounded Private Coles

30:00 until April on to get my money back on a personal basis. I wasn't threatening him with prison. It was my decision to bail him out. He paid me the money in the morning and he was dead that afternoon. He was blown up in a minefield and I just thought how incredibly sad that story was. And some years later it came doubly home to me. I was in West Australia

30:30 and walking through Kings Park, the equivalent of the botanic gardens and there is a monument to Vietnam veterans there with Kevin Cole's name on it and so it caught up with me again. So that was just a very poignant thing and it was reflected in one of my poems. So that is the Darwin experience. We arrived in Vung Tau and then we were put on trucks to travel

31:00 maybe twenty miles to the operational base at Nui Dat and I think that experience got chronicled. The first time you are there in your slouch hat and the first time you met live ammunition and you are driving up the road wondering who the enemy is and whether you'll get done over before you get to the task force base and of course it was pretty much a matter of routine for that taskforce to travel up and down the road but there was that sudden transition

31:30 from the airport to the heat and smells of Vietnam people working in the paddies as you passed up there…

And do you recall the smells when you first arrived?

Oh yes. I think if anybody had worked in the tropics…My New Guinea experience and Vietnam. Your first arrival in the tropics is the smell

32:00 …that is quite pronounced and secondly the atmospheric difference. The feeling that when you leave the aircraft you can virtually cut your way through the air. Humid stifling I think…The smells probably didn't come home accurately until you got leave and went down into the market places of Vung Tau. I think it is a feature

32:30 of army life. Even going back to Duntroon. The first smell of Duntroon was mothballs because all your equipment came in naphthalene flakes. But there was a tropic smell about it and then arrival in the task force base showing you what was going to be your home for a year in the form of a tent and then night fell I think and I walked through the battalion base to catch up with my CO. I don't think

33:00 he knew I was there at the time and I think his face turned white because it still hadn't come home to me I was in a war zone. Although I was in the base I walked through the night and the battalion was still a bit twitchy. They still hadn't settled down and he said, "God. You will get shot if you walk around unannounced." Yeah so that was arrival and it went on from there.

And

33:30 **how did you settle in?**

I don't think I did in terms of settling in. We were required to perform immediately. We went on shakedown procedures immediately and I was required to, you know, start producing immediately but in terms of settling in

34:00 the army equip [equipment]; you with a batman, which can be defined as your personal servant, I suppose, and so you didn't have to look after your personal needs. Your batman did some laundry for you, made sure your tent was squared away and did the sandbagging around the tent while you got on with your

34:30 planning which touches on the point that people think it is a servile role but the batman's true role is to equip the officer to do what he had been trained to do and is paid to do. So you had a batman looking after your personal settling in and then it was a matter of you had done a certain amount of it in Australia but getting together with the other two battalions and doing an administrative company job

35:00 and one in particular was a class mate of mine from Duntroon. So I was asking how is the system working and sucking his brains on how the system was going to work. And starting to set up that duty officer system I referred to. Getting to know your key operators and who was going to be good in that role and then so there was no luxury

35:30 of settling because we arrived so that was late '67 and the Tet Offensive broke out in late January '68 so we had three weeks of settling in if you like to call it that and also the fact that we were the additional battalion and our base was virtually still being constructed. You know. The base was raw dirt

36:00 so there were multitudinous tasks. It was not raining at the time and drainage had to be established and defensive wire had to be put out and defensive patrols established so the settling in time became a very rushed thing because once it was only in those three weeks that the battalion ever existed in its entirety

36:30 apart from the period between operations. They would come in for five days and then go out again so there was all of us together for that short period before being committed to the Tet offensive at the end of January so settling in and a bit of a misnomer. There was no luxurious settling in so to speak.

37:00 But those initial exercises weren't stressful exercises. They were to establish routines about how you insert by helicopter. How you got out by helicopter, established in a reasonably peaceful minimum threat area but we were working with enemy always on hand but the real fighting didn't start until the Tet Offensive.

So you used that three weeks

37:30 **to get the systems in place?**

Get the systems in place, get the defences organised, and get all those multitudinous construction jobs done, buildings, sandbags around tents. You had to put two thousand sandbags around a tent and that is just sheer drudge. Filling sandbags and then briefings by the task force intelligence people about the intelligence setup in the province.

38:00 Briefings by the US Air force people in methods of inserting. Health briefings and that sort of thing. Orientation and then acclimatisation and that was a very definite requirement. It took six weeks to acclimatise to perform to that ability in the tropics.

And what did that acclimatisation

38:30 **include?**

A little bit of PT [Physical Training] and a little bit of just, in those initial shake down operations, just exercising with load in the jungle. But there wasn't a great deal of…Acclimatisation is assisted by that but it just happens as a natural process of living in a tropical environment.

39:00 Bearing in mind that the system despite the truncated nature of it did prepare us well physical fitness wise so you were fit when you arrived and it was just adjusting to the tropical temperatures. Bearing in mind that we were living in Woodside like this and in this climate for months before going into action in Vietnam.

39:30 It was quite a change.

Well that is a very good place for us to stop and have a little break.

Good. All right. Now your…

Tape 6

00:31 **Before we broke for lunch you were talking about the lead up to the Tet Offensive and by the time you got there you only had about three weeks before the offensive. What was your briefing?**

Our briefing was commonly known as ‘Grimm’s Fairy Tails’ because shortly after we arrived we were briefed on the situation in Vietnam and at the time some of the (UNCLEAR) events

01:00 but particularly in early January it was a mess. The Viet Cong was a shattered, demoralised force incapable of mounting major offensive operations at that time. Words to that effect and low and behold about two or three weeks in, the Tet offensive broke out and the Viet Cong became very offensive and up to strength and rampant over the country so that would be

01:30 a popular tag of one of Grimm’s Fairy Tales, the lack of preparation of the Viet Cong. So I think it took the country by surprise until…So we got reasonably little warning of it. If they did get warning of it they must have taken reasonably little notice of it. So there was…I wasn’t at that

02:00 level of planning or information in my battalion but that was the impression that was floating around at the time.

And how well prepared was the admin company for the Tet offensive.

Oh the system was in place. The immediate fighting was in the vicinity of the

02:30 provincial capital Ba Ria which was a short distance down from the task force base or the battalion base so there was no requirement for resupply in terms of helicopter support. There was a great deal of support required in terms of combat support, casualty evacuation and support to the

03:00 companies fighting there but no heavy admin [administration] involvement because it was a very short spaced action. The battalion moved out of the province and started operating north of Nui Dat over longer distances which meant that the administration was working harder to resupply over longer distances.

03:30 Procedures then was to position a formal echelon which went forward with the battalion when it was operating a long distance from Nui Dat. We would either draw resupply from a nearby American logistic unit or specific to the battalion resupply would come from me at Nui Dat with helicopters and aircraft which would go forward. It was the…the administrative system was set up at the time of Tet

04:00 and it wasn’t tested, apart from routine, until later on with some of the bigger actions.

And what were the difficulties that you found with the later actions?

Well the later actions were reacting to operational demands which couldn’t be

04:30 forecast. In other words it was reasonably easy to plan rations and water and clothing replacements and that sort of thing forward but you had a situation where if one of the companies was involved in a significant action there would have been damaged weapons or something. You know. Getting weapons out of the system quickly. It was always

05:00 a challenge to react quickly and the sheer volume of demands was sometimes quite daunting. There was a situation in the long high hills where at the conclusion of an operation there one of the rifle company commanders, in conjunction with his engineer advisor wanted to destroy a Viet Cong cave complex in the hills which required an enormous

05:30 amount of explosives and a huge proportion more than normally would be available. We combed the whole American logistics supply system to get that to them on time. And it was a story which one of my fellow company commanders dines out on because he

06:00 was sitting with his engineer advisor out in the field and they decided they needed this huge amount of explosives and by that stage I had developed somewhat of a reputation for calm. Not much disturbed me and they said, “We’ll really disturb this guy. Just wait until he hears the demand for this thirty thousand pounds of explosives.” The amount is not important but it was a huge amount and I was

06:30 a reasonable wake up that they would be delighted if I came back saying, “This is nearly impossible.” So I just said, “Roger, out.” And he dined out on that. “We tried to fluster him and we didn’t succeed.” That is a story that he remembers at reunions. So if a routine was established for getting the routine stuff out, we just had to work innovative and hard

07:00 in those sorts of situations.

Were there many episodes in which you just couldn’t deliver?

No. Never. It was always developed and I suppose this is the pride that the administrative system took. We never questioned what a company in the field required. Even in the most mundane sense in a

07:30 badly administered battalion someone might challenge the usage on socks or something like that but I made it a policy never question what the company requires but give it to them. Ask questions later if you think it was an unreasonable request but supply it and get them to explain later. So there was no instant where the battalion didn’t get what they

08:00 wanted. That was my job. As simple as that.

It is a great duty of care as well.

It is. And it is one of the great aftertastes of Vietnam hinging on responsibility. There you are in Vietnam and you have been trained well and you are doing a job and there is no room for error and no question of error. It was just something you

08:30 instinctively had to do and you did it and there was no…If it hadn't have worked then you would have been removed from the job virtually immediately. When you have the luxury of thinking about it the duty of care and the responsibility was quite significant at the time.

So can you describe where you were based at Nui Dat?

09:00 It was an additional battalion base area carved out of the south east corner of the existing task force base and it was basically a disused rubber plantation and from that rubber plantation developed a large helicopter landing zone and a smaller one for resupply purposes.

09:30 There was a network of roads for the trucks to operate off it and positions for heavy weapons to operate to defend the base if that was necessary. Defence tentage accommodation for the companies when they were back in base between operations. A stores complex, and underground command post,

10:00 and then various amenities and an outdoor theatre and there weren't many playing fields. I think the only playing fields set up were volley ball courts and some room on a helicopter pad big enough to play a game of football from time to time. And that also had to be effectively drained to cater for the monsoon period so a very big network

10:30 of trenches around it and then the whole of that perimeter had to be enclosed by barbed wire and obstacles to enemy penetrations. And an area outside that had to be cleared to allow open fields of fire in the event of people moving against the base. And I'm not sure how many hectares it would have covered. It might have been three hectares in size.

11:00 Capable of accommodating up to eight hundred soldiers.

And who maintained the maintenance of the camp?

Oh the administrative company was responsible for the overall administration of the camp and the rifle companies, the fighting companies left small rear details, rear parties in camp

11:30 to keep sentries posted on the perimeter to act with the company quarter master sergeant who was responsible for positioning the supplies on the helicopter pad at my request for his company to go forward. So he had a small team of storemen and drivers doing that and then there would be a collection of transit

12:00 people. People going on leave and coming back from hospital. People going forward or moving back to Australia so they would be responsible for their own little patch of dirt within the battalion base but I had full responsibility for maintenance of the base and maintenance or the security for the base. I had to put patrols outside the perimeter overnight to give you warning of any possible movement around the perimeter.

12:30 **And the patrols? Who were going out on the patrols?**

Anybody. They were normally as lot as three man…three man to five man patrols. They were armed but they were equipped to act as an additional set of eyes and ears around the perimeter and you would have the patrol commanded by

13:00 signals or a radio corporal who was working in base or waiting to go on leave. Storemen, corporal, at odd times a sergeant. One of the administrative people in base would command a patrol and it would be one of the people in rank, a corporal or a sergeant. And they would go outside the perimeter

13:30 never a set pattern, the patrol location was always changed. I was responsible for briefing each patrol commander. Each morning I would have them in pointing out their routes, times in and times out. Making sure they would not go out where they came in. Making sure they understood how to bring down fire support if they got into difficulties and as a matter of

14:00 fact I would bring in those key patrol leaders at that time and run them through fire mission procedures. And they would go out. It was a reasonably lonely job. Although they were members of an infantry battalion they weren't front line riflemen as such. They were storemen, drivers, craftsmen and the like. And they had to know what they were doing there.

14:30 There was the odd occasion when a patrol would get jumped by the VC [Viet Cong] and have to get themselves out of trouble. That happened on one occasion and the patrol was commanded by a young signals corporal and he performed very well in calling down and adjusting fire. It was such a hot situation that his radio aerial was shot off and the contact was lost.

15:00 And that was another feature of the responsibility. I talked earlier on about setting up a system which operated without me. That was clearly a situation where it was important that I have the availability to

support that patrol out in the field, not physically out there but being on the end of the radio checking that his adjustments to fire were sound

15:30 and he wasn't endangering himself by adjusting the artillery fire and giving him the support he needed. Given that it wasn't their primary function, that there was no such thing in that context of a safe role in the battalion because everyone shared that responsibility.

So first of all what was the fire support procedure?

16:00 Without getting too technical, the internal fire support was based on the infantry section which was based on a rifle group and a machinegun group, and they operate conjointly to support each other and forward of them are operating two scouts just to

16:30 detect the enemy before the enemy detect them. That's the basic element. That's the lowest common factor in infantry operations so if they strike action they can get themselves out of action if it is a low level conflict using that sort of fire, all right. Anything above that needs either the support of other sections or the support of heavy weapons

17:00 such as your mortars or artillery. And the battalion had it's own mortars. Mortars are heavy weapons whose main point is to fire projectiles at a high trajectory and operate at a very short range and it can get over obstacles such as hills where at flatter higher velocity weapon can't. Large arch so you then had the ability to call down your own mortars.

17:30 In a situation that you are out numbered and you want that anti-personnel fire down around you and then your next recourse was artillery which wasn't an integral part of your battalion but you had radio procedures where you could call fourth artillery support virtually instantaneously. Over and above

18:00 that you had your air support and you had recourse to American artillery support so there were a multitude of way that you could be assisted at various related levels of response. So it was then a matter of making sure that your patrol commands, your platoon commanders were briefed on the mission…on the radio and prior mission procedures and also the adjustment of

18:30 the fire. It wasn't my direct province. It was more what the infantry rifle companies got involved in but understanding the beaten zones and the weapons and those mortar and artillery pieces have a long beaten zone. The shells will fall in a rectangle and you plot that rectangle. If you're on the long side of a rectangle they can

19:00 understandably get closer to you to provide very intimate supporting fire. But on the long axis of the rectangle that is tricky because you are on a long axis and the Viet Cong, of course, understood this and they would attempt to get into a position where you just couldn't reach it with your mortars and artillery. They would be virtually embracing you so you were too close and there have been

19:30 situations which were chronicled, not in my direct experience but the company commanders accepted that risk and said that the fire can be brought down closer than established safety limits and that happened a couple of times when one of the rifle company commanders just curtly said, "You know if Sunray accepts his (UNCLEAR) then I'll accept the risk. So in that serious

20:00 predicament you have to get people off your back. So to summarise, it not my direct involvement with the admin company but it was an understanding of the principles and how the fire worked and how it was applied on the ground. And the ability to have radio communications set up with the frequencies and prearranged codes and also in a defensive position when the battalion was in the base for the night here would be established

20:30 pre-registered targets for firing where you would establish the most likely routes for a night attack. And you plan a fire mission on that so that all you have to do is fire the guns and it will land. And you don't have to muck around giving any directional orders in that instance. So it is an understanding of procedures and having the

21:00 radio communications to achieve it.

Well who determines what level of fire support is required?

In those levels of operations it is a question you should ask more accurately of the infantry commanders but in general I can answer it depends on the level. If a platoon, three sections and a lieutenant

21:30 got into trouble and required additional fire support his company commander, his major is travelling with a mortar controller and an artillery controller attached to his headquarters and having established the danger of the situation and the requirement to call down fire whether it be mortars, artillery or air in those

22:00 situations those artillery and mortars travelling with the headquarters would organise them. And the lieutenant on the ground under attack would probably be calling the shots, you know, making the adjustments but the initial response should be established by that fire control party moving with the headquarters. At another level you would have other fire support.

22:30 There is a team there consisting of the artillery commander and other representatives. So the fire

support is coordinated at two basic levels in the battalion to help that man on the ground but that man on the ground would have to have the training to say, “Go right,” on the ground and know where it was falling and make the adjustment.

23:00 **And what was, what kind of daily contact would you have with the battalions that were out on operations?**

Radio predominantly and approximately once every ten days I would go forward to visit the battalion somewhere in the field just as a matter of getting me out of base.

23:30 It becomes quite claustrophobic to stay in one of those bases and to sort out any difficulties and resupply. I would go forward as called for by the CO either by light helicopter or other aircraft. Mainly by aircraft to go out and meet with them and get briefed on any special requirements. But my main

24:00 …My job mainly kept me in base and it was important that I was in base particularly during the night when most of the activity occurred.

So when you went out to visit the battalions and have a look what potential problems were you able to pinpoint being out there in the field?

Shortage of particular items of supply.

24:30 Improvements in the resupply system. They were reasonably few and far between because the system worked reasonably well and bear in mind that I was the overall organiser of that process but each of the rifle companies had

25:00 their own representative in base. Their quarter would be assembling the stores for their particular company and positioning them where I was able to get them forward. So a company wouldn’t be bothering me with some minor details. They probably would be speaking to their Q store [Quartermaster store] on some specific details. So

25:30 the system worked so smoothly that there was rarely a requirement to iron out problems in it. So the trip to see the battalion into the field was mainly to see if there were problems and secondly to keep in touch with just how the battalion was operating because it is easy

26:00 to be divorced. There were people in the battalion who I rarely saw because I was in base and they were out in the field most of the time. It was a morale booster for me to get out of the place and hopefully it did them some good to see that the fellow in charge or resupply was out there to see if they had any problems.

You were saying that things were running fairly smoothly but do you recall any major problems that you would have had

26:30 **with major battles or action?**

No. Most of the battles occurred out of the Nui Dat base. The battalion operated after the Tet offences out of adjoining provinces. They operated north west of Saigon and that’s where they had some of their major battles. Balmoral in particular.

27:00 It was a bit remote for my control because there was a forward echelon working there and they were going direct to the major American bases there for resupply. So there was no drama so to speak in that system. The dramas were mainly in keeping the base to an effective

27:30 measure of defensibility in particular cases. Later in the operational year we had very high malaria casualties and the battalion was operating out in the field with twelve to fourteen men to a platoon as opposed to, you know, the normal twenty or twenty-five or so and so with the emphasis

28:00 on having the best part of the battalion into the field we had to virtually denude the base and so OC [Officer Commanding] admin company, myself, felt a bit like Jesus Christ with the loaves at times. Having to defend the base, keep the resupply system going and yet there was constant demand to keep the numbers in base as low as possible to keep the numbers in the field as high as possible.

28:30 And it wasn’t only the battalion requesting that but your task force commander or brigadier would be studying his numbers at task force headquarters and it would be, “3RAR has two hundred and twenty soldiers in base. You can run on a hundred and eighty.” There was an understanding that there was a finite number before it became very, very difficult to make the base run so that was a routine

29:00 administrative difficulty where it did reach extreme proportions if you had something unusual going on like that high malaria rate or a high casualty rate or something like that. The other difficult areas were just as I mentioned before helping get a base patrol out of difficulty. Helping with sort of voice support to a commander in the field and the rest was

29:30 routine. You know, using your man management skills when people go off the rails from time to time. We had one attempted suicide in the base which had to be handled and soldiers being soldiers played up from time to time. It was no big deal compared to the combat situation out in the field and no physical

danger involved but

30:00 it was the mechanics of keeping a hundred and twenty guys motivated and pointed into the wind.

You've raised quite a few interesting dilemmas there that take skills to deal with. How difficult was it to calm an officer down who was out in the field and fretting?

30:30 No direct experience. That would have occurred in the rifle companies. There would be periods when a rifle company commander would take an officer out of action because he had had a hammering in a particular engagement and just needed a break, you know. From the heavy exposure

31:00 to combat operations. I can't comment specifically on that. My officers were actually contained in base and there was internal squabbling and calming people down who were stressed out by work over lead so there was not a need to counsel and officer to that extent. But bearing in mind that there was also a padre in base that if there was

31:30 a spiritual requirement you could brief the padre on the overall situation and he could take that over. So my officers weren't exposed. They had different stresses in meeting that constant demand for resupply but in my experience they rarely needed that sort of support.

32:00 **Well you did not there was an attempted suicide or was it one who had threatened suicide?**

Oh that was a soldier who for some reason decided to shoot himself one night, but for whatever reason he didn't murder himself but he extensively injured himself and he had to be taken out

32:30 of the base. He subsequently returned after having whatever psychological treatment was necessary. But that was a simple procedure after receiving that report to get a doctor onboard and give him first aid and get him out of the area. Now it wasn't established what had caused that at all. It was inexplicable.

33:00 And he subsequently came back and continued his tour of service.

How stable was he when he came back?

Oh he performed to normal ability. He was a hygiene duty man and he performed until he went home as my memory serves me.

33:30 I have no accurate recollection of him going early so I assume he came back and soldiered on. Whether it was a fit of severe depression I have no direct knowledge.

You also made a point of men playing up on the base. When men came back from patrols or operations how would you

34:00 **…I'm sure you had to let them unwind to a degree but how did you keep that under control so it didn't get out of hand?**

In many ways. When the battalion came back from a heavy operation they might have been in the scrub for up to four weeks so they were exposed to

34:30 that operations casualties and death out there. By the same token on another level the company was operating under high levels of workload keeping the base defended on minimal numbers so they were under their own form of manageable stress so what would happen as a matter of procedure when the battalion

35:00 came back from operations the CO would have the administrative company maintain the base for twenty-four hours or thirty-six hours as if the battalion hadn't returned. He would stand the battalion down and they would get on the booze but under rationing procedures which was two cans a man per day but typical Australian mischief they probably subverted that

35:30 and stockpiled it and that sort of thing. So there was that conscious letting off steam by the battalion and then at a convenient stage the battalion proper would take over the running of the base. So there was that conscious letting off of steam and there was also a system of leave.

36:00 You had five days R&C [Rest in Country] leave in country and that's where you could take local leave and go down to Vung Tau and have a swim at the beach, etc. You had five days R&R [Rest and Recreation] leave where you were told to either elect to go home to visit family or you could go to any destination within South East Asia or Australia so that was

36:30 the arrangement for leave, and also individual officers would manage to find soldier space, knowing that a resupply vehicle was going down to Vung Tau. And if they had been under a fair bit of stress they might get off the base for a night and let off steam down in a reasonably safe area. So to summarise there was that conscious planned letting off of steam

37:00 at the end of an operation. Naturally there were no orders to consume alcohol but alcohol was the release valve associated with it. To my knowledge that never became unmanageable. When you say did you ever have a battalion just rotten drunk and incapable of performing but

37:30 the system was set up to allow the battalion to do that.

What about sports?

Not a great deal. Indoor things like darts and the odd company organised indoor sports. There were volleyball courts and some football but not much sport. There was

38:00 definitely no inter-unit sport within the base. There was no 3 Battalion against 2 Battalion. Simply time didn't allow for it and I'm not sure how much good it would have done. The battalion is operating as a team anyway out in the bush for four weeks at a time under very strenuous physically innovative conditions and the last thing they wanted

38:30 to think of was being physical back in the base. And they were back in base for such short times and physical anyway with sandbagging etc so it is a moot point that sport would have improved people from an aerobic point of view but I think time precluded any form of highly organised sport. But there was volley ball and kicking a football around.

39:00 **Well how long were they at base?**

On the operations a typical pattern would be out for three weeks in for five days or a week and out again. But bear in mind that that's…back in base you had to defend the perimeter. There were other patrols to go on.

39:30 Often while the battalion was back in base an individual company was called upon to do an individual operation somewhere. So generally speaking it was a misconception to ever believe that the battalion was actually at rest. They were in base but occupied doing other things, preparing for the next operation so I don't think physically people got much time off apart from those ten days a year, five

40:00 days R & R and the odd night on a vehicle going down to Vung Tau. There just simply wasn't that much time. I suppose out in the field on operations with the sentry requirement there sleep deprivation would have been a significant factor. People just got more sleep back in base than they would have got out in the field because they were in a

40:30 much safer environment which didn't require that same level of permanent alertness.

Okay. We've got another tape change.

Good.

Tape 7

00:31 **The Tet offensive Ray, was that the most intensive period for you or was that just the beginning and then it remained fairly…**

No. It wasn't a terribly intense period for me because there wasn't any real resupply involved. It was only a short and sharp action that the battalion was committed to Tet itself and so there were no repercussions

01:00 from Tet. The companies virtually looked after themselves because they were only just down the road so to speak so there was no need to take aircraft forward or resupply them apart from the ammunition that they were requiring and the main requirements there wee purely combat things like air support and artillery support. The resupply effort

01:30 didn't really…Or put it, this was with a perspective on it it was constant as apposed to…It had no identifiable peaks and troughs. It was constant and it worked but it needed constant work at night to get the requests in and work in the morning to get them out.

02:00 **I was just wondering whether there ere times when there would be more sleepless nights than others?**

For me personally. Yes. There would be the odd sleepless night initially having a huge resupply demand to go forward and hoping that the orders were specific

02:30 enough for the people to get the orders assembled and have it there in time. Those were things you should never worry about because it always happened. Nevertheless there was some worry initially until you grew to trust your people who were working in that area. Yeah. Sleepless nights. I can't recall having many sleepless nights.

03:00 It was really…If you are talking about the stresses of working in an infantry battalion my stresses were no where like the stress of working in combat situations. There was a highly responsible stress of not letting the battalion down which was the…They always got what they needed but I was

03:30 very well supported by the organisation's storemen and duty officers to achieve that. And that…my only

real fear in Vietnam was that sort of fear of having an organisation which would never fail. I was never really concerned about

04:00 personal danger. It was more that team fear and in my reading about it it is what motivates a lot of people. There is that fear of personal danger and maybe death and that is equal to a fear of perhaps letting your own people down and fear in Vietnam whether you call it fear or anxiety

04:30 was just nervousness initially. Had my training been good enough to keep this organisation geared up and motivated enough to deliver.

And I guess I'm wondering how you learn to…I'm going to use the grease the oil joints. You used the oil

Oiling the machine?

Yeah. So how did you get to know how to use that system?

05:00 Oh I suppose it's…You set up a system of duty officers who would be present in the battalions out there and radio communication with the rear base so that you can talk to the CO at any time and talk to the CO at any time and talk to the company commanders to those duty officers were there taking routine questions.

05:30 And calling me if somebody wanted to speak to me personally. So that then cleared me up to go around with my metaphorical oil can and just get around the place, talk to soldiers, see how we ware getting on and identify where you think there might have been a bit of a morale problem. Somebody might not have received mail for some time. They were having a grizzle about his treatment at the hands of one of the NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers]

06:00 where you would have a chat with his platoon commander and said, "I have observed this. Is everything all right in that area? Just keeping an eye on how people were getting on. Having a look at standards of hygiene in the area. Hygiene particularly in the cookhouses, kitchens to guard against any

06:30 potential outbreak of disease. Looking at suspect drainage and getting that corrected. Looking at malarial precautions, whether they were being actually recorded, whether people were taking their daily suppressive. Motivating your patrol commanders when they went out to make sure they were switched on

07:00 and doing well. I suppose what I am saying with the oil can was the ability to go auto and look at what was going on and communicate with people, which you couldn't do if you were glued to a radio set all day and then having the ability to deal with the major problems when you throw

07:30 away the oil can that is just keeping everything running smoothly. It is not having to be in the command post when you are required to deal with a problem such as an attempted suicide or that patrol in trouble outside the wire and having to be in communication with that specific person for a long time. In other words it is also the

08:00 kind of staying loose enough to handle the big ones when they come up.

And would you organise like formal inspections or was it done mostly…

Mostly informally. You might…There is one photo in my album of a company lined up for parade. We have a Kapyong Day Parade in three RAR to commemorate the Battle of Kapyong in Korea.

08:30 It was fought by the third battalion and I think that was the only time that you actually inspected your soldiers to make sure they were fit to stand on parade. You know. If they had dirty equipment and their brass was polished etc, which was abnormal. You didn't have any brass to polish unless you went on that sort of a parade. Apart from that it was…formal in the sense that when the battalion

09:00 was out I would phone one of the rifle companies and say, "I am coming down to look at your kitchen." You know. I would meet the bloke in charge and go through the kitchen or, "I am going to see the latrines in your area." But there weren't people standing fast in neatly pressed uniforms by the latrine. And you also had…And you also had specialists

09:30 in that regard. You had a hygiene staff sergeant and his job was to do all that. It was just your techniques of command. If you just left it to the hygiene sergeant, you know, just in terms of man management it was good to see the boss

10:00 who could be supportive. So it was just the old principle of man management and communication which that sort of setup allowed me to do. That's what I am referring to as the kind of oil can approach.

And you mentioned earlier in the day that you answered to 2IC [Second in Command] for daily routine matters.

Yes. Yes.

So what sort of a man was he? Did you have a good relationship?

Not initially. He

10:30 was very demanding. Mainly for organisational reasons because the 2IC by virtue of the job was second in command of the CO and normally understudied for the CO and would step into his place in the event of the CO being on leave or becoming a

11:00 casualty. In 3 RAR's case that was perverted to an extent in that we arrived, as I said, at very short notice and occupied a new base. The CO appointed the 2IC as virtually a command in base construction. His job was to get the base organised. And then he took

11:30 his…Without boring you too much with details you didn't have an operations officer. It was just an organisational position. The operations officer helped the CO say how the battle was going to operate so you would take OC support company and give him that job and run support company with a captain so you would get an experienced

12:00 major as OC support officer. Because the 2IC was running the construction of the base or overseeing the construction of the base the ops officer became virtually 2IC for the battalion operationally because the 2IC was doing a specific job.

12:30 Now having done that there was a bit of a personality clash and he used to always be on my back, you know. He preferred to…I would prefer he wasn't there type of thing. And it was a matter of time cured everything in that one; he established that I knew what I was doing he stayed off my back. There was an

13:00 unnecessary one on one compounded a bit by personalities. I was very fond of doing my own thing and he was very fond of being over supervisory which touches on another point I think. One of the qualities of my relationship with the CO dealing at that level was once the CO established my credentials he very rarely spoke to me except in a…

13:30 Once he knew I could do my job he was always there to support me. He was never there to oversee me or be critical. I think that was one of the nice features of the battalion that made it a pleasant battalion. Once you worked yourself into a position of trust the CO did everything to make it easy for you. The CO trusted you implicitly to do the right thing and it's something for which I like to pat myself on the back.

14:00 They didn't have to look over the shoulder of the support people. They knew it was always there. But getting back to the 2IC it was one of those unnatural organisational things where he had somebody to harass. Yeah. It sorted itself out.

And does that sort of go down the line?

No. I took it all.

14:30 You get it under control. Yeah.

You've got big shoulders. You've mentioned and I've seen a photo of your underground command post. I'm intrigued to know where your underground command post was in relation to your other officers and indeed why was it underground?

Underground purely to protect the communications

15:00 and the occupancy from artillery or mortar attack in the event that the base was under attack it would be unacceptable to have that above ground and wiped out by one mortar round so it was protected and it would operate under fire. You lived above ground and you had the duty officer and your radio operators in there. And if it was required for you to be in there…

15:30 I would be in there a lot of time during the day looking at patrol roots and speaking to the companies on this and that. It was just a requirement that if your position was under attack your communications should function effectively. Obviously when you looked at the living accommodation it was equal responsibility to make sure that soldiers

16:00 were protected in event of an attack so each company had it's weapons pits established where you could get into a fox hole or weapon pit if you needed to and the tentage was sandbagged so short of a direct hit the sandbag walls would absorb mortar fragments or small arms rounds to a depth where it would stop a bullet and would stop fragments. So

16:30 it was a simple protective measure in which…typical not only the base but the battalion operations went underground each night. In the base area of course underground headquarters would be a bit more sophisticated but out in the field if there was some engineering

17:00 people there they would get around and make sure the battalion headquarters had a hole but people had to dig it out themselves. It was just simply to get out of the line of fire. And it's standard operational procedure. Dig yourself in first before you do anything else.

And was the perimeter of your base camp ever under threat while you were there?

No. Not significantly.

17:30 As I said some of the patrols fought contact outside. That was an attempt by the VC to get near the base either as nuisance value or as something more serious. There were odd cases where the VC would chuck a grenade over the wire and

18:00 there were no casualties so that was almost a nuisance. Whether in my time a patrol was observed getting into position at night and the word was passed back to the Viet Cong to have a go at the patrol. So there is three men out there. Let's take ten out and we'll have a good chance of doing them over. And there was

18:30 a village called Ba Long not too far from the base which was a hostile village. It was not too far from the perimeter. So there was that level of threat. Bear in mind anything could happen and in 1966 as you will obviously recall in the Battle of Long Tan

19:00 where the 6RAR acquitted themselves so well. That could have been a major movement against the base. You know, when I say major movement I mean a regimental sized movement against the Nui Dat base. But actually the base was mortared. The Viet Cong mortared the headquarters and the artillery areas so touch wood

19:30 that didn't happen on any scale to us and whether it was because they were occupied doing something else or whether they knew generally or assumed generally that there would be base patrols out and that would give some early indication of their movement against the base. Now those people could have been overrun had a major force moved against the base in a hurry but they were

20:00 always given some warning of it. It is hard to answer your question accurately but there was no major threat to the camp apart from throwing a grenade over the fence which was probably more nuisance value than real threats. It was commonly established that

20:30 they would…It was assumed that they would tie lanterns to buffalo and send them walking around at night and we would employ a lot of ammunition firing at suspected movement of enemy troops and that sort of attempt to…

Diversions.

Diversion sort of things. But there was no major ground threat to the base in my time.

21:00 It was just I think the nature of the operations changed Once it was established the Battle of Long Tan was a defeat and they might have established that the task force base is too hard a nut to crack and other priorities came up like the Tet Offensive and taking on the softer targets so to speak. I can't answer the question

21:30 accurately.

And you never made sorties out to that hostile village.

No. No. It was off limits. You could enter it during day. It was a pretty normal village during the day but it had the characteristics of a lot of Vietnam.

22:00 You never knew who the enemy were. You could go to Vung Tau and the man behind the bar might be Viet Cong. It was commonly assumed knowledge that the Viet Cong also used Vung Tau as a rest and recuperation centre. You were not sure but we joked that that could have been true. The barman could have been a Viet Cong off duty. You couldn't differentiate the enemy for the general population so Ba Long was a bit of a Bolshie [Bolshevik – revolutionary] village

22:30 close to the base and from time to time villagers suspected of harbouring Viet Cong could be caught and searched. You would mount an operation and seal it up. Get an aircraft up and surround it and report at the front gate and be checked out and whatever and you would find a suspect and turn him over to the

23:00 authorities or whatever so it just had a bad name, Ba Long, deservedly or undesirably. But it stands to reason that some of the patrols who were jumped just outside the base it could have been someone from the nearby village as opposed to a Viet Cong unit coming from a more remote area.

23:30 **There are many iconic images of the Vietnam War. I'm wondering or I'm curious as to what the sound of choppers means to you?**

It is very emotional. Choppers [helicopters]. There are various iconic sounds.

24:00 The Second World War introduced the Dakota aircraft, resupply aircraft and that is very iconic. Noise. It is a lazy sort of a noise and I relate to it because a significant number of the transport aircraft in New Guinea in the '60s were ex-World War II DC3s and some of their insignias were just painted over. And similarly with the Vietnam war.

24:30 The noise of an Iroquois is very iconic in that it took the troops into battle, took them out of battle, took the wounded out, etc, etc. And apart from the noise it penetrated. The downwash actually created a vibration in your body. And I was at the…there was a dedication parade in Canberra.

25:00 I think it was 1992 when I think thirty thousand veterans gathered in Canberra for the dedication of a

memorial there and we were assembled just short of the war memorial for marching down Anzac Parade and they flew an Iroquois over and there were people in tears for that.

25:30 Iconic reason and plus it is just…I think human behavioural noise. People might speak about it but it was the vibrating penetration of your body that just make it indelible in your memory. And that's Vietnam. Noise does happen to

26:00 excite me. There are other noises. There are noises of the Mustang, the World War II fighter that has iconic noise for different reasons. It is a highly aerobatic aircraft but the motor doesn't appear to be working. It just lopes along and does all these amazing things and there is no apparent indication that the motor is under stress as opposed to say listening to the

26:30 Grand Prix [Formula 1 car race]…Zoom. The ultra high frequency of a racing car. So to answer your question I think the Iroquois is probably the most iconic sound because of the multitude of roles it performed and that vibratory factor.

And how dependable were they for your task?

Oh extremely.

27:00 Great. They were the workhorse of the Vietnam War. I can't speak mechanically for them but they always ran on time. And also for the Chinook [helicopter]… Not that I had much experience. We would use them for heavier lifts but the Iroquois was used more for troop insertion and casualty evacuating and some of the lighter

27:30 resupply.

So which chopper would you mainly use for the resupply?

Mainly the Iroquois. They were used to carry about a thousand pounds dependent on the distances and that sort of thing. I would carry it internally or in a sling slung underneath the fuselage. And the Chinook I think carried about eight thousand pounds. I think it had about

28:00 eight times the lift of the Iroquois.

And what sort of direct communication did you have with the Iroquois drivers, the pilots?

We had radio communication with them and they would…and my company, my organisation would tee up the resupply for the next day. We had

28:30 x thousand pounds to five locations commencing at such and such a time. You'd schedule all that and their code name was 'albatross' and you'd be at your receiver and "Albatross 101 approaching your location." They would fill it up and you've have a briefing sheet. Give them a briefing sheet. And off they'd go and you'd then call up the

29:00 company so "Albatross OI (UNCLEAR)" And so the company commander would have that aircraft's frequency and when they were approaching the delivery point and the drop zone the helicopter pilot would call up the infantry on the ground and they would say, "This is 2, your call sign." "This is Albatross I01, pop smoke." And the unit would have to throw a smoke canister

29:30 of an undisclosed colour and the helicopter pilot said, "I see blue." And they would acknowledge that they had thrown blue because the enemy if they knew and aircraft was approaching knew that was a technique and might throw up red smoke or something like that. If it was red smoke you know that the bad guys were doing it. So that was an identification for the ground people so they knew that those receiving were good guys and not bad guys. So they would communicate with us as they were coming to pick it up and then when

30:00 they were delivering they would communicate with the people on the ground. I would lose control of that. I had no further involvement than that apart from them receiving it and it never got lost. It always got to where it was going.

I want to ask you what sort of confirmation of arrival?

Virtually none I don't think because it was a kind of a routine

30:30 thing. It wasn't quite like my fax machine. It is an interesting question. No one rang up and said, "We got it." You would have heard if they hadn't got it. Put it that way. It was so…And you would have heard, but it never happened, if the helicopter had got shot down or something like that. So to answer your question, no news was confirmation.

31:00 I can't remember procedure to say we had received it. I think it was more the negative. If you hadn't received it you would soon hear about it.

And were you aware of how dangerous those drops might have been?

Oh yes. Yes. Well they weren't as dangerous as the insertions. Taking…You have say

31:30 five hundred…You have a hundred men airborne and they are inserted into a landing zone and it was known as reasonably safe or hot. And a hot LZ [Landing Zone] was one where you could have enemy fire immediately on landing so there were techniques for hot insertions where you had gunship up there covering them with an artillery beam, etc, and then

32:00 you might have a relatively safe insertion with whatever reading of the tactical situation but a normal routine resupply would be delivered under reasonably safe conditions and the company wouldn't call for a resupply until they secured the area. Arguably, it could be shot down by someone that was unaccounted for at the time but much more dangerous would be

32:30 say casualty evacuation where a chopper has to come in under the imminent risk of fire in a battle field situation and somebody is at risk of dying and there have been incredible acts of bravery performed in that area and physical…not only bravery but physical pushing of the helicopter

33:00 to it's limits. The pilot is actually using the main rotor blade to cut a clearing. You know. The size of the tree is such that we are not going to ruin our chopper but getting it down there. So the resupplies were the least dangerous operations apart from some of the…reasonably safe in that they were normally operating in fairly secure areas. Unsafe in that the flying characteristics of the aircraft

33:30 were often put to their limit. For instance an American crew delivering that huge quantity of explosives for me the only way they would get it in was with that huge jungle canopy was to sling loads sixty feet below the aircraft. So they would have to pick up eight thousand pounds of explosives on a sling with a sixty foot strap and it was like flying a pendulum and it was a very windy blustery day

34:00 and those American pilots were getting that stuff into a pinpoint location at the top of a ravine. That was pushing the aircraft to their limits so there was danger if you gave them a difficult job that they would be exposed to a threat like that but rarely would a chopper doing resupply be exposed to high levels of danger like some of the American

34:30 experiences at a major base at Khe Sanh where they actually had C130 aircraft actually blown up on the strip because they were operating in an impossible situation but I don't know whether…I don't think there was ever an Iroquois lost or damaged in a resupply mission. It just was safer than the other operations.

And what were the most

35:00 **commonly requested supplies?**

Oh well routinely it was water. Water, ammunition and rations and then replacement of items of clothing, boots, worn out shirts and socks and whatever. We'd try and get them a hot meal whenever possible so the cook would

35:30 perform wonders on these little petroleum stoves we had back in base and get fresh buns and hot meals out as long as it was within a reasonable carry distance from. They say the (UNCLEAR whale force) to fight the next day.

And how would you get a hot meal in?

Put it in a hot box. A miniature esky.

36:00 That didn't happen very frequently. It was a bit of a morale booster to be out there in the jungle and get a fresh roll and a piece of hot turkey or something. And then there would be the one off weapon that got busted and they wanted a replacement weapon or replacement medical supplies. Any number of things but the main weight

36:30 would be in water and rations. Quite often the major ammunitions would just be sent direct from an American supply depot, you know. That was good for heavy weapons like the mortar which is quite a large round and so the Iroquois wasn't an efficient way of delivering those things that were much heavier.

And how often would

37:00 **soldiers lose their rifle or need a new rifle?**

Infrequently. They were all dependable weapons but mechanical breakdown. I can't really accurately remember. I didn't deal in detail with that sort of thing. That would have been a thing that went directly through their company representative on the base. But

37:30 the weapons were quite dependable and they normally waited till we got back to base and one of my NCOs was an armourer sergeant and he would have a system of recalling weapons and he would service the weapons before they went back into the field.

I was just wondering whether there was a need for a stocktake

38:00 **and whether there was an accountability sort of system?**

Not really I don't think. No. It is just if they work they work but if they didn't work you got rid of them. I

don’t’ think there was a high demand for replacement weapons. If they were damaged by enemy action, that would have been reasonably rare. There were instances in other battalions I think but the

38:30 attack on Fire Support Base Coral I think the enemy got near the gun line and might have damaged the artillery pieces. But in 3RAR’s case I don’t think there was any significant damage to the weapons. It is a bit out of my province. The rifle company commanders know a better answer to that.

So you personally were mostly dealing with water, clothing, rations.

Yep.

39:00 As I said casualties normally would go direct to the Australian Field Hospital which was established at Vung Tau. Until they established that the casualties would go into the American system. The US army ran the medivac choppers and then the

39:30 RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] initially had a small number of choppers and they did….I think they did casevac [casualty evacuation] and a little bit of resupply. The point I am making is I think in ’67 or close to that time the Australians set up their own field hospital at Vung Tau.

40:00 At that stage there was also a US evacuation hospital in Vung Tau so it was a matter of communication when the guy was picked up. “This guy’s got a head wound.” Well he goes direct to 36 Evacuation Hospital. There was an election

40:30 at the point of pick up where he was going to be taken and you know, the battalion had it’s doctor in the field but the doctor was always forward except when the battalion was in base. He would often not see the casualties either because they would be picked up at the point of injury and taken out direct and that was one of the great pluses of the Vietnam War.

41:00 He could be in the hands of the neurosurgeon within twenty minutes or thirty minutes. He wasn’t carried out on a stretcher in a week over the Owen Stanley Mountains in New Guinea. So it was mainly as you say the essentials to keep the body going. And of course you’d take reinforcements forward at the same time.

We just need to change our tape again.

Tape 8

00:31 **Ray. I’m just going to ask you about your barracks. Whereabouts did you stay on the base?**

Whereabouts?

What were your barracks like?

Initially a tent. Duckboards on the floor with a nine frame bed and a cupboard and after that they constructed timber outbuildings

01:00 to house headquarters above the ground and I had a little room on the end of one of the headquarters buildings. Just half the size of this building with a bed, a table, a lamp and so officers normally had individual accommodation of some nature. The rifle company officers would probably just live in a tent.

01:30 Two lieutenants to a tent or something like that and the major would probably just have a tent on his own. And the soldiers lived in tents, usually four soldiers to a tent. But there was no…A couple of officers in admin company had accommodation under a roof, a metal roof and the rest were under tents

02:00 for the year.

And I’m assuming you had a batman still.

Yep. right.

And what other responsibilities did your batman have?

He’d have….In addition to his looking after the officer in a rifle platoon he would have normal

02:30 …He would probably act as a bit of …It depended how the company actually worked but he would probably act as a bit of a bodyguard, staying close to the company commander and delivering messages and that sort of thing. The overall job of the batman is to relieve the officer from not having to look after himself. Not having to cook a meal or dig his own hole in the ground

03:00 Or set up his own shelter. That is out in the field but if you look at the life of an officer in the field from the time he stops he just doesn’t have time to look after himself and in my case primarily in base my batman would bring me a cup of tea in the morning, collect any washing that needed to be done. Only small washing because our

03:30 greens went down to a contract launderer in a nearby village. And any personal things I wanted him to do so I could just go round with my old oil can so to speak. So he'd so that for me. And then he would be at the disposal of the company sergeant major for general duties. He might be on sentry duties. He might be at one of the outposts or on patrol or cleaning something or something like that. So he was a

04:00 soldier whose primary function was to make sure I didn't have to worry about where some of those fundamentals were coming from. But the point is he didn't sit on his bum wondering whether I needed a new handkerchief. He was doing things for me and then he went on to general duties. And the same for me. Although the batman was a necessary

04:30 thing you would never have the luxury of a batman just on hand waiting to cater for the needs of an individual officer. They had other things to do too.

Did he come over to Vietnam with you?

Yes. He was a National Serviceman. In fact one day I will look him up. He was a very nice fellow. I think he has gone into the church. I wouldn't be surprised

05:00 because he came from a pretty religious family here in Adelaide. It has been on my agenda for ten years to track him down. I will get around to it one day but he was a National Servicemen.

How did you find the National Servicemen were coping over there?

Quite well. It was perhaps the halcyon days of the National Service involvement in Vietnam. Unless it was concealed from

05:30 me I am fairly confident there wasn't a huge drug scene and that is a general statement with the National Service and the RAR or the regulars. The National Serviceman was almost surprisingly not terribly involved with the politics of the thing. There were no visible malcontents and this was the flavour of the '60s.

06:00 Menzies has said we are going to war and here we are. We're one of Uncle Bob's marbles [referring to Bob Menzies and the drawing out from a barrel of marbles marked with birthdays numbers to select conscripts] and we've been pulled out of a hat and here we are. And they did their job and went home at periodic times and an interesting comment from one of them I was having a beer with. He was a driver and he was going home and I said, "How did you like your tour in Vietnam?"

06:30 He said, "It's the safest thing I ever did." He said he was a driver on a rig operating from the river district. He went to New South Wales and Queensland and he said he was on Benzedrine and all those pep up pills and "I was on my way to killing myself. It was the safest thing I ever did being called up." That's an exceptional sort of a statement I guess but they were the crème of the youth of the time and also

07:00 they brought with them skills which the army was very fortunate to have. You'd get a National Serviceman who had been a PMG, Post Master General or Telecom, linesman and so you wouldn't have to train him to be an army linesman in a signal platoon. So they carried great skills and once they got the national

07:30 service officer scheme up and running, they were a breath of fresh air. They were highly competent young officers who brought a breath of fresh air because they were not as conservative. They were not as engrossed in the tradition of the army and they could think out of the box and have quite innovative and cheeky ideas

08:00 so they were a blessing as well so your point before, really unless you looked in your company records… I would have to look in my company records to find out whether a soldier was a National Service or a private, a regular soldier. So they were reasonably indistinguishable. Sometime later when

08:30 I got home from Vietnam I ran a reinforcement unit training reinforcements. One of a few problems with the National Service scheme was that the government had decreed that National Serviceman could go forward to Vietnam to replace drafts coming home at the completion of their time but a regular soldier could only go

09:00 forward if there were casualties. So they had to wait in the reinforcement stream basically till mates died and became casualties and that hurt the regulars to the extent that here I am, I volunteered for this and I want to be in Vietnam and we have all these National Servicemen going in my place. But that was a political decision to keep the fifty-fifty balance.

09:30 I found them very good. They had a right to complain about the system but you rarely heard them doing it.

Also your duty of care of the men did entail some counselling to a degree with some of them. How difficult was that. Not only

10:00 **going out there and seeing action but having to deal with the repercussions of that?**

I had no direct involvement in Vietnam because the bulk of the soldiers who would be exposed to that

sort of care or counselling would be those soldiers in the rifle companies

10:30 and that would come to the attention of their company commander to do that for them. In my case there would be reasonably few members of that company facing the same level of trauma and thence requiring that level of counselling. So really my job in the company was a more routine counselling

11:00 nature. I don't call it counselling. I just call it the established principles of man management being observed in the company so I think it is a slightly wrong impression that I had to deal with people who were traumatised. If their trauma came it might have come after Vietnam for all sorts of reasons but to my experience there was a low level of immediate

11:30 trauma. It was more distress occasioned by their being in Vietnam at the time. It would have been quite different in the rifle companies who were in the jungle involved with tracking down and fighting with the Viet Cong. That was a different story despite the fact that it was in the same battalion.

Okay. Well speaking of the unwinding and the R & C that the men would have what

12:00 **kind of warnings were the men given about brothels and VD [Venereal Disease]?**

They were told of the risks and encouraged to take preventative measures. I think the realisation was you wouldn't stop it but you could control it. I think that's all that was stated on it.

12:30 I'm not sure whether the incidence of venereal disease in 3 RAR was any higher or any lower than any other battalion in that area. It's a perennial chestnut that has been flashed backwards and forwards ever since armies have been in existence. Venereal disease…some of the implications were in Vietnam

13:00 that if a soldier was detected with VD he couldn't return to Australia till that was cleared up and you'd have those potentially damaging situations where you would have a young wife waiting at Sydney Airport for her husband to arrive home and somebody telling a white lie to her that he was behind to clean up the camp or something

13:30 like that. So they were the realities of venereal disease. And the nature of the war in that you could have nineteen year olds possibly away from home for the first time in their lives, six weeks in the bush, four weeks in the bush and then relieved to go down to Vung Tau on R & C and the

14:00 bargirl grabs them by the groin and all the sensible precautions go out the window. I mean there are realities so accept. There have been moves in the army saying that let's accept that as the status quo and at least have military brothels where someone supervises hygiene and things like that.

14:30 I think the last instance of that was in Korea I think and that was rapidly put the kibosh on by a welfare organisation Australia for being a unacceptable condonation of that sort of practice. So there is no easy answer to it but to answer your questions. Soldiers were,

15:00 as had been tradition in most military circles, were warned of the dangers and people made sure that they had immediate access to condoms and they were encouraged to report sick if it happened. Now I don't know what the incidence was or what the studies revealed was the incidence of VD in Vietnam as opposed to other

15:30 wars and in various units and base units and otherwise. It's a perennial problem. I'm not sure indeed just what the ratios were, say malarial incidence as opposed to venereal disease.

Well before we

16:00 **changed tapes we were talking about supplies and difficulty with water rations and getting them out. What about petrol and those kinds of maintenance?**

Well the battalion in the field would probably have a zero requirement for petrol because it was essentially

16:30 all on foot at that time. There would be no situation in the operations I can remember where there was a requirement of support they would be within a petrol tanks operation of Nui Dat. That wasn't an issue. Just bear in mind it was basically that the battalion went into the field with whatever they could carry on their back. They basically went into the field with whatever they could carry on their back.

17:00 Just water and rations and the heavier stuff would be either coming from ammunition depots round the country or direct from other depots. Large pieces of engineering equipment…There would be no point in bringing it down to my organisation having it lifted there. It would go direct from

17:30 a supply depot and if I didn't have the equipment in my organisation to deliver I would have contacts in various headquarters. For instance with that thirty thousand tons worth of explosive and my contact through the supply and transport guy in the transport headquarters would say, "Well I'll get it for you. Where does it need to be?"

18:00 And there was some necessary liaison with all that sort of thing and the US army pilots came over and dropped in their supplies and off they went. So petrol was not a requirement because there was no machinery operating and the infantry at the time operated essentially on its feet.

Well you mentioned

18:30 **earlier going back to leave with the five days**

R & C or R & R.

Where did you spent your five days R & C.

I spent it at Vung Tau. It was a coastal area and an old French resort centre and it was…The village of Vung Tau had a French name, 'Cape St. Jacques'." It was co-located or

19:00 adjacent to the logistical support area in Vung Tau so I had five days R & C. I booked myself into the Grand Pub and got pissed for five days and went home. Not an outstanding performance but it was my escape valve. I got up and had breakfast, had a few beers before dinner and I had a Jekyll and Hyde [good and bad side] aspect to me.

19:30 I was a Cognac drinker at night so I would drink Cognac at night and wake up with some very bizarre hangovers. And that was my R & C if you like to call it that.

What part of your job was getting you to the point that that type of R & C

20:00 **was necessary?**

Just to remove you from a constant twenty-four hour sameness I guess. Just living in a rubber plantation between a hole in the ground and a tent. That sort of thing and an overlying responsibility

20:30 that anything could happen. Just being keyed up and always reasonably alert to deal with a drama and so I suppose the R & C was the situation where you could go and have no responsibility whatsoever and it was reflected in what I did. I got on the booze

21:00 and I enjoyed myself knowing full well that I would return to that Spartan existence in five days. In the R & R circumstance I returned home to meet my wife and two daughters in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast and we had time there. That might have been a mistake in reflection

21:30 because it is very hard within a years absence to return in five days, particularly with children who don't really know you. You are looked at strangely by your children and it takes more than five days to get back into the swing of your children bearing in mind that they are four years of age and nearly two. So they were two different sorts of things. I think the R & C

22:00 was just a…Not so much a debauch but just let it all hang out. But I was still in Vietnam. You had two choices in R & R. You could either stay in South East Asia or go home and I elected to go home. And it might have been a line ball whether you stayed away from your family for a whole year or…There were certain people who consciously elected

22:30 to stay away from the family for a whole year for that reason. Not to expose their children to a person that they really didn't know until they had a chance to communicate and really get together.

How did you feel at the end of those five days having to leave and go back to Vietnam?

R & R? Awful. It was (UNCLEAR fat a media) transfers in some pub in Sydney

23:00 at dawn and I'm not sure of the exact timeframe but you are back in the mud and slush that evening, so to speak. So the transition was quite horrendous in my opinion.

And in that time how was your wife coping with you away?

Quite well. She elected…We had a married quarter up here at Woodside and she elected, a woman of

23:30 great initiative sort of thing and she elected not to stay there. She didn't want to stay in a little army married quarter while I was away, so she went travelling. She went round the eastern seaboard. He had friends in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane and then went up and back to New Guinea. Stayed there. Took the children up there and had a ball to the extent that

24:00 when I told here I was coming home on R & R it was virtually, "Must you?" And we laughed about it after the event because it just required a change in her travel routine I think. At the time she had to come down and see her rotten husband in Brisbane. But that was the positive side of it. She…most wives had to deal with

24:30 family illnesses…It is just part of the male psyche that one of your daughters has some intestinal illness and you are not there to assist. She has to take that onboard as well as the routines of car service and maintenance and fixing whatever is broken in the house but she coped well.

25:00 **So in that year away you had five days R & C and five days R & R. Was that adequate unwinding time?**

Yes. Under the circumstances. Given the total

25:30 picture for me it was adequate despite that questionnaire should I have come home from my R & R or stayed there. Because the reality of my life in Nui Dat was although I had that twenty-four hour commitment I could go to the pictures every nigh. The pictures were a hundred meters from my CP [Command Post] so I could just come back if there was any sort of blue.

26:00 I could go to a concert party but I only got to one and I was called away from it. So apart from the R & C and R & R I had my own relief mechanisms in the camp and I ate in comfort while my battalion was out in the scrub so I was okay. At risk of odious comparison diggers stayed away for five years during the Second World War from

26:30 their families so I think it's all relative and the troops in Tobruk probably didn't get out of that place for similar periods and so I suppose that it has to be taken in that context and also there is a certain

27:00 disadvantage of the hot and cold treatment. To be taken from a spartan all male environment into a less spartan environment and then returned to it, such as returning from R & R in Sydney, it is a hurtful process to have to make that complete adjustment within a year. You are almost at the point of saying that you didn't get much benefit from either. You get pissed on R & C and

27:30 that doesn't do your body any good and in R & R you dealt with just touching base momentarily with family. So under those circumstances not so much adequate but reasonably irrelevant. I don't think anybody came back from R & R or R & C totally invigorated by the experience. And as a truism

28:00 I would much rather have said, "Well let's get it over with and go home." Have ten days off. I suppose to put it another way if someone had said, "We'll shorten your tour by ten days I would have said, "Yeah. Go for it." There would be other opinions than that I'm sure.

Well that was an interesting point that you raised that you were on call twenty-four hours but you were able to get away and do things but did you ever find that you were able to relax?"

28:30 Oh yes. It was essential that you relaxed and you asked the question earlier about sleepless nights and I don't think I had any. That is just how people are. I rarely had a sleepless night and didn't have any traumas apart from Vietnam. It is the…I think that's

29:00 another asset of having had military service. It particularly harks back to the New Guinea service. You could set up every system in the world foolproof and you could sit back and be guaranteed it would stuff up. And then you had to go and fix it and I lived in the Philippines for a while and it was like that. And so

29:30 with Vietnam you set up a system and knew that you were going to have to deal with some departure from that all the time so go and relax until you do. I never had any anxiety. I was able to switch off from my duties but knowing I could be called out at any time.

Well how did those systems that you set up cope while you were away?

The CO would normally put another officer in my job and organisationally

30:00 at some time every year one of the captains serving in one of the companies wanted a break from field operations so he came in and acted as my 2IC so he could take over when I was away. But for my R & C time it was just an officer nominated to do my job while I was away.

During R & C would you be expected to come back if anything major had happened?

30:30 Yes. But normally a quality officer who was called in for five days would have to make it a pretty extraordinary thing to get me back from leave. It was pretty sacrosanct except in the lead up to Vietnam when I couldn't get my pre-embarkation leave. There is an amusing

31:00 kind of comment on that debauched R & C that it wasn't quite as debauched as I had picked. After the fourth night I decided that I had to sober up and limber up and get ready for war but I fell on my (UNCLEAR thieves) again that night and tried one on and got up the next morning and travelled back to Nui Dat in an air force helicopter and I remember almost gouging holes in the

31:30 emergency winch vertical to stop myself being ill. I was being rocketed up to Nui Dat and I got in and thought I'll just creep into bed and sleep this off for a couple of hours. I got a phone call. There was an operation on the next day and I had to go to the CO's orders where he briefed everyone on the operation that was happening the next day. So I went and a voice from on high was saying,

32:00 "Don't dare say a word. Just absorb this and get out." And another voice says, "Open your mouth and just prove that you are on the ball and back on deck." That was the end of the orders and he went around everyone asking if they wanted any more details and the voice telling me to open my mouth won. I started speaking Hebrew or something, gibbering away and not making a great deal of sense. And he was a great man and he

32:30 stopped that and said something like, "Thank you for your input." And just let me off. So that wasn't the most memorable achievement in my Vietnam tour. At least I'm honest.

Yes. You've mentioned using US supplies to assist you. How did you find working with the US army?

I had no direct contact with field operations.

33:00 The supply units operated independently so no comment on their performance in that regard. In terms…My main experience was with the helicopter pilots and they were second to none in terms of personal bravery. And it was an observation…

33:30 Not that I've had direct observation of US combat units but there was…in the ambience of Vietnam I would have no comment on US personal bravery but I could comment on their methods. But the direct experiences of the helicopter pilots were of very competent men. They could fly their helicopters at the limits of their performance and they delivered those loads of ammunition as I described.

34:00 Highly personable sort of people, the ones I had to deal with. Irrational…there were some irrational aspects of our relations with the Americans like the Americans thought we had the best combat boot and we thought they had the best combat boot

34:30 so we traded in combat boots. How on earth that worked logically I don't know. Or things like, I think Americans in all their technology didn't have a shower bucket. You know those buckets that you fill up with water so we had a trade in that. That was one sideline to the Americans.

35:00 I didn't have much contact with them except for contact with their pilots but there was usually a US liaison officer attached to the Task Force Headquarters and he would take various briefings around the place. So not a great deal of contact with the Americans.

I'm must thinking that we've heard along the way

35:30 **how American supplies and resources seemed to be in abundance. Did you find that as well?**

There were abortions in the system. A semi trailer arrived in the unit one day from some logistic abortion. It was a full semi trailer load of hair oil. But we gave it to the battalion and the battalion used it for all sorts of things like oiling weapons and all sorts of things. So how on earth

36:00 we ended up with a semi-trailer load of hair oil and someone must have punched the wrong number into the computer or whatever. A massive abundance. Just as well there was or 3 RAR wouldn't have got those explosives to put into the field.

36:30 Without being too critical there was a massive abundance implication of their use of firepower. Just pile it on. No considered application of fire but I think that's the way the Americans have been for a long time. An overabundance…I don't quite take the point of the question. There were plenty of

37:00 things…an abundance of what they had and touching on that was probably a higher ability to take risks in their combat operations because of the sheer numbers involved but I don't' think it is saying that it is

37:30 less conscious of the loss of human life than we were. I think they felt that the casualties were not worth one man's life or less visible. I think with the Australians casualties were sustained at the same rate as the Americans would have been politically dynamite. That was another aspect of the American involvement. But

38:00 not enough exposure to them. I wasn't working side by side with them except in the supportive role and they would provide helicopter support and that became less as the year went on because the Australians got their own helicopters and did a certain number of the jobs that the Americans were doing on their own for quite a while.

Well with that comes a question of wastage. How did you

38:30 **combat wastage?**

What. Sort of material wastage?

Yeah. Yeah.

It was mainly that routine wastage…When you say wastage it was a top up of personal clothing and personal equipment and that sort of thing and it was just

39:00 keeping track of the life of items and there was a quartermaster whose job it was to make sure the battalion was topped up with everything they needed. My responsibility was to get it into the battalion. My responsibility was to get it forward so he had his mechanisms to just keep it topped up and so once again like the battalion he didn't look over his shoulder to see what I was doing and

39:30 I didn't look over my shoulder to see what he was doing. The QM [Quartermaster] was a highly efficient old professional soldier who made sure that whatever wastage…Well it was efficient. It just arrived. We never went short of anything…So the supply system to take your point was a plentiful supply system. We didn't have to experience the hardships of the early days of the Second World War in New Guinea where the

40:00 out going patrols were handing over their weapons to the incoming patrols. Which should never have

happened?

We've wound up another tape here, so…

Tape 9

00:31 **Ray, just a couple of questions to finish up Vietnam what did you know if any…Was there a black market that you knew of while you were there?**

Not that I'm aware of. I think that there was some. Without knowing any details of it there was a black market in currency. When you arrived in Vietnam your normal currency was removed

01:00 and you were issued with military payment certificates and that was to avoid black marketing. And when they became aware of that system being corrupted or perverted they had a currency exchange system overnight. There was a massive slick system where your currency became valueless

01:30 overnight and you were issued with another set of currency and that was to avoid the black marketing in the currency. And if they didn't get wind of that they were left with a valueless pile of money. Apart from that no…appreciation of the black market…You might get a different answer from someone more down in the base areas of Vung Tau or Saigon but we were too

02:00 remote in our little enclosed community at Nui Dat which was quite Australian. There was no Vietnamese entry allowed in the base so there was no opportunity for black marketing from the point of view of contact with the local population within that base. I had no knowledge of that.

So you weren't

02:30 **aware of the penalties of changing money.**

I knew that it was punishable but I heard of no examples where people in the battalion had done it. I don't think they had the time or inclination but that is just a purist thought.

Well one thing that we were talking about earlier when we were having a break

03:00 **you being in barrack life and not at the sharp end so to speak. How conscious were you at the time? Do you have any kind of regrets or indeed resentments?**

No. I think I was too busy doing my own job and as I worked out, as I mentioned previously with a hearing deficiency,

03:30 it wouldn't have made much sense to have me exposed to that unnecessarily and I took a great pride in what I was doing so it wasn't an issue it was more a generally understandable regret that people have. Did I really win my spurs? And it is not uncommon for people to have that belief and

04:00 it is useful to also approach it knowing you did your job well and it has never been a major issue.

And how did you feel when your tour eventually came to an end?

Highly relieved. Particularly from the point of view of homesickness. We haven't dwelt on it significantly

04:30 but it is a significant ailment so to speak. You are missing your family and most of us had our days to go on a board and we carefully marked it off so there is a relief to be going home to your loved ones. That was point one and a year is a long time.

05:00 There is a feeling of great relief to be out of there. I had no affection for the country. I doubt if I wanted to go back there. Not that it caused any real trauma but I just didn't see enough of it to be impressed in one way or another. So I was pleased to go as opposed to

05:30 pleased to go from New Guinea in a peacetime environment having created greater peace for the country. So I was pleased to get out of there.

And just one question about Vietnam asking further about that homesickness, how reliably did the mail get through to you?

Oh very well. There was a good mail system. There was a strike by the posties

06:00 at some stage in '68. I think somebody had got into trouble from one of the officers in the taskforce, unnamed, created this logo of 'punch a postie' and I think the authorities got very concerned about that. But there was some union opposition to the war and I think it was reflected by the posties not delivering the mail for a

06:30 certain period. I think it caused a two week hiccup in the system. But it was quite an efficient system. Punch a postie.

So on your return what…Well I'm just going to ask you and spend a bit of time just asking about how you adjusted after Vietnam.

07:00 I came home by air. The main battalion went by ship which arrived in Sydney so arguably they had more time for letting themselves down. I went by Qantas from Saigon to Darwin and then to Sydney and was back into it. I slept

07:30 at my mother's house at Ingleburn for the first night and then I had some work to deliver to Canberra. I had a book on Vietnam I had to deliver to Canberra and on the funny side, I slept in my mother's house but she had as an antique building and she had thirty-six clocks all keeping different times and I stared at the ceiling with all these clocks chiming different hours of the night and so I got up in the morning with no sleep

08:00 and I had no sleep in the last week I was in Vietnam, mainly for social reasons because I was farewelling people and one of the first legacies was travelling by air from Canberra to Adelaide. I fell asleep against the side of the aircraft and the hostess switched on the public address system and I was immediately alert on my feet.

08:30 It sounded like the safety catch coming off a weapon. It was one of the legacies of Vietnam, a slight touchiness which is suppressing not having come off the combat line but nevertheless a sound you were familiar with. Probably the most important aspect of coming back from Vietnam was you'd occupied that position of great responsibility and powers

09:00 of command. You had a hundred and twenty soldiers who did as they were told with your powers of man management and you returned to a family that had been effectively managed by your wife and you to that extent were superfluous. She had dealt with the sicknesses and the administrative hassles of running a family and there was an immediate sensation of what am I doing here or how do I get

09:30 into a position of power or something like that. And I think with a bit of hindsight and maturity it wasn't a power thing at all; it was just a natural occurrence that the wife had that total responsibility and had coped quite well and so that had to be an understanding process of both letting ourselves go with our responsibilities

10:00 and feeling that everybody must instantly obey me otherwise the system won't work. So coming from a year or seven days, twenty-four hours a day of operating a system to come and find a family well under control and people not saluting and clicking their heels sort of put it in a lighter…It took some adjusting to in the right sense of adjustment.

10:30 And that just sorted itself out and because of the nature of my work although it was demanding I didn't retain any (UNCLEAR perform) in any significant quantity so it was not as if I had any severe repercussions of Vietnam. It might be reflected

11:00 in general about an intolerance of imperfect performance and getting to my age and reflecting on how much responsibility you had as a twenty-seven year old and looking at someone and saying, well you don't expect to have the same level of responsibility, you know, so that sort of attitude, you know, how highly responsible you were

11:30 and that had to be tempered with some prudence not to be too judgemental in that sort of area. So there are different sorts of responsibilities. And the most important thing that came out of that was to pay credit to the wives and what they had to tolerate and how they coped and how they coped very effectively and just the challenge of not getting back

12:00 in command of your family but getting back on a two parenting situation which is probably the greatest aftertaste of Vietnam. I had none of the bad experiences like the ex-soldier I was talking to yesterday, after we marched through Adelaide, we had a march through Adelaide after they got off the ship

12:30 and we then packed up and said goodbye and the battalion ceased to exist and he was walking down King William street and a fruiterer threw vegetables at him, you know. It was a terrible sort of thing but I didn't experience any of that. Luckily not and I think it was also the attitude that I was a professional soldier, that is what I was paid to do. I wasn't a conscript or a Nasho [National Service soldier].

13:00 You were told to serve there or serve there and that was the ambience in which you conducted your life at that time so I did my job, came home and went back to normality.

Well yes, public opinion had really turned.

Yes. In '68 public opinion had turned against Vietnam.

Well you then went on to a period of training

13:30 **reinforcements.**

Yes. I spent two years at Ingleburn reinforcement wing. That was putting regular National Service reinforcement into this pipeline for Vietnam. Training them after their initial training, topping up with their weapons skills, getting them what was called draft priority one in terms of their inoculations and

that sort of thing.

14:00 Getting the numbers from Canberra and putting them on the plane in the necessary numbers. Giving them farewell speeches before they took off. And that was probably the least satisfying posting I've had in terms of it was a sausage machine. You were dealing with large numbers and you

14:30 couldn't do justice to personalised training. It was to our tribute or to our good name that despite the fact I regarded it as a sausage machine there were still pretty highly trained individuals as compared with the huge machine of the American army who had to turn out far greater numbers. A bit of a sausage machine by our standards. A terrible accommodation setup at Ingleburn.

15:00 Ingleburn…I don't know whether you know it but it was built in the Second World War and should have been knocked down in about 1950. It has since been knocked down so soldiers in pretty squalid conditions and I just didn't like the depersonalised system of running people though that sort of a system. I worked there for two years before I moved on.

And you mentioned earlier in the day that after that period

15:30 **you then returned to New Guinea and that was a very satisfying time for you.**

Yes it was. Yeah.

Why was that?

Mainly returning to a country I loved. I've got a great affection for the country of New Guinea. I have an affection for the soldiers as might have come out earlier. That was virtually it. New Guinea is iconic… That's probably not the right word but

16:00 probably equally Vietnam was the highlight of my service career in a different way. In that close lasting friendships were made there. We were all in the same boat in terms of we were mostly young and mostly with not much money…A great affection and love for the New Guinea people and so to

16:30 to go there was quite a rewarding experience. It was quite a hard country. One of our wives died during my time there and it was still quite a harsh environment but it retained sufficient of the old charm to be quite an enjoyable time. I retain a personal sadness the way New Guinea has gone in recent years with the breakdown of

17:00 law and order and that sort of thing but once again like the '61/'64 experience we lived a very privileged life in terms of being part of a closely knit Australian and New Guinean community. It was just a finale to my affection for New Guinea. And my second publication

17:30 of poetry is about Papua New Guinea.

And was that again with the Pacific Islander regiment?

Yes. I was a lieutenant platoon commander in the first posting and in the second one I was the second in command of the whole battalion. So I managed the battalion while the commanding officer commanded it so to speak. So it has been a feature of my career that there

18:00 has been an emphasis on those administrative roles.

And what was the Australian presence there at that time? I mean it had been ten years since you had been there. Was it a similar kind of a presence?

It was a similar presence working towards the devolvement of the country. It hadn't

18:30 changed much. There was an increasing sort of lawless aspect to Port Moresby which is the worst possible place in Papua New Guinea in that it had always had a squatter sort of camp on it's fringes. But that was more of a problem in the 'seventies than it was in the 'sixties. So the general atmosphere was much the same. There has been a quantum jump as I understand

19:00 it with you know the security implications. They have sort of created a fortress complex where the European populations live in their fortresses and rarely venture outside. It wasn't like that then. There were signs of that happening but it wasn't as unmanageable or as serious as it was now. But

19:30 have I answered your question?

You have. Yes. And after that period you then returned to Canberra in charge of staff appointments. I think.

Yeah. I returned to Canberra to a staff position at the Directorate of Infantry, yes, dealing with equipment development in the Directorate of Infantry.

20:00 **You then spent a year in the Philippines and then came back to Australia as director of army recruiting.**

Correct.

How would you sum up that time as director of army recruiting?

Probably short of the New Guinea and the Vietnam experience the director of army recruiting was a very rewarding experience and that was a national marketing operation to get the numbers in.

20:30 The army…I was given a pretty free rein to do that and there was a pretty dedicated band of recruiters there. I learned a lot about myself and my attitude towards the army. One example was an indication at Duntroon. I recruited everyone into the army and I would get into trouble with

21:00 the staff at Duntroon for not attracting the right quality of applicant and my response would be, "I'm in the numbers game. You need a hundred and twenty in the door and my ratios are that I need to generate a certain number of enquiries which translates into so many applicants and they will come to appear before your board. You sort it out. And I'm just putting them over physical, psychological hurdles

21:30 and academic hurdles and you sort it out from there. So it made me understand certain things about my mates in the profession. Duntroon would say things like, "We are not convinced we are getting people with the right motivation to be army officers." At the risk of oversimplifying it I've always been suspicious of people who have always wanted to be army officers, you know.

22:00 People who wanted to play with soldiers and couldn't wait for the day that they became a soldier as opposed to the young man who was attracted to Duntroon because it's got a pretty good football team and it is what happens to that young man after graduation, who gets a hold of him and motivates him in the right direction so I think they end up with a better balanced officer than the guy

22:30 who has always wanted to be a soldier. We had some traditional arguments about that and also the other things we learned in that time was that you could be the best person in the world and still get into Duntroon by the numbers applying and it brought back to me my brother who was manifestly a much bigger man than me in many senses and wanted to

23:00 follow his older brother's example and go into the army and he was rejected by both Duntroon and Portsea. He got pretty down in the mouth as did my mother. She said, "He is much bigger. Why can't he?" And it revealed to me that a…the army wasn't terribly good in the way it briefed people so when applying for Duntroon here are the numbers

23:30 and with these a hundred and twenty will come in the door. And so did you not get in because of sheer numbers or because you don't have the right kind of ability to live in a community which the army demands. So army recruiting was a valuable exercise in understanding how the army worked. And you asked the question was I a rebel. I think I was becoming a bit of a late developer as a rebel

24:00 and I used to get into trouble from my masters for not getting the right people in front of the selection board and they ignored the fact that I was the sticky fly paper and these people stuck to the fly paper and the army had to sort them out. So it was a very worthwhile job. One where you had to think outside the box and you had a good budget to work on. So it was a good job to leave on so to speak. I had one small job after that before I

24:30 called it quits.

And calling it quits when you look back, now today, on your service years do you think you missed the army when you left?

Yes and no. I missed the best parts of it. The camaraderie. It is unmatched in terms of its comradeship,

25:00 particularly because it has been forged in adverse circumstances with good humour. I have belonged to community organisations and I have left them for various reasons and one of which was that the spirit of camaraderie was not matched in similar organisations but that is the great thing of the army to me and the thing you can still enjoy. I don't miss

25:30 the more bureaucratic and non thinking areas of the army but taking that within the context it is a reflection of society anyway so it can't be full of perfect people and the other thing about the army on reflection I'm probably glad

26:00 I left when I did. I was becoming complacent. I was getting up myself for having been to war, having been to New Guinea and having reached the rank of lieutenant colonel and I could do anything the army served up to me and a voice said to me, "You are getting too big for your own boots." You need another kick in the bum so that was a kind of a motivating thing. I wasn't a malcontent. It was just

26:30 that you need a new mountain and I've gone on and have a very rich experience thereafter in that I entered industry and worked for CSR the sugar company. I have studied horticulture. I am into garden design. I am a practising poet and I live in a beautiful part of Australia. All that might not have happened had I stayed in the army till the death knock. I probably would have been a richer man in terms of superannuation but not in

27:00 an ascending scale of personal contentment. But I owe a lot to it. Going back to the earlier part of the interview I certainly owe a lot to it. I might have been some kind of indolent dreamer had I not joined. I cherish my time with the army but I also cherish my ability to do different things and maintain my

affection for it.

And when

27:30 **you look back I'm thinking particularly of your Vietnam years but also of your time in New Guinea…Well no I'll ask directly about Vietnam. What do you think the lessons for you were from Vietnam?**

Lessons from Vietnam was it that was right to get involved in Vietnam but the methods were wrong. I can expand on that but that's it in

28:00 nutshell. I don't think its…I believe it was a country at risk of sinking if something wasn't done and I think the rationale of doing something was right but the method of the implementation was quite wrong. There now.

Well on a personal note how do you think you changed from that time?

28:30 From?

From your time in Vietnam?

A growing realisation that if you are going to achieve something in this world you can't do it on your own. I think you've got to work with other people and use their expertise. I think that's the outstanding lesson and I think up to Vietnam and even

29:00 afterwards I said, "If I want this job done, well then I'll do it myself." But you reach a stage where you can't. It becomes more and more stupid with the complexity of human performance. So I think that was the lesson that came reasonably early after Vietnam and more recently going back to army reunions

29:30 realising the absolute tragedy of it; that it wasn't worth one man's life. When you hear some of the suffering that has gone on post Vietnam and secondly the increasing importance of maintaining the friendships that you developed during those days. Without getting morbid about it, more and more emphasis on maintaining

30:00 the friendships you gained there and working at it. I think that's it in a nutshell. Learning that you've got to work with people and realising what a useless exercise it was but transcending that is the effects on some of your fellow men and how important it is to keep the friendships going.

And along the lines, staying with that theme of affection, 3 RAR did

30:30 **have a reputation of being 'Old Faithful'. Why was that?**

Because it was raised initially…well they called for volunteers on the island of Morotai for people to go and be part of the occupation force in Japan and '45 was the conclusion of the Pacific war. It attracted sufficient volunteers to

31:00 there. People didn't want to go home and they wanted to go on for various reasons so 3 RAR was raised as the occupation force, '45, '46 and '47. In '47 it was named 3 RAR and they were on occupation duties in Japan when the Korean War broke out. And they were the first troops to be committed and they remained there for the duration of the war with just individual replacement whereas the other two battalions, one and two,

31:30 served as units for a certain period of time, went home, and were replaced. The brigade commander at the time. I think it was Tom Daly who went on to become chief of the general staff, christened it as 'Old Faithful' because it was there from the start and there at the end of it. And from then it distinguished itself in service as did the other battalions.

32:00 I think it was awarded a presidential citation for the Battle of Kapyong and it fought a very significant offensive battle called Maryang San. And it has developed that reputation as being a dependable unit. And it is reflected in that Tet offensive. I was standing beside a road as you saw in one of those photos watching armoured personnel carriers assembling to take the companies down to Ba Ria and there is a hoary old transport

32:30 sergeant standing with a column of trucks to take the rear part of the convoy down and I said, "I hope you do well." "We always do well." That was the mystique of 3 RAR. It has had that mystique and it has also been a lucky battalion. We went into the Tet Offensive and statistically didn't lose many people whereas other battalions walked into terrible minefield accidents.

33:00 That has been good. Yeah.

And why were you proud to serve with 3 RAR?

Because it had that reputation and without wallowing in it I am one of Jim Shelton's men. I don't have many heroes but my CO fulfilled many of the requirements of hero status in terms of his personal integrity

33:30 and personal standards and it is little management prop ups I've maintained through the years as well

as other standards that I remind myself that I am one of Shelton's men. It sounds very trite but a mechanism does help you out of some personal crises that you had. So it was just

34:00 …it is almost a romantic attitude. 3 RAR had some of the greatest villains I have ever met in it and it also had a mystique stemming from its Korean war days. Old Faithful—and everybody you ask served in the finest battalion in the Australian army I know—but 3 RAR personally it was an honour to serve

34:30 in it and it is almost in compliance with the old British regimental tradition. The regiment goes back to Waterloo or something and you don't let it down. It is reflected in the regimental motto 'Duty First' so it is an ingrained sort of a thing and somebody who served in 2 RAR would say rubbish. We were the best battalion but

35:00 that's my bid.

And when you look back do you think there was a time that stands out for you as the most emotional time?

In where?

In Vietnam. I will stick with Vietnam.

Most emotional time in Vietnam…

35:30 I think that last referred to incident where you always do well. We had a high expectation of performance and you have a result that you don't let this guy down because he reckons we are good. Yeah. I can't think of another real highlight. I mean I don't have much emotion so that comes close to being an emotional moment.

36:00 **Well this is an archive for future generations to look and learn upon. If you were to put down a message for those future generations in relation to your own experience, particularly on active service, what would that message be?**

36:30 I have to struggle to form the correct words but I would say it would be centred around, "whatever you do, establish a reputation for reliability; that your word is your pledge," and words to the effect that the

37:00 value of a human being. And the correctly inspired people perform to the best of their ability and that one should never be accused of threatening somebody else's self esteem and achieving their own levels of performance. Now that

37:30 rattles on a bit but I think it's centred around the true pure definition of leadership and my job in 3 RAR was to be a leader.

38:00 And leadership is the art of influencing people to the achievement of a common goal in a manner which inspired their willing participation. So that would be a…so that on reflection that would be don't lose sight of the pure definition of leadership if you want to be a leader. I mean if you don't want to be a leader I think that's

38:30 the subset to that big message is establish a reputation for reliability. It will pay you great dividends and don't knock the self-esteem of your fellow men. Very philosophical isn't it.

Well it is a nice note to end on. Our interview had come to an end. Are there any last words you would like to say?

39:00 No. I've enjoyed the experience. I don't think there is anything I would regret saying. I think the point of attempted suicide and self inflicted wounds is too debatable a point to dwell on. I would probably prefer to see that excised from things because it does

39:30 risk being judgemental by the person who did it. So as I said I can't describe what incited him and I think that's the only nervous point I've made. I don't think I've said anything contentious. Some people would say I've talked crap in certain areas but I am sufficiently happy with my stand on certain issues.

40:00 I just hope it has been of use. My reluctance to speak to you was at one end of my spectrum. I'm a person of no great consequence.

Okay. Well our tape has just run out.

And the other side is my great feeling of superiority. Yes I am a good man and I have enjoyed sharing that experience and I hope somebody learns from it.

Well it has been an incredible

40:30 **privilege for us speaking to you today. You've had very clear descriptions and…**

Good.

INTERVIEW ENDS