

Australians at War Film Archive

Ziggy Ziogas (Ziggy) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:30 **Thanks for having us here today Ziggy. It'd be great if for starters we could talk a little bit about your childhood, your early years, so if you could start off with where you were born and about your family background?**

Okay. I know I was born in Fulda, Germany in nineteen forty-seven and my parents

01:00 at that stage were in Germany after applying for exit to Australia because they were classed as displaced persons. They're of Lithuanian descent. So Lithuania was taken over behind the Iron Curtain at that stage and that's the last place they wanted to go back to with the concept of Communism. So they were there. They were waiting. I think they waited a total of three years before they could actually get out and come to Australia. So

01:30 a little fact that came out after, and during my military service, was that I was actually introduced much later and a little bit after Vietnam to a person who actually was a scientist with the Dambusters - the people who made the bouncing bombs. From our records somebody said, "Look, this chap was born in Folger," and he said, "I'd love to meet him." So he asked me questions and he said, "What did your parents do in Folger?" I said, "My father

02:00 worked with the German forces just as a driver there in one of the factories. My mother worked in a tyre factory, a rubber factory there. And the chap said, "Oh. Okay. Look, had we been successful with the dam above the industrial area you probably wouldn't be here." Because one of the dams they couldn't break. So that came out much later in my life as a result of me having been born there.

Right. So your parents had obviously lived through the Second World War?

02:30 Yes.

What do you know of their experiences there?

My father talked very little about it. All I know is that my mother had a very extended family in Lithuania and my relatives, especially the males, ended up being in the Resistance and the - what do you call them? There's a name but I've just forgotten it now. They resisted the Russians as they came through after pushing the Germans out.

03:00 So what they did was the extended family tended to stay, at least a couple of the children tried to get out. They preferred to go with the Germans rather than the Russians so they went south into Germany and then stayed there. All I know if that of the, my mother had been bombed in the bomb shelters and covered over twice. At one stage she was the only one alive out of the shelter that was brought out. As a result of that, that was her experiences of that.

03:30 What I was told of that as a young person of what they felt and what they went through war etcetera I suppose set me up for my expectation of what I probably experienced when the Vietnam situation came up.

So those bombings raids you're talking about, they were in Germany, they were the Allied bombing raids?

That's correct.

So what year did they make it into Germany?

04:00 That I'm not sure. Because the Germans had moved through Poland, Lithuania and then they were attacking parts of Russia. So it was at that stage people had a chance to move around. My mother was one and my father - unbeknown to each other - moved south with the Germans to get away from at that stage I think that Germany was not going to win with Russia. Some people thought, "Let's get out of here at this stage."

04:30 I know that my father chose Australia because he knew absolutely nothing about it. All he knew was it

was diagonally opposite, that he felt, to Europe. He just wanted to get away as far as he could.

So were they at an apartment or a house in Folger?

No. They worked in factory accommodation. I get the impression it was like barracks for the workers there. So definitely not. They were not really classed

05:00 as enforced workers, but they were not free to move around.

So I guess till then you don't have too many memories of that part of the world?

Not that part, no.

So how old were you when they finally moved out here?

I think I was three years old when we moved down here. I remember some scenes aboard the ship. We came out on an Italian ship. Castel Bianco - white castle, or whatever - which is on internet.

05:30 One the manifests of the people, I'm named as a child on there. My first recollection of that was when they crossed the equator and the most frightening scene I knew was of King Neptune. I was totally scared of him. That was my only recollection of the ship. We moved to Australia. I think they ended up at Bathurst. Big migrant hostels there.

06:00 And from there my father had to work two years anywhere the government sent him. So they immediately sent him to a little place called The Caves, just north of Rockhampton. He worked as a driver in the limestone quarries there. My mother got ill and the doctors decided it was the humid, sub-tropical conditions there so they suggested a move down to Victoria. We ended

06:30 up, my father as a driver again, in quarries at Pyramid Hill in Victoria. That's where my sister was born.

Were there other siblings prior to that?

No. Well I didn't know of any prior siblings at that stage. All I knew - my sister naturally in Pyramid Hill. And at that stage my father had completed his two years. We moved down to Melbourne and tried to settle down in Melbourne.

What age were you at that point?

07:00 When we moved to Melbourne we lived in Dawson Street [West Brunswick] at a brick quarries, and the first school I went to, a primary school I went to, so I would have been about age five at that stage. So I remember all that area.

And how do you think your parents were coping up until that stage with being migrants in Australia?

My father has difficulty - I learnt later on that people have aptitude for languages or

07:30 they don't. My father didn't have any aptitude for language like I don't have. My mother has. So she could get along quite well in any environment. She got along well with the other migrant families there. My father worked again just as a driver normally working by himself. Recounting what my mother says, always playing cards with the guys at night later on. And they got very early into the fledgling Lithuanian community here in Melbourne

08:00 that was starting up. So people were putting out feelers, getting to know where the other migrants of the same nationality were, forming organisations and things like that. So we immediately got stuck into that.

What language was spoken at home?

Lithuanian. But because of the area we lived in all the kids mixed quite regularly. Although I was supposedly from German backgrounds, my mother said I could get along fairly fluently in very junior German and Polish.

08:30 Because of the children because we all tended to speak our own languages and mix the languages together. Then naturally once in school quickly all of us had to try and learn English. That became a difficulty for me especially when I found out later I don't have an aptitude for languages. So I've always had a difficulty with spelling because Lithuanian is a phonetic based language. So as you say it, that's the way you write it. So from then on.

09:00 **How's your Lithuanian now?**

Pretty poor. I have a real struggle trying to send emails to Lithuania now. For about two paragraphs I have to spend about two hours with a dictionary. And the grammar throws me.

So is that to say that then Rockhampton, The Caves there and then Pyramid Hill was mainly a migrant workforce?

Correct. It was migrants who were directed by the government to work in certain industries that probably needed the workforce.

09:30 **So does that mean your father was beholden to the government, was on a bond of some description?**

Yes.

And how long?

Two years. They were quite happy with that just to get away from I suppose the aspect of constant danger and not knowing what the future will hold and having a steady wage and having a country which is stable, but very foreign to them. Throughout their lives

10:00 I know that they would constantly mention how thankful they were.

You mentioned King Neptune. What are some of your other early memories of your childhood?

In Queensland was a thing that I used to like reptiles for some reason and my mother says at one stage there was a Lithuanian word I had for lizards and I used to be loving that. She said at one stage I wanted to go

10:30 grab this lizard I kept calling out and she thought, "What's he calling out this name all the time?" She came out and she screamed, ran and picked me up and I thought, "What was going on?" and she later recounted it was a goanna that she thought was going to eat me - it was a crocodile. That's how big it was. Plus we used to have a lot of snakes there and things. My mother did say she was petrified there of the different type of animals and things that they encountered. Plus the kangaroos at night knocking over the rubbish bins which was quite common there.

11:00 **It's hard to imagine anywhere more different from where they've come from?**

It would be. That's right. And when they went to Pyramid Hill I remember that like we're experiencing now, drought conditions, where the men would go out after work or the weekends and they'd go rabbiting. There were so many, they used to dig up the rabbit burrows and instead of shooting them they used to kill them with clods of earth and knock them.

11:30 Hit them with things. That's how many rabbits there were. It was good. Very interesting for me because that was totally new for me. But for my parents the arid conditions and things, they thought, that was what was so foreign. 'Cause they're used to countries that are lush and green and cold with much rain.

What else about Rockhampton do you recall? Crocodiles.

No.

12:00 This is it because we were there probably only for about six to eight months before my mother had to move because of medical conditions. So therefore, no. Nothing further there. Just that later, prior to going to Vietnam we were back in the same area with a big army exercise there. Went past The Caves railway station a number of times, but never had the opportunity to get off and have a look at the area. I was always wondering whether that building we were housed in

12:30 still remained. One of these very, on stilts, big verandahed Queensland homes. That's one thing that stuck in my mind. The big verandahs and off the ground. Which I've liked since then because I with the army did go back to live in Queensland for about three years. Later.

And your family had that all to itself?

That house? Yes. They did. And the neighbouring house I believe was an Estonian family

13:00 housed there. So what actually happened to the original owners I don't know. I know my parents were saying the buildings were in very poor repair conditions. But they were so thankful just to be there.

And what about Pyramid Hill? How long were the family based there?

I think it was just over a year in there. I went back there recently and managed to get hold of the people who were looking at the historical side of it and

13:30 soon as they found out the family name they looked up the registry in the history building and they came across my sister's birth record and baptismal record. I said, "Look, I've come here with my wife to find out the hospital where my sister was born' and the lady said, "Hospital? Okay. Look, come outside. See that house over there. That was what you thought as a child was a hospital." It was just a house which doctors or midwives attended.

14:00 It was quite interesting. I think Pyramid Hill has not expanded at all since that time.

Where is Pyramid Hill exactly?

Pyramid Hill is near Kerang in Victoria. Just south of the Murray River. Very flat land and there's only two big hills and one of them's called Pyramid Hill to break the flat feature of the land.

What memories do you have of that time?

Besides with the kids and that, sandstorms. We used to get sandstorms coming through.

14:30 I was coming back from the shop once. I had to pick up some bread. Got caught - in kids' shorts - it was so painful with the sand blasting through at you. I remember that very distinctly. Once there was a house fire in the neighbourhood. I was so frightened. I actually hid under the bed and everyone else ran off to see what this fire was about. I know that fear. I remember families

15:00 barbecuing, cooking a huge pig. Butchering it themselves and blowtorching the hair off and all that. I thought this was incredible. This was something that was awesome to a child. The memory of that time. That's probably about it. Oh and the huge steam train that used to come in. We used to live near a railway line. And the huge black things - again I was fearful

15:30 of them because of all the smoke coming out and the huge engine. That was awesome to me. And the - in those days we didn't have refrigerators so therefore they had, not Coolgardie, but some sort of ice chests where you put ice in a particular area and it dripped water and it kept things cool. The ice man used to come around in a light truck but as they unloaded the ice shards of ice used to break off and the kids

16:00 use to follow the ice man round. He used to sell it in blocks of ice and deliver it to the house and put it into the cooler. But we used to grab the shards of ice and suck on it. Just like icy poles are nowadays. So that was great.

And the kids there, was it the same as up in Rocky [Rockhampton], the European shelter or ... ?

The ones we normally associated with because I suppose of language, yes, but kids generally associated with anyone, any

16:30 kids their same age group. I think that's where we started to pick up a smattering of English and things like that as kids.

And then the move to Melbourne after that. What triggered that?

I think because my parents wanted to get closer - more work, and the countryside up there very arid so that was too foreign for them so they heard better things of Melbourne so they moved to Melbourne knowing that fellow countrymen were here. They could freely

17:00 relax and talk with people that they could understand and fully converse, knowledgeably.

Where did they settle in Melbourne?

In Melbourne we've actually moved about seven times throughout my growing up period. We were originally in Brunswick at the Pipe and Bread Factory. We moved to another place in Brunswick. Then we moved to Abbotsford. From Abbotsford we moved to

17:30 Kensington, from Kensington we moved to Heidelberg. I think I calculated before leaving school I went to a total of seven schools.

What was behind the number of moves?

Basically my parents trying to improve their conditions. And being closer to their work areas. Until eventually Dad bought a car. I think that was the main trigger because we couldn't buy a house

18:00 until after we left Kensington. Then they bought a house. Something they could have permanently in Heidelberg.

What sort of work - were both parents working or just your dad?

Yeah. Both parents worked. My mother was a workaholic. She worked originally at a thing called Yarra Falls Mills which was wool making - wool threads and things like that, wool yarn.

18:30 That was in Abbotsford. Then she moved to Collingwood working in Colvin Chips. That was great because we had an overdose of chips. Soft chips at that stage. Then she moved into the city working in a number of coffee shops. And that's where she started - because she had to talk to the public etcetera - really started picking up on English and getting quite good at it and being able to quite fluently converse with people from that instance.

19:00 The thing that I noted was that as a young person I think from even about the age of nine I had to do their paying of their bills, reading any documents that they got from the government or tax documents, not understanding what it really meant, but trying to impart the information to them. I remember having to catch trams etcetera into the city to pay bills. So in my current line of work I suppose I take a much more sympathetic view to our

19:30 current influx of migrants and try to help them much more because I understand exactly what they're going through. There's quite often where I deal with people on the telephone on complicated legal matters I am dealing with the young children or the young teenagers who in English are trying to impart that information to their parents.

So you're basically acting as the interpreter or translator for them in Australian society?

Correct. That's right. And I suppose that was a

20:00 little bit more of an accelerant in responsibility I think which later were in my favour.

And what about your dad? What sort of work was he doing?

He ended up - I forget, they're actually Smorgon now - but in a steel factory at Sunshine. This is at the time that we were able to have a car so he could travel all that distance from the inner suburbs out to Sunshine. He worked there till retirement. So he worked

20:30 in the mobile crane in the roof. Again, no contact, not until lunchtime or smokos, to talk to people. So again he never picked up on very fluent English either so Mum always kidded him about that element of it.

So was his social focus more the Lithuanian community?

Absolutely. Yes.

Right. What sort of involvement would he have there?

On various committees, he was on that.

21:00 In Lithuania prior to the war he was an officer fireman in the fire fighting. So as an officer he had to be of a certain rank and education. So he was able to be in various committees and things like that and in the choirs and they used to have a lot of big choirs here. So he used to participate in that.

21:30 Both my mother and he. Then, as children, we ended up being in folk dancing groups and participating in that way.

Were they religious people?

They attended church because that again was a Lithuanian church and so they attended regularly because that's where they're going to meet all their friends. But particularly religious, I don't think so. Specifically no.

22:00 **You've told us what your parents were doing, what were they like as people, as parents?**

My father didn't have much I suppose to do with the kids. My father was not a handyman. Neither am I. So therefore that side of things as a male thing never entered our area. As far as I know my Dad was quite good to us. I certainly have

22:30 no ill feelings to him at all. My mother was the main influence in my life. So anything I learnt of Lithuania, the language, eventually our extended family, was from her. And I suppose her moral outlook on things and what is right and what is wrong. That's what's really made home to me. And the appreciation

23:00 of peoples, of the country that is looking after us and the element of duty and if you commit to something you go through with it. You keep your promises. That was the big thing that I got from her mainly.

So your values came from your mother. Can you think of other examples of her values and how they shaped her

23:30 **life and yourself?**

I think she had a different influence on my sister, being woman to woman. Because I didn't realise things till a lot later in life. I got along extremely well with my mother. My sister got along well with my father and not my mother. This I didn't see as a child. But later on it had certain difficult things in life much later as a result of that.

24:00 No. Just overall I think the sense of if you focus on the military side of things, I didn't realise that at that stage, but her family was into the military side of things in Europe. This respect for uniform, whether it's police, service uniforms,

24:30 the military especially of your own country is quite important because of the difficult work they do. Things of that nature. So I had a respect for that. It wasn't from them I suppose, but I know I always had this imaginary adventurous attitude or dreams even as a young person. I was really big into building model aircraft. Wanted to get into the air force. Wanted to fly. And then I learnt at about fourteen I had to wear glasses and I learnt

25:00 later at secondary school I was absolutely useless at mathematics. That put a sealing on being in the air force. So this is at the time that the decision making came as we're going through high school - what are you going to do? Parents typically, "Go to university. Be a learned person." To them from their background, being you might say in the officer corps in the military or being educated with a university degree was extremely important

25:30 and really was a status symbol. I know that's what they were pushing both my sister and myself into. But I had no idea what I wanted to do and at that time Vietnam was starting to get under way and I had

to do thinking what to do.

You mentioned that respect for uniform. Had your mother, did she have brothers, relatives or anyone who had worn uniform?

- 26:00 That wasn't very clear to me at that stage because what happened was when they came or escaped from Lithuania through Germany they were only able to keep very few photographs. The only other photographs they had of themselves was in Germany. They don't even have any wedding photographs. Everything was done without ceremony and things like that in those days to my knowledge. But no, not of uniforms. But I believe
- 26:30 one of my uncles who's just recently died ended up being after the fall of the Soviet Union in Lithuania being very highly decorated for his partisan - that's the word - activities. Once the Germans moved out a lot of the western European countries were really under the strong belief America was going to come in under things that they had heard before and America
- 27:00 was going to re-institute what it was prior to the war where the Baltic States especially they were all independent states, definitely independent countries because of languages, the histories and things like that. But that didn't eventuate. So a lot of my family ended up in Siberia. Number of them didn't make it. Others did. So they did survive and that sort of is where we are now.
- 27:30 Unfortunately I've only had a chance to meet my brother, but no-one else from the extended family. And this is what's so difficult with the language, trying to get back and liaise with people that I don't know and I didn't really know about until after Vietnam because of certain conditions that happened.
- Right. So would you be able to tell us what sort of - with the Lithuanian community in the fifties and sixties which your father became quite a part of - what**
- 28:00 **was the conversation in those days? What was discussed by this community? What were their hopes and plans?**
- Okay. Things which were extremely obvious besides just socialising was to maintain Lithuanian tradition which was in festivities, food, and the folk dancing and the type of music or songs that they used to sing, the choirs used to participate in. That was to
- 28:30 uphold that because in Lithuania they weren't permitted to do those sort of things freely. So that was the big thing. And all their effort and a lot of their work went into organisations or maintaining the element of wanting freedom for the country. The whole focus. Any demonstrations against Communism, they were into it. Things like that. So that was the most apparent. That was their goal in life really.
- 29:00 To live long enough to have a free Lithuania again.
- And was that something you grew up and accepted or was that something you had some doubt ... ?**
- No. I totally accepted that. I could see the sense of it. Again because as I've learnt later my parents were stuck in a time warp. Because they only remembered it up to that stage that they left because the flow of information out of there was very difficult after that
- 29:30 time. Any mail coming to us from the families especially once they were permitted out of Siberia was heavily censored. And we knew that. So you couldn't freely discuss things or talk about things. That also led to the factor that they didn't want them to know that I'd ended up in the Australian forces because we were fighting Communism. But as things eventuated the Russians knew all about it. Later.
- 30:00 **And what were they doing in Siberia? Was it labour camps or ... ?**
- Labour camps, that's correct. Because of their - what happened was, historically, when the Russians moved in a lot of the intelligentsia you might say were immediately shipped out of the country. A lot of them died on their way there. And later they hunted down the people who were not sympathetic to Russia especially to their military. As partisans, definitely. So I know my uncle
- 30:30 carried torture marks on him, had been mutilated and a few things like that, but he survived right through. For some reason he wasn't put up against the wall and shot. But again, not being able to liaise with them now I don't know what the reasons behind it is and there must be a reason. If somebody's not shot there must be something else for that, for what he was. He was a leader of the partisans in this particular area where most of his
- 31:00 men were killed. So it's a strange one, but he was one of the last ones to get caught. That's about all I know. Even my mother now can't impart all that information fully to me. It's freely available, yet I can't liaise by email enough to do this. Our descendants there as you might say now are in the military because Lithuania has just joined NATO [Northern Atlantic Treaty Organisation] and I know one of my uncles has
- 31:30 just come back. He was in America as one of the liaison people and he says, "English is such a complex absolute language." It's a language problem too. He's probably got something like me - not the aptitude for it.

Okay. You've moved to Melbourne and you said out at Pyramid Hill you started mixing with more English speaking kids. Melbourne obviously there's going to be more of that. What was that experience like? What can you tell us about that adjustment?

32:00 The difficulty was that at home I spoke only Lithuanian and it was encouraged. And on Sundays we went to church and part of it was also Lithuanian school where we tried to learn about Lithuania - geography of it - but mostly the languages. Tried to learn. I had such a real struggle. I as a young person thought, "I'm not a very bright person

32:30 because I can't pick this up. I just can't." And being then a very quiet person, shy, I never asked, so I never went out of my way to learn anything or ask questions about things I didn't understand. And no-one went out of their way to help me. So I just plodded through in relation to that.

So were you at the one primary school or were you moving schools as you moved?

33:00 No. That's right. We moved around schools around seven different times. I can't recall any great difficulties. I for some reason tended to fit straight in. One of the things that I know - both my sister and I at very young ages were blonde. It's just that probably because of our accents or whatever the worst thing that people could say about us if they - cause you have your little cliques in schools, was, "You bloody new Australian!" Can't get

33:30 called a wog. You're blonde. So you couldn't. So we blended in quite well so we had no problems really from that element of it. It's just, "Gee your folks speak funny." We lost any I suppose accents in primary school. So after that nobody knew. Eventually in my teenage years I was actually mistaken for a Pom. I don't know what I was

34:00 saying or how I was talking at that stage.

What about your name?

That is my greatest difficulty through life. My greatest difficulty. Because my father gave me names which even in Lithuania are classed as ancient names and not even Christian. So the given names were Edotas [?] Gaudintas, and the family name was Ziogas. The 'Z' had a little hyphenated thing on it or a little 'V' on it which changed

34:30 the sound from a 'Z' to a 'J.'" No-one could pronounce the names. So we shortened the first name to Eidis [?] which was half the pronunciation. That was awful. So I ended up at school being called Eddy all the time. From then it was Eddy. Then we moved into the military again it was all called by your surname and nobody could pronounce Ziogas. So I ended up in those days -

35:00 nowadays everyone can because we got such a big migrant population. But in those days I used to be called, "Wheelbarrow! With a zed." "Yes, sir." No problem. Got used to it. Stemming from that is how I got my name now which was a nickname but is now lawfully my correct name, which is Ziggy.

So when did Ziggy come into play?

In Vietnam. Came from at the time we were in Vietnam, Twiggy the model was a big thing here. Went to the Melbourne Cup etcetera.

35:30 One of the surgeons there - again they were supposed to call you by your rank. Private Ziogas. Even that was difficult for them. So eventually one of the surgeons said, "You're as skinny as Twiggy, Twiggy Ziggy - Ziggy!" And from then on bang! This guy kept calling me and his being a major everyone went along with it. Ziggy. So the name stuck from there on. And I found it so easy. People don't forget Ziggy. They forget John, Peter and everything else.

36:00 But I kept it. But then again it kept causing problems because working in the government there's your true name and legal name and there's your what you'd like to be called by. And it just caused confusion on documents and payslips and other legal things. So I went to a solicitor and had it changed by deed poll. My solicitor who was from a Lithuanian background went through the spelling extremely carefully. He reckons that, "Do you know that on every legal document - your birth certificate, your

36:30 marriage certificate, your naturalisation certificate, your names are not spelt correctly or consistently throughout any of those documents." Only he ever picked it up.

I wasn't sure what to write on our little clapper board there.

All that through my life. So my sons have ended up with much simpler names. Lukas, spelt the European, L u k a s, and Martin. They can't get it right even in Lithuania. The same way.

That's got a good ring to it. Ziggy Ziogas.

Yeah.

37:00 **But your original names your father had given you they sound almost like Latin or something?**

Could be because Lithuanian is stemming - ancient or prehistory I suppose - from Greco Roman. So a lot of our surnames are mistaken for Greek - Ziogas is also a Greek surname. We have got family in our street with the same surname. Sometimes

- 37:30 we get mail mixed up. But they're from Greek background. Then we have people with names ending in 'A' which are mistaken for Italian. So it's either one or the other.
- Yeah. I read somewhere that Lithuanian might be the closest European language to whatever the original Indo-European language was?**
- That's right. And yes I think some of the grammar is based on Latin. Supposedly if you've got
- 38:00 the aptitude you can pick up Latin quite easily. It's like the word - you hear the saying "Et tu Brutus." Well the word tu is 'you' and that's the same in Lithuanian. Tu. It's 'you'.
- So you said you went to a number of different schools but you managed to fit in fairly well. You weren't very good at maths. What sort of aptitudes did you have?**
- 38:30 Originally through primary I used to always come in the top ten or top three. I used to be fascinated by science and all the tools of science and things like that and I thought, "This is an area I wouldn't mind going into." Zoology, biology, some sort of the sciences. As soon as I hit secondary school because any of the sciences was heavily based in mathematics and my mind just couldn't get around to it. Those were the days of classes of thirty-four
- 39:00 to forty kids. And being a shy person you're not going to ask questions even if you've got difficulty with your homework. Your parents can't help you because you're beyond them by that stage in maths. No. I had difficulties in that. This all leads up to where I ended up. The element that in Year Eleven I actually had to repeat Year Eleven because of the science ones. I sat through the chemistry exam only being able to answer
- 39:30 two questions which was, what is your name, and what is your exam number? I couldn't even answer the first question because they were chemical equations all through. And equations relate to mathematics and things and I was just a big blank on that. So failed that fairly well. Resat next year and did Humanities which was commercial principles, history, of that particular nature. I think I passed every subject. But that was the time I had to make my
- 40:00 big decision. National service was under way and my parents were pushing me to go to Year Twelve and university. That's what they were pushing. I used to be fascinated by kids at school who knew exactly where they wanted to go, what they wanted to study and what's so surprising that they were able to stand up in class and exhibit that they were good at those subjects. I was fascinated by that.
- 40:30 So after the final exam and I thought, "I'm not going very well. Military may not take me." Mum used to - Dad said, "That'd be good for you, yes." Because I ended up being what I believed is a true Mummy's boy. Everything was Mum etcetera. She wouldn't let me - being a typical European woman, can't touch the laundry, you're not allowed do the cooking, stay out of the kitchen. All that sort of business. So I never learnt any of those skills. But I never learnt manly skills either.
- 41:00 My Dad wasn't into that. Dad tended not to be around. He was never into the garage scene or fixing things. That was out of it. So my big decision was, should I continue with studies or will I be ended up in national service because having repeated a year I was the oldest kid in the class at that stage. So in school uniform I went to the recruiting office to see whether they'd take me wearing glasses. And Mum kept saying, "No they won't take you.
- 41:30 You wear glasses. No. You're too skinny. They won't take you. They're all he-men in there," etcetera. She kept rubbishing me all the time, anything to do with that. And so I went there without her permission, school uniform. The guys looked at me. Then I said, "I'm looking to join. Will you take me?" The guy said, "Why don't you take a test? We've got plenty of time." I knew what's going to - they said, "Come back in two hours." So what did Ziggy do? He went and filled himself with malted milkshakes
- 42:00 and water to put on weight.

Tape 2

- 00:30 **Alright. you went down and they said come back in two hours. Could you set that up for us again, Ziggy?**
- Yes, so what happened was, yes, I had filled myself up with liquid to put on weight. I went in there, did the tests - medical tests, the eye test etcetera, and naturally when they said could you please give a sample in this little container, well, did I have enough to give! They said, "That's a bit clear, isn't it?" "Well I had to drink a lot of liquid," and I admitted what I did.
- 01:00 'No no no. You're weight-wise etcetera you're okay. Ooh, Year Eleven." You know, you've done Year Eleven, 'cause in those days anyone who had more than Year Twelve was considered educated - for those days for the military. It was just then that they were using people who were educated because they were getting national service people, people who are in to their twenties, and in universities and things like that,

01:30 educated people. So they said, "No. We'll take you. Here's the forms. Could you get your parents to sign it?" So I took the forms away and my mother naturally went into a fit and a rage and crying etcetera. Dad said, "Where do I sign?" "Thanks."

So you just needed the one signature?

Yes. We did. Only one signature. My mother eventually relented and she was okay. Basically again back to the element that

02:00 you're doing something for the country, you're going to be wearing uniform. What she said, "My son! You're not strong enough. You're not going to be able to put up with it." This is where I suppose from my mother's war experience, I looked at anything to do with military or war was going to be the most difficult thing that you could possibly go through. I looked at it - if I don't die, it must make me better, if they don't kill me.

02:30 A couple of times even in recruit training I thought I was going to die. But that's another story.

Okay. We'll get that soon. It seems like your mum's attitude almost like there was further grist to the mill, that was the challenge?

I think so. I think I knew early on that unless I got away from my mother my future path wouldn't be of any benefit to me. Again, being of a very shy personality at that stage, no.

03:00 And not knowing what I wanted to do with my education and things. I didn't feel free. The future wasn't there so I needed a direction, something that was adventurous away from my mother.

So when exactly did you sign up?

Would have been at the end of November or December because the end of secondary school exams had just finished. I did my last

03:30 exam, I was still in school uniform when I turned up to the recruiting agency.

Nineteen sixty ... ?

'66. No, sorry it was '65 that I actually signed on the dotted line. It was in the February that I actually went to recruit camp. So it was just over the Christmas period. Nothing happens then so it was at that time I had plenty of time to think about it. I'd already signed so I wasn't going to think about it. I was looking forward to it.

Okay. So before we get you off to military training and that

04:00 **can you give us a picture of what life was like, late fifties and into the sixties, in Melbourne. You had the Olympic Games in 1956. So from that period on.**

Okay. Because the Olympic Games were quite a bit of a memory for me because we actually went to the Olympic Village to have a look at it and it was the biggest thing that was happening in Melbourne at those times. I forget what age I was but it was enough for me to start absorbing a few things. My parents and a lot of Lithuanian community really went out of their

04:30 way to attend the basketball matches because the Russians were there. And who were the best basketball players in Europe? Well generally in those days it used to be the Lithuanians so therefore half the Russian team was Lithuanian. So there were are. My mother managed to manoeuvre us to sit behind the team on a couple of matches and the joy I could see of her talking to people in Lithuanian, but I could even at a young age tell that they were so guarded.

05:00 Because you could look and you could see their minders were there listening to every word that was said. They had to talk so greatly in generalities about things. That's what impressed me of how things really are even as a child at that time.

What other memories come back to you from that period. Late fifties you'd have been only eight or nine?

05:30 At that period yes. Again, we kept very strongly to the Lithuanian community so we didn't go into any Australian activities or school activities. Shied away from anything to do with schools. Schools in those days, as now probably, have their own community. Eisteddfods, footy teams. I was never athletic. So I was never in any of the sporting

06:00 teams. And I believe I had too much to do on weekends because the whole weekend was taken up within the Lithuanian community always. I eventually felt I had to break away from that. I ended up with a knowledge that, for me personally meant may not be the right direction of that. Yet even to this day we have families that are linked and have never varied from that path.

06:30 I thought the path, it's good, it's part of my duty to help to assist, I believed in it, but not to spend my whole life focused in that area. Again, that contributed to my joining the military I suppose.

Were there other ways of breaking away from that?

None that I could see because being of the shy personality type I never even ventured into any other things. What I realised was I could have joined

07:00 a bushwalking club to express my adventurous nature, things like that - but never. There was too many other things to do within the Lithuanian community. No. I didn't give it any deep thought at all. My main thing was whether to continue studies and of that nature.

So even as a teenager you were still firmly grounded in that?

Yes.

07:30 My mother always kept me from getting a job as a kid. I remember helping out the local newspaper boy and things of that nature delivering papers through factories and things like that which I found absolutely fascinating and adventurous but my mother was always frightened of me getting in with the wrong crowd. She was so over protective. And this is why some funny things happen in the future because of my

08:00 innocence or ignorance of really what was going on out there.

Who were your mates at that stage before you decided to be in the army - who were you hanging out with?

Only Lithuanians because we all went to each other's birthdays. Lithuanians had such a large group of people. They used to have balls. You'd get dressed up as teenagers. Go to a ball! And they'd dance the old waltzes and the foxtrots which we didn't know how to do. And then they

08:30 used to put on a few rock and roll bits in there. So that was good. But no, not into the Australian community at all. Not for any other type of function. So I was locked in to one path.

So a little bit sheltered from all those developments in pop culture - rock ... ?

As a shy person especially more. Some of the more outgoing teenagers used to go in to those sort of things and go to some of the venues that some of these performers used to turn up. But I never felt the need to do that.

09:00 **And what about the Cold War leading up to Vietnam and the whole Domino Theory and that sort of thing, was there much awareness? Obviously also with your parents' background. Was there an awareness of the politics of the time going on?**

I believe so because Lithuanians were very much into that element of - their whole existence was to be part of or assist their country being freed.

09:30 That was everything that we worked for. Everything that the organisations raised money for. Even in the scouting movement. The whole element that you have to learn scouting, you have to uphold Lithuanian traditions because one day Lithuania will be free. You have to maintain the language. Things of that nature. That was very much put into you. So anything to do with movies about the Cold War, news articles, because by the time you were a teenager you started to read newspapers, the school encouraged it,

10:00 so they were the areas that you focused on. Yes, that was very notable and you tended to know the trends from the ethnic meetings and organisations you were in. That was always brought up. This is happening, that's happening etcetera, how's that going to affect the Baltic States and things like that. So we were always raising money and keeping awareness in Australia and towards Australian politicians. These countries are tiny. But

10:30 they are separate countries. You've got communities here in Australia that are there. That was our whole focus was on that.

Politics aside, what did you do for a good time as a teenager?

At that stage, amongst our teenage group, there was none of this going bush or things that I'm totally focused on now. There was within our own thing - it was - Monday to Friday you did schooling.

11:00 Especially when you were in secondary school you really had to apply yourself. Saturdays and Sundays were always taken up with Lithuanian community involvement. So Saturdays you were practising folk dancing or in the choir or something and the parents used to be in choirs. Sunday was actually you go to church. Lithuania was basically a Catholic country. So you always went to mass and then after that you went to

11:30 which was here and it was called Lithuanian House. It was the gatherings, the focal point of the community, so you always ended up there. The parents were always at meetings and things so as a young person you just made noise and ran riot throughout the particular place and then with organisations you were involved in you participated in all these things. And for fun, basically there was so many birthday parties and things, you knew everyone in the community so you ended up going to their parties.

12:00 So you're a very closed group and your I suppose mental outlook was and it was totally encouraged by the parents - stick to the Lithuanians. Don't go out of your country or ethnic group. They did not encourage you joining in the Australian organisations. That was very clear.

I guess if you were to have an Aussie girlfriend?

That would have been frowned on or discouraged really. Didn't get a chance. We were too involved

12:30 with others. And if you took a Lithuanian girl out the parents were wrapped. What you see in the old Italian movies and things like that - same thing. Same ethnic thing. Thank God! Thank God! That sort of attitude.

Were they an interest for you at that time before the army? Did you have girlfriends within the community?

Yes. Definitely was an interest, but again - because you ended up at the same places all the time so you didn't go out quite frequently as couples.

13:00 If you went out to drive-ins or anything like that it was group, this whole group that used to be about three couples squeezing into a vehicle or something of that nature. So I suppose even from that I was fairly sheltered at that time.

What about sport for example?

No. Never interested in sport. One of the friends of the family ended up playing for Footscray for about three years and

13:30 so we mucked around with the football. He as a teenager was quite good and he gave it one massive kick, it hit me in the face and knocked me out. From then on I thought, "No. Football's no good." Then I got hit by a cricket ball. "No. That's too hard. That's no good." I just didn't have the skills. Or the interest. So I've always classed myself as definitely non-athletic.

So what did you want to be when you grew up?

That's where my problem was. I really had no clear thing. All I wanted to know was

14:00 that I wanted to which the term now would be adventurous things. My focus was the military. I had no I suppose all my reading had been on World War II matters. The comic books, any books, the building of models, it was all associated with this. In my days a lot of the movies were based on either cowboys and Indians or the American west or World War II - the military.

14:30 And that's where my focus was. So I was mentally prepared for the military knowing that I couldn't join the air force - not to fly - and I was not particularly happy with cold water so I didn't want to join the navy. So the military was more my liking because from a school activity we went out bush, we went on a day activity in which we got absolutely soaked in school uniform, running around through muddy fields and things and I got this huge shock

15:00 that "This is fun!" for some reason. "Look at this." There's a little place in Victoria called Werribee Gorge which we went there as a field study for land formations and things which I think it's even used for now. It's a little national park. I was fascinated that these things existed. My parents weren't concerned with it. No-one in the family, but this

15:30 existed. Wow. I did one bushwalk that I organised prior to joining the army and we had so much fun. A guy who ended up one of my other brother-in-laws - with him. From then on I was set for life. That helped me a great deal through the military and what the military did.

So at what age did you have that realisation that could be the path for you?

About sixteen.

16:00 I thought, "I've got to go bush." But not encouraged by the parents there was no facility - you couldn't drive, things of that nature. But always considering military type things. And again, Vietnam was going at that time and they started national service and that's where I had to weigh it up, do I go to national service or do I volunteer before then and join the regular army to do that.

You mentioned

16:30 **the movies of the time, the westerns and the war films. Are there any that stick in your mind that were influential?**

The British movies. I was quite rapt with American or British. But the British movies because it ended up the Australian forces followed the British type system. But that was what interested me. For some odd reason I felt at home with British things more. I suppose because I had learnt that a lot of Lithuanians

17:00 had moved just in time to Britain and things of that nature. People who I met later on in years who'd grown up or the children had grown up my own age group in England through that time. So that's where I felt very much at home. A lot of the influence came from the movies.

So like you're saying I guess you knew a lot about what happened in the Baltic states during World War II, what about, were you learning about Australia's involvement in World War II, what had happened?

Yes.

17:30 From the weekend leading up to Anzac Days in those days was full on. You'd get no other movies except war movies leading up to Anzac Day because Anzac Day in those days was huge. Really. This again had an effect on me later but the old soldiers, the veterans of those days were very well respected. You could tell, this is Australia and this is very important

18:00 in Australian culture of that thing. So I was glued to the television set. I used to attend as many of the marches and sit in the crowd watching as I could. It was just an interest, a focus. I suppose the thought ended up in your mind, "Well could I ever go through what those guys have gone through?" That was something.

I guess you were growing up with kids who might have had dads who were in the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] or whatever.

That's right.

18:30 **Did you get to meet any of those or hear stories?**

Not readily because in those days if you were a kid you tended to be - a parent didn't really speak to you much. You saw on the mantelpiece or something war medals, photographs and things. You'd go like that. Because my family grew up with no relatives in Australia. I never learnt the

19:00 Lithuanian words for anything beyond father, mother, brother, sister. I didn't know what, couldn't remember the words for cousin, extended family - uncle I heard because a lot of the other kids had uncles here in Australia. But no anything beyond that I had no knowledge. We were our own thing. We had no relatives. I never really considered that odd because I used to attend other people's homes and get to know their relatives.

19:30 I didn't think it so odd until later in life when I learnt that we've got such a huge extended family in Europe. I found that unusual from then on, but I'm losing my track.

That's all right. Let's get back onto the track with the sixties, Vietnam. Prior to your signing up you mentioned that national service had come in. When that was announced, what did you think? Did you have friends who'd been called up at all?

No.

20:00 What happened was that you associated in your own age group. There was a fairly strict social level through school in the Lithuanian community. All levels did their own things. You knew people by face and things. You tended to know if anyone could have been conscripted because it would filter through the Lithuanian community. So I didn't know anyone who'd actually gone in prior to me. Although I believe

20:30 there were people from other states that had been conscripted to do these things. So it was unusual for Victoria amongst the community that I was at that stage the only volunteer to actually join the military specifically at that time. But the knowledge of what was happening and the Lithuanian community - the government didn't have to convince them. This is the domino theory and that

21:00 Communism is sweeping towards Australia and that's the very last thing they wanted because they came to Australia to get as opposite to that factor as possible. So they were quite concerned.

Was that at all a motivation for you? You talk about the outdoors and your discovery of the bush and all that, but was that a motivation at all?

Yes. Because having been brought up with that element that duty to country and spending all

21:30 your time even in a social element maintaining a culture which has been usurped by the evil of Communism and the information that was filtering out from the countries of what was going on in those countries you felt that you had a compulsion, you had something to do in life. And I felt, "Well I don't want to do schooling and things like that." I was more into the - although I couldn't express myself -

22:00 the adventurous things in the mind. I thought, "This is one way I've got of doing something. I could be doing it by joining the military because it's all focused on anti Communism. I could be helping my parents' side of things and I could be helping my adopted country at the same time." So I felt I could do no wrong morally by doing that. And hey this is something quite adventurous. Again with the element

22:30 from my parents was it's going to be horrific, it's going to be extremely tough. That was always in the back of my mind and again the element was, I have to make a break. If it's going to kill me, so be it, but I'll be doing what I want to do and I'll be doing something for the country. They were the main driving elements I think.

So if national service hadn't been introduced do you think you still would have enlisted?

- If the situation had been going the way it was, if Australia was attempting to
- 23:00 recruit people for this I probably would have. Yes.
- Do you recall - obviously with national service, Vietnam, that was on the news but were there recruitment drives?**
- Not specifically for the regular army, no. All the news features was on - you started to get the resistance in the papers. Because Americans had already been going for a while.
- 23:30 The anti-war movement in America started and therefore anti conscription started here. So any time you had the government announcing troops are going to be shipped to Vietnam etcetera it was becoming more and more controversial. But I think the element was that some people still felt a sense of duty. Some people still wanted to do what they believed and were brought up as the right thing.
- 24:00 And I suppose the anti Communist thing. That was quite strong here in Australia. I felt that at the beginning.
- That's right, when you signed up it was still a fairly popular venture.**
- Yes.
- Okay. So you'd have been pretty young then. Fifteen? Sixteen?**
- At the time, no no.
- 24:30 I had to repeat a year, Year Eleven. So actually when I joined I would have been nineteen.
- Oh so you just finished Year Eleven. You told us how your mother wasn't terribly pleased, your father, "Go for it." Any words of advice or encouragement from them once you had signed up?**
- 25:00 Yes. From my mother. Because it was obvious that I would have gone into Vietnam. It was obvious, so her big thing was, "Please don't come back with a Vietnamese bride?" That was her only advice. Really. Just to survive, come back in one piece.
- What about your dad, what did he have to say?**
- Not much. I think he was proud.
- 25:30 You could tell. That was from him. But again I wasn't that close to my father.
- You were a bit concerned wearing glasses weren't you, about signing up and the fact that they might possibly reject you?**
- Correct.
- How long had you been needing the glasses?**
- From about twelve or fourteen. Actually a schoolteacher said, "You're squinting at the board all he time. I recommend to your parents
- 26:00 take you - " and eventually one of the teachers spoke to my mother. "You should take him to an optometrist." And yep, immediately had glasses. It was a revelation. "Oh look how clear the world is." Wore glasses from then on. I've got a stigmatism. That's the thing that causes the problem of the short-sightedness. Isn't that big. What they did in the military was, my dominant eye which does the focusing through a rifle was the better eye, so "Not a problem, fellow, we'll take you."
- 26:30 Which means basically I could fight without glasses.
- So when you signed on the dotted line, what were you thinking? You wanted to be an infantry man?**
- At that moment I didn't know. I didn't know what was in front of me. I didn't know the various corps that existed. So the element in the military always is, most people look at it, the fighting soldier running around, pack and rifle and jumping in the dirt and
- 27:00 out of holes and things. That's the impression. I didn't realise there were so many other positions there. Fortunately at recruitment one of the guys said, "Gee with your education you should be able to go into survey work." I didn't realise that survey took up a lot of mathematics. So eventually that was discouraged. Don't need surveyors, need people in other areas. So at recruitment stage once you were almost completing recruitment as a regular soldier you were actually given three choices of what to join.
- 27:30 "Where would you like to go?" Then we'll tell you where you do go. I think national servicemen didn't have much of a choice at all.
- But the permanent guys did.**
- We were given three choices, yes. At the recruit stage. By that stage you had an idea what the different

forces were, what the different corps and elements were within the military.

28:00 You had to have an understanding to be able to choose. First of all whether they think you'd be suitable. And then the other element is whether you'd function in those units.

And that happened at the end of your recruit training.

Recruit training, that's correct.

Okay. We'll come to that in a minute. Once you'd signed up, you said there was Christmas, New Year, you were going to be - the future lay ahead of you. How did you spend that summer, do you recall?

I don't recall.

28:30 No. Because in those days we used to have really hot summers, I remember that. But I believe it was not so different. You started to read a little bit more carefully of what was going on in Vietnam and things like that. Because at the time that I went into join that's when they sent the first great amounts, the battalions and things like that over there. Prior to that it was all their training units,

29:00 the advisers were going over there and things were happening to them. So we took a lot more notice to what was in the paper to what Australians were doing. I think that was more clear. I think I must have had a much better Christmas and time there because for once a path was in front of me and I knew where I was going. That I think was a big relief for me. I felt so happy.

Was there any fearfulness?

No.

29:30 None at all at that stage. I just felt a great happiness for having first of all been chosen. Because you live and you think "They won't take me. I'm what my mother says. I'm weak and too skinny," and all that sort of stuff. So I thought "Hey!" Something I respected. And "Gee. Look what all these guys do! They're tough. And they've accepted me?"

30:00 This is something. This is a pathway in life."

A bit of validation.

Yeah. It was a boost to me personally.

Were you a smoker or a drinker at all at that stage?

A drinker, yes. But not a smoker. No. I couldn't see any need for smoking. There's an interesting story there too and eventually it came out. But, no. I used to drink. In those days you could drink and drive almost.

30:30 Survived those days. But I didn't drink much. What you'd call a social drinker. Too much alcohol didn't sit well with me at all.

And you had a driving license before you joined the army?

Yes. That's correct. I was actually one of the only kids at school that had a drivers' license, because again I didn't leave school until I was nineteen. In those days you couldn't get it till eighteen and I passed on my first test so I was quite happy.

And was there a girlfriend at the time?

No.

31:00 No-one specific. Because you would move to Adelaide or other areas, you'd have youth camps where they tried to intermingle you and so you ended up writing - you had pen friends or pen girlfriends in all the different in all the different states. I know when I was in Vietnam I had a number of young ladies I was writing letters to.

Those camps were from the school or community?

31:30 Community. So whether they were scout camps - I wasn't into the scouts, but they - it's a strange thing joining the scouts because again from the adventurer, as soon as I did join the scouts I was in the little cubs, but when I realised that when they go bush they stay in a main camp and they don't do much except learn Lithuanian things and learn the traditional camp - I thought, "Well that's not very adventurous. I've got to learn Lithuanian. No. I don't like this." So I didn't continue with it.

32:00 But other youth camps were from either the religious groups or sub station groups and that's where the parents definitely encouraged that. Again, it was good. It was to mix the people up and get to know other people from other states. Basically what you might call we realised later was getting the gene pool organised.

Had there been any associations of a military bent like cadets?

32:30 No. None of the schools I went into. If they had cadets I would have been in my element. But, no, the schools that I went to were inner suburb and Christian Brothers but not the big ones. My parents couldn't afford to send me to the big colleges that had all this sort of thing. No.

So after having signed on the dotted line, what's the next thing you hear from the army?

A letter of

33:00 what to bring and when to be at the railway station. And that was basically it. Oh yeah. Because you had to turn up and I think there was one room near the railway station where they all brought you in so you knew all these people are joining up, terrific. And it was very much impressed on you that you were joining the regular army, not the conscripts. Because a lot of the guys joined for three years. I was the only one then pressed for six years for some reason. So I took six years. Signed

33:30 on the dotted line and that's when you swore on the bible allegiance to the queen. And then you know you were committed and you had to get on the train. But you were given an out, just up until that final moment. And that was impressed on you. "If you take this oath you go on the train. And you're not going to see your parents for about eight weeks." I think they wouldn't let you out of camp for eight weeks. Because they were so tough. They were too scared to lose people.

34:00 If you went home you'd never come back again probably. They don't realise that some people actually enjoyed what they did there.

So you swore that oath at the train station?

I believe so. As far as I remember, yeah.

Which station was that?

Spencer Street Station. Because it was the train going up to Sydney, Albury. And from Albury I think we were bussed to Wagga Wagga. Silver City they used to call it. Right into the heartland

34:30 of Australia up there.

So that was that group, that mustering was all regular, or was it a mix of Nashos?

No. Regular only. That was impressed on us, "Fellas, you are volunteers. You are going to be treated slightly differently for that. But you volunteered. We thank you for it." Et cetera. They were quite good about it. "We hope you make it," and things like that. Typical even in those days there's a lot of bravado and

35:00 "Move move move." Although they try to soften it not to scare us too much at the beginning. But it was all there. It was the officers who were the, "Mate, you've got to listen. Thank you. This is good for your country," and things like that. From there we moved out.

And what would your farewell - I know you were only going away for a couple of months, but actually walking out of your home and your parents saying goodbye, what was that?

They were at the station to see me off. I think it was only

35:30 my parents. Normally I'd have photographs, but I don't think - none of my friends were there because it was a work day that we had to leave on so none of my friends were there. It's different to when I flew out to Vietnam.

How were your parents at the train station?

Mother cried of course. Mum cried. Dad shook my hand. And that was it and I was gone. Forget what my sister did. She was there too.

36:00 **And can you recall the train trip up north? Did you get talking to the other guys?**

You got talking to them, but I don't remember what we talked about. I think just our premonition of what's going to happen because none of us knew what was going to happen. What surprised me was that some of the people there were older than me. Older people. I thought, "Oh what are they joining for?" Again it became a bit clearer later why older people -

36:30 anyone who was twenty years and older is older in those days. So looking at it, "Gee, if you're over twenty, you haven't been in national service - nasho - why are you joining?" Then gradually we found out during training et cetera why they were joining. There were a couple of people from England. We found out later why they were joining.

Can you tell us now?

Okay. What happened was there were people who - for some odd reason we got a shock when we went into recruit training -

37:00 these are the guys who knew everything. "What's going on here?" And they were the fit guys. They were the guys you would turn to for help. Later on you found out that Australia was involved in Vietnam, Britain wasn't. So you had ex-military who left the British forces, joined the Australian troops to get

experience in a war zone. Being we were all British subjects they could straight away sign on the dotted line. There's no problem.

37:30 That's what we found out later. Some of those people were looking at their career paths - would you believe - as mercenaries. Really. They admitted it later. They're the guys you always looked forward to. They're the guys who knew how to do the weapons. And as medics, they were the guys who knew all the medical work. Wow. And later on you found out they're career soldiers in their little speciality they've chosen. And they were good at it.

38:00 **You make it sound as if there was quite a number of them.**

Our unit in Vietnam would have had at least four of them. But through recruit training we found out there were people - they were Poms in there and that's why they were joining, to get that experience, because they wanted to be - not in the officer levels, but they had to be skilled. There's a certain pride in the military that you can do certain things that other people can't do and they always utilise that, like special forces and

38:30 other areas where you've got to try harder. You've got to be fitter. You've got to be better and you wear different markings or something like that. So you took that on board and you tried very hard to pass those tests and be like that and the Brits were wanted to be - whether from their family background - they wanted to be career soldiers so they needed that experience because they needed to get back there to Britain, "Here's my experience. I'm permitted to wear these medals. Here we are."

39:00 These are the people who'd end up being promoted through the system. They've had that experience. Others don't.

I didn't realise. I imagine that happens in all wars, there are those professional soldiers who want to get involved wherever it is. I didn't realise it was to that extent.

I didn't realise that was happening so early in Vietnam days. It's only later in Vietnam that I found this out.

39:30 **So it was a train up to Albury and then from there?**

I think we were bussed and got on the army trucks. Thank god, not on army trucks. That would have frightened a lot of them. But, no, we were bussed to Kapooka, the army establishment there and allocated to our areas and our platoons and started our training. The law was laid down. This is what's going to happen. This is what you do. It was a shock.

40:00 But again you had to get into it, you had to follow closely what was going on and if you didn't - you quickly found out the guys who absorbed it quickly. That's how we found out the guys that have already had previous experience. The NCOs [non commissioned officers] even, they knew their history, so they let these people be the unofficial leaders in your platoon. And you looked up to these guys. They knew what they were doing. If you didn't know how to do something they'd come and help you. And this is the big thing I learnt with teamwork was that you

40:30 helped each other. If you weren't good at something, you helped the other one. The other guy would help you in something that you were not good at. That was very much to survive. You had to survive as a team.

Tape 3

00:30 **Something I wanted to pick up on was your education with the Christian Brothers in North Melbourne. You didn't talk very much about that and I'm just wondering what that was like for you and how they influenced you.**

Yes. There was influence. Because most of my schooling was through Catholic schools and there was one of the brothers who taught religious training there,

01:00 Boris, they used to call him. A very strict person. But we had a lot of respect for him. He was a very overbearing person, but for some reason you felt that he was very strict, but that he was fair in his dealings. One of the things he taught us was to consider things - okay, religion teaches this, or this is what we say, but could there have been another cause for this to happen, or this miracle

01:30 to happen etcetera. It'd still be a miracle, but it happened in a more scientific way and things of that nature. He got us to think that way and I think that has helped me personally to understand things which might be rather difficult or hard to reconcile in your own mind when it's related to religious matters. Actually at the school while I was there I had to toss around the idea

02:00 whether - which would have been greatly to my mother's satisfaction - to go into the priesthood. And I toyed with the idea because as a person right throughout schooling I believe I was very religious and I truly believed in it. That was one of the things. And this is why with my further education and things and the element of being so shy and I recognised that factor

02:30 in myself was, should I consider that path. That was another option which I'd forgotten about before in relation to that. But I think that having gone through Vietnam my concept of religion has changed from that.

How far down the track did you go with considering the priesthood?

Only listening very intently to - because on of the things they do in Catholic schools,

03:00 especially in boys' schools is quite often have a recruiting sessions without you realising it for the religious orders. Now, the way the world's going, it's even much more difficult getting people into that area. But it was something they did as part of their marketing I suppose in those days. It was a thought that had passed my mind that probably it could be of interest

03:30 to me.

So what about the disciplinary aspects of our education with the Christian Brothers? Were they strong on discipline?

They were. But I felt it was quite fair. And I can still remember the pain in my hands too. On a very frosty morning one time when I spoke to a mate of mine we both got called out, it was freezing cold and we'd just settled into school. Getting seven cuts on the hand and the pain was there for another hour and a half. That was the days where they could mete out

04:00 corporal punishment as they called it.

What was that for?

It was talking in class. It was rare for me to get into trouble because I was so quiet. So I always understood and felt the need for discipline. I usually had no problem. It's just a got distracted by a person who eventually has ended up being one of my brother-in-laws. So we ended up

04:30 sitting in the same class all together for some reason. They tried to do it alphabetically and we usually ended up sitting close by each other. I always understood the need for discipline. Even today. Self-discipline. I'm probably a very analytical person and if I see a need for it I'll go along with it. Even now working in the area for law enforcement I see a need for it, I see a role for it, so I have

05:00 no challenge with that.

Did you tell your mum that you got the cuts?

No. you don't tell things to your mother like that. It's a big thing in class though, "Cop this." It raises you a little bit amongst your peers.

I was going to say did it hurt your pride?

No. Never hurt your pride in school to get the cuts. No. It was like a score. Got that.

05:30 Survived that. Again reflecting back on the military all near misses were an advantage to you. Because you got scraped through and said, "Oh gee, didn't hurt." It either hurt or it didn't hurt. But, "I survived that one. Wow." And you'd count it as an experience.

Okay. We'll move down

06:00 **the track a bit to Kapooka. You got the bus to Kapooka you think. Oh, you did, didn't you. You got the coach. So can you tell me what it was like to move into the barracks there and commence your training?**

The thing that got me straight away was the Spartan conditions. Very sparse. At that time you were not permitted to have anything which was of your own clothing. That was all taken away from you immediately

06:30 or you had to put it in a safe area. Safe lockers. Issued with everything military, underwear right through, every little bit and they wanted to militarise you immediately. So the Spartan conditions that existed. That's probably why I wouldn't have too much trouble going to jail, but it was extremely foreign to me. But they kept up such a very intensive pace

07:00 of training you didn't have time to get homesick. You didn't have time to think about, "I'm uncomfortable," or anything like that. You would just train so much you had no time to yourself. You were either training, eating, or cleaning your equipment for the next day's training. So you were so focused on just getting some sleep. Recruit training, that's its intention

07:30 is to weed out people who psychologically or physically just cannot go through it. So psychologically I suppose I adapted very quickly because of my attitude that "I'm going to be going through hell here." I was mentally prepared for that. So if I survived that day, "That wasn't too bad." Because what they did was they gradually made you fitter and fitter so you could take more and more and eventually you took pride in it that you could do this.

08:00 And eventually you'd be coming in, "We've done five weeks. We have survived." This sort of attitude which they encourage. "Fellas, you've gone this far. We'll push you a bit more." All this sort of attitude. In those days, I don't know whether they do it now, sergeants and the drill sergeants, cor, talk about swearing and carrying on and calling you all sorts of weird names. "You little" - whatever. But that's what you accept from the movies and I was in awe

08:30 and I wasn't going to answer back. Which was a wise thing to do. But you accepted all that because what you really woke up to eventually was that they're doing it for a purpose, they're fair about it and you pull your weight, they'll assist you. As soon as you woke up to that factor you fitted in. You did it. You did it as a team and just tried to survive each day.

You know we were talking in the break about how unrealistic people's

09:00 **expectations are. They don't really grasp what it means to join the army or join the services. What about yours when you signed up and you arrived there at Kapooka? Was it a shock? Was it very different to what you expected?**

It was very much a shock, yes, because I really didn't know what to expect, but the Spartan conditions of it and the barking of the orders and there was no "Yes, please. Please do this. Thank you." None of that. It

09:30 was all orders and I realised later why it is orders as such. You follow orders. There's not the slightest questioning of what you're given. You go ahead and do it. No time to think about it. That was very much of a shock. But again the mental attitude that it's going to be bad so I was so ignorant and

10:00 naive of what was going on, one very clear impression I have in my mind which I give out to people of how much I'd been sheltered was the element that again your parade boots had to be spotless clean, you could see your face in them and things like that and we had to spend hours trying to get our parade boots up to standard. The sergeant kept harping on me. "Private Ziogas, get some elbow grease into those boots. Come on.

10:30 That's not good enough." All these things so I went to the canteen one night and asked for a can of elbow grease. Thank Goodness no-one else was in earshot and the kind lady behind the counter said, "Elbow grease. I think that's a figure of speech." And she explained it to me. She mothered me for that period and I - "Thank God!" Little things like that I didn't know about. Terms of speech. Metaphors and things.

11:00 I was lost. I couldn't react. I had to think, "What does he mean? Is he fair dinkum or is he joking or what?" So it took a big learning experience for me to come up to speed of what you might say street sense for what existed out there. Especially in those days, all male environment, so that was a rude shock to me. Very much. But again because of my shyness component and probably because I sat down listening and tried to evaluate what are they saying, is this true or what is it?

11:30 And then when you've got your set of mates around you who you felt comfortable to talk to and you spoke to them and "No, he means this, he means that." This sort of stuff became easier when you had someone that could interpret for you.

So who did you gravitate to at Kapooka in terms of mates, friends?

You were two or four to a room. So naturally you had to be on very friendly terms with the

12:00 people in that room. And basically I think there was about twenty to twenty-eight of us in that particular platoon and because you had to depend on each other so much you really did not - there were people that you would not voluntarily have a beer with, but you worked with them and you had no problems sharing things and helping each other. That's what really set things in my mind about

12:30 the military and their training methods. This has become quite apparent in my days, in my unit I never saw anything which - every now and then you hear about this bastardisation, things like that, you were just so flat out doing things and trying to help each other survive to get through it, but then again you were trying to become a regular army soldier. You weren't forced into this. You were a volunteer. So therefore there was a little bit of the pride element that "I can survive this. I can

13:00 do it."

But in the early days at Kapooka when you realised that there were things you didn't understand because English hadn't been your first language, were there certain men there that you found it easier to make friends with, who were sympathetic ... ?

Yes. Anyone from a different, non-English background. We had one Hungarian and one Polish guy and we became mates instantly because of our backgrounds.

13:30 Because we understood our backgrounds and what we'd faced and the little trials and things that we'd faced. That was the obvious clique that we were on friendly terms instantly from day one really. You found that out by their surnames because everyone's called by their surnames. You think "That's an odd name. Where are you from? Where are your parents from?" And you took it up from there.

Were you accommodated alphabetically?

I'm not sure. I'm not sure how they allocated

14:00 the rooms or anything like that, no.

I was going to say that surnames starting with "Z" are usually European names.

They are. And the big thing in the military is, if you're last on the alphabet you get the dirty jobs - hang on, what was it - you always missed out. Whatever happened, they used to do things alphabetically and the person at the end of the alphabet usually got the worst tasks. That's right. You always got

14:30 the worst jobs and then you were never the first one to be paid or whatever it was. I forget what it was, but you learnt to live with it. So if you ever got a plus, you thought, "Wow, this is odd. Who reversed the alphabet?"

So I imagine there would have been a few jokes about the Aussies amongst you and your Hungarian friend and your Polish friend?

No. Because we were in it all together. So no there wasn't. Because we'd all grown up with that

15:00 same background I think because all the nations were under Communist rulers and we all had this sense of duty and this sense of purpose. So really not and again because we were from a northern European background, all of that area, we didn't look that much different to anyone else. Except for the names we had no problems. There was no - generally there was -

15:30 I can't remember any racial differences or jokes or taunts or anything like that at all. I thought we blended in quite well, surprisingly.

I meant my question though from the other side, like you responding to this very Aussie environment that you were in in the army and like you said, these strange metaphors and expressions that you hadn't come across and just wondering whether that

16:00 **gave you some entertainment with your other fellow ... ?**

Yes. The reaction and the laughter from some of them because we didn't understand certain things. Yes. But they took it on board to the effect that after they'd had their fun with us, to explain it to us. That's where you learnt quick. Oh yeah, sorry, that certainly happened on a number of occasions. Because quite often something would be said by the sergeant in the group or whatever and everyone would look to us and say,

16:30 'Did you get that? Did you understand that?' Certain footy terms. Colloquial Australian slang, yeah.

So overall what were the fellows like? Were there any rougheads?

There were the boozers. There was a couple that were a little bit slow. But, no, our

17:00 particular group was quite good. I think most of us graduated. I think there's only one that left our particular group. So we all succeeded. Marched out. We were no longer called recruit. We were actually got the rank of private.

So let's talk a little bit about the actual training itself. What was covered there at basic training school?

A lot of it which made us exhausted was the physical training because they had to get us up to a particular physical level

17:30 which was acceptable to the military with the understanding that should you have been immediately allocated to infantry, infantry from it's very concept are always mobile, on the ground, they don't ride around in trucks and things like that. They have to carry heavy loads. So therefore they must be extremely physically fit for the mobility of the military and for their own safety. Later on I learnt the thing is if you're fit and you get hurt

18:00 you can survive things much better than a person who's not in a fit condition. So that was very important to them and they had things like chest measurements and things where they had to prove that our muscles increased, muscle mass and things like that, increased as a result of the training. Very long marches which toughened our feet and blisters. Then there was the weapons training which was considered very important as later on we found out a little bit more important than the American were using. So that was an

18:30 important element. And the safety elements from weapons handling, map reading which was a common thing, knowledge of military customs. Knowing who not to step in the line of and who to salute. That was important. A little bit of military history, but what impressed me was their training methods. Because they had to train you as the most, you might say the dumbest level in the military, to be able to accept and acknowledge and know the

19:00 regulations which were shouted out or given and it was to be an automatic reaction. So you had to know firstly the reason for this automatic reaction, then you had to be constantly drilled to do that without question. This element you hear of stories from Vietnam, I suppose Second World War, you hear a shot

and everyone does the one thing. Either you fall on the ground or take some other action. These are the sort of thing that were drilled into your mind. I remember the factor

19:30 of learning that I wear glasses, so therefore when you go to sleep you roll and you can bend your glasses out of shape so what you do, you take them off. But you must put them in an area that in an instant of being awoken from a deep sleep you must find them instantly.

Where would you put them? Where was that place?

Generally it was somewhere near my chest, in one of my chest pockets or one of my pouches of the webbing that we used to carry. Put it in there so it wouldn't get crushed.

20:00 And broken. Other things such as knowing where your firearm is. That in an instant you woke and you know where your firearm but you don't go groping in another area. We got to the stage that we could actually wake up at certain times just be focusing on timings of when we're supposed to be awake. You can actually wake up. In bed and a picture or a watch or a need to be up at a certain time, you can do that without an alarm clock.

20:30 Things like that. I was fascinated by that sort of thing. You were encouraged to make up little habits that were suitable to you in the field and to do that without constant supervision. You learnt that pretty quickly. 'cause you couldn't function effectively without learning those sort of things.

Can you recall what some of those habits were that you're referring to?

One of my

21:00 habits was - because you always had your firearm with you in a ... Australians insisted that in Vietnam you always had your firearms with you, in training always had your firearm with you. You must never be more than about three metres away from your firearm. Always have your firearm. And what's going to happen is when you have live rounds in there? Biggest thing, people shoot each other in the army accidentally. So the big thing I learnt was, the first thing whenever touching a firearm I went to the safety catch.

21:30 Always to the safety catch. Sitting up on a track, always playing, making sure it's on the safety whenever my mind drifted to the gun - always on safety. So I never had an accidental discharge which was almost a court martial offence or jailing offence in my days in the military if you accidentally fired the rifle. Because you didn't know what condition it was in. That's one which is an automatic habit that you got. Other habits were that you just complete an action, so having tea in the bush, sitting there having tea - one of the

22:00 few breaks you got - you're having tea. As soon as you've taken something out of your pack and you've used it, fold it up, put it back so you've only got something loose which you've got at the time. Because you may be in an instant, "Get up! Move!" "But, sir, my tea's still brewing." No no. You're moving!" You've left your tea, started brewing, you're gone. Things like that. They did that sort of stuff so you had to be constantly ready. In the barracks there was a certain way of arranging your clothes in the cupboards.

22:30 In case of fire you had to lift coat hangers out in an instant. Even to this day my wife puts coat hangers in the wrong way and we have a bit of dispute but we have come to a consensus. I change everything around. Particular way of putting things in. All of these things, they're for a reason. You eventually wake up to the reason and you go on with it so therefore you play the game.

That's a wonderful description because it makes you realise how it's all about survival ultimately

23:00 **that kind of training. Whether it's putting the coat hangers in the right way or folding up your or putting away your tea. It's all really ultimately about your survival, not being distracted from that I suppose. With the weapons, what weapons were you trained in, or were you, at Kapooka? Were you given weapons?**

Yes. As diggers in basic training you never did pistols.

23:30 Not in my day. But you did the submachine gun and the rifle were the main firearms that you trained with at recruit level. In my days it was a - Sterling - I actually forget the name. But they got rid of those firearms before we got to Vietnam and then they gave us the F1 submachine guns which we thought was great. I could never fire a single shot out of them. They always burst at three. Which I was -

24:00 constantly the sergeant was on my back. But that was good. It ended up, being as a medic, that was our defensive weapon. Small submachine gun that we carried, thirty three rounds. So you had to qualify in that. You had to qualify in a rifle which I had much success with except I always used to get a bruised face as a result of it. 'cause of the way I wear my glasses, they way I had hold the rifle to see through the sights properly - always got a bruised cheek. Came away from firing and glasses splattered with the oil and stuff like that.

24:30 **So it would kick back into your face.**

A rifle has a good kick, yes. We were shown an example, "Don't be afraid of the rifle!" And the sergeant

gets out on the firing range, puts two of these rifles into his groin. Boom. Does a yippee shoot. His whole body's shaking, we thought, "Boy. Wow. How does he do that?" And we worked out later on he must be a eunuch because those rifles kick. Depends if you hold them

25:00 the wrong way.

With the F1 you said that you couldn't get one shot out of it.

Yes. You're supposed to be able to just squeeze the trigger to get a single shot 'cause it doesn't have a single shot setting. It's always on automatic setting. I could never do it. Always went ba ba bah! Always. But he let me go. Let me pass.

You were training in a

25:30 **rifle range?**

Yes.

How were you taught to use it? Standing up?

Standing up, lying down. And the positions that you would be expected to fire firearms. Remember, this is basic training. When you went to your unit to do further training and prior to Vietnam you had to do a specialised course of using firearms in the bush and not in the firing range. That's where the danger is of hitting your own troops.

26:00 So that was separate training altogether which we found quite exciting, quite interesting, compared to being on the range hitting the target all the time.

Any accidents there at training?

Not during my time except people falling off, having logs dropped on them. This element of going through the obstacle courses. I always fell off narrow beams that we had to walk on. My sense of balance wasn't great. But not in my unit.

26:30 No. We had people who bayoneted themselves through their hands because we still had bayonets, we'd do drill with bayonets and things like that. That used to happen. People falling out of trucks by playing around. Remember we were young fellas. A lot of bravado going on so people used to do some things wrong. Firearm accidents, never. Which was great. In our unit. Getting hit by lightning. Three of our guys went to hospital for that.

This is at Kapooka?

Yes.

27:00 Lightning on the parade ground. You're out on the parade ground and dark clouds building and the first rumble of thunder, bang!, it's a lightning shot and then everyone had to go off the field. But knocked the whole platoon over but three had to be taken to hospital. They survived. One had burns, but they other two just had a bit of shock.

It knocked the whole platoon over?

Half the platoon yeah.

They fell?

Yeah. Just the vibration and the shock. And the huge fright. Massive fright of this happening. One of the other things when you're talking about weapons was the element of

27:30 throwing grenades. Because you never see this - all your video and film equipment is sound controlled, so you never ever know the loudness of how these things are, pistols or grenades. So that's one of the things they had to train you to get used to how loud these things are and to get over the fact of being distracted by all that noise. But yeah the grenades really frightened all of us.

28:00 Just from the devastation that they can cause. And in Vietnam I found a grenade can cause incredible damage or the most minor damage. Really weird effects which we might go into later.

Yes. We will. So you threw a live grenade at Kapooka?

You had to. You had to qualify in about four grenades that you threw which were live ones. You did dummy ones first because you had to get used to the weight. I think about one and a half kilos

28:30 the ones that we were training with at that time. Again, not being a sportsman I was told by the sergeant in the pit, "Now, recruit!" "How do I throw this thing?" And he says, "Bowl it like a cricket ball. Bowl it!" So, not knowing how to bowl I lean back, bowled it and it went straight up. So he grabbed me and we went in to the shelter and he dragged me and threw me into the shelter.

29:00 The thing landed just on the other side of the pit and went off and shook and dust and everywhere. And he says, "I told you to bowl it." I said, "I've never played cricket." He said, "Chuck it then." So the next shot was much better. I just threw it. Must have been like that. Because when you throw the thing you count the time and then you watch around you because you quickly drop down and you look and you

can see the splinters and the bits of grenade that do all the damage flying everywhere

29:30 and throwing dirt on you and you think, "I don't want to be anywhere near these things when they go off." So you end up with a healthy respect for them.

Can you tell me what the process is in throwing a grenade? What's the first step?

You have it in your hand for a starter. You pull the pin out and all the pin does is release the handle. Sorry, it makes the handle ready to fire. As soon as you release the handle it fires the pin inside. It's a firing mechanism.

30:00 Once the handle flies off there's a click. Normally depends on the actual device. It's activated and you have a limited time in which to get rid of it or do something else with it. So you've got to get rid of it. The only other thing is to fall on it which sometimes people have done to absorb the whole explosion. But that's what it is. You were later taught that you can actually take the pin out, put them into a

30:30 can and put a string onto them as a booby trap so that someone goes past, pulls on the string, pulls this out of the can, the handle goes flying and in a number of seconds off she goes. We were never taught how to shorten the fuse length because if you did that and you're close enough you can hear it going off. Soon as you hear that you run and dive. That's one of the other things you were taught. Any time you hear these strange metallic sounds you don't hang around, you disappear.

31:00 Or the biggest thing was you'd lie on the ground. A lot of these things blow up. They don't blow sideways. There is a way we can make things blow sideways to cause damage along the ground too. But not necessarily with grenades.

We've heard fellas who froze once they pulled the pin and they had the grenade gripped in their hand. And they just froze. They couldn't throw it? Did you, maybe not your personally, but ... ?

It was very fearful and

31:30 that's the thing you feared because, hey, you're a man, you can do this. That was a very constant fear of that. But I was able to throw it. But no. They had arrangement for that. So even if the digger dropped it on the ground there was a pit behind you that you could go under shelter from above and around. So that's why you were in there with one of the instructors. So even if you dropped it there's still the timing there. So just quickly you'd get dragged out of the way and if the instructor thinks there's enough time

32:00 he can pick it up and just toss it over the edge. Not instant. Which is good.

So you're in the pit throwing out of the pit?

Oh yes. Because you have to be protected. Yes. Those waiting were in a protected building a little bit further down before you move in. You're always looking out the door. You can hear, boom! You can see this thing, all the shrapnel, bouncing along. Thump and there was something on our door. "What the hell was that?" And you look at the door and you think, "I don't want to go out there." And the bottom

32:30 part of the grenade logged in the wood in the door and that was frightening. And we thought "Oh no." That really puts the fear into you. Later we did movement with firearms where people are giving you firing cover. The whole front that you're walking into is being disintegrated by firepower. That is very frightening.

Was that Canungra?

That was in that type of training, yes. I didn't go to Canungra because there was too many troops going over. We did our training in Victoria in some of the bush out here.

33:00 **How were the fellas dealing with this fear?**

The instructors were able I think a lot of times to pinpoint - they knew what was the most frightening elements. That's the thing I was very impressed with military training - they lead you up to it. Remember that you practised with the same weight, same dummy thing, saw the pin fly off, you practised beforehand. That was a big thing.

33:30 Anything dangerous or anything that was a physical skill, you practised it beforehand. This was the thing that I learnt. You can train yourself into many things which are physical. You can train yourself to automatically react to things that are important to you even later in life. Just have to keep repeating it consciously. If you repeat it not thinking about it, doesn't work as effectively. That's one of the teaching techniques the military use because it's almost like teaching a puppy. They teach dogs that way.

34:00 So for automatic safety reactions I was very impressed with their way of training. So that element of freezing with a grenade, that, although we were very fearful with them, in our platoon it never happened. Almost dropped back on me, but the others got through it all right.

So the completion of that training you had to choose what you wanted to do?

That's correct and being a regular we were given three choices.

- 34:30 I put down because I really started enjoying the training and enjoying the bush etcetera and I said, "Well "Look, I'd like infantry, infantry and medics." And the guy said, "Not allowed to put the same thing twice." And I heard from the others, "Oh put it down three times and they've got to give it to you." And the guy said, "No. We'll punish you for this. Why do you want to join the infantry mate?" "I like running around the bush. I like this." He says, "All right.
- 35:00 Why did you choose medics?" Because in the military medics is like - you want to be a nurse? Gee that's not very manly is it? Sort of thing. That's the sort of attitude. That's a bit sissy. That was the attitude. "Why do you want to be a medic?" "I'm scared of blood." "Oh no. Really?" I said, "I've learnt that if you're scared of something and you train through it you eventually adopt it, you're okay with it." He said, "Oh right."
- 35:30 I walked out and I thought, "Bugger it. I realise what's going to happen. They're going to give me medics," and sure enough at the - it's not a graduation or anything, but you don't know where you're going and you know you've completed it successfully, the course, and then the lieutenant and the sergeant walk in and they've got bags of buttons and emblems for your uniform. Because at the moment you've only got the rising sun on your buttons and things like that. So they walk in and they say, "Okay, we're going to allocate." And we're standing in a
- 36:00 corridor. And they say, "Here's your bag, here's yours." And nothing's marked on them except your name. And they said, "Okay, everyone open the bags." Paper bags. You open them up and as soon as you see the button you know where you went, what corps you're going into and "Medics." "Where'd you go?" You ask everybody. And most of us got what we wanted. I got medics. I didn't mind.

You weren't disappointed?

No. It got me back to Victoria where medical corps training was in Healesville and I always lived in Melbourne.

36:30 **What about at first when you opened the bag, were you disappointed?**

No. It was all right. No. I wasn't disappointed. It was - I had expected it because I knew people in that area and I'd actually volunteered which was good. Most people are put in there.

When you said that you wanted to join the infantry because it meant you'd be out in the bush, you'd be out there, had you given thought to the possibility that you would be having to kill people?

Not to the thought of killing people, no. That's what you were taught.

- 37:00 Would you believe I didn't wake up to the fact that you were really training to kill people until back in Australia when I did officer training. That's when the huge realisation came onto me because as officers you have to commit people to do that and that's when it sunk into my mind regarding that. Up until that time and I think everyone has a thing, "I'm there for the adventure. I'm there to carry this big gun. I know how to shoot it."

- 37:30 I'm going to shoot at things out there, but I would never have conceived of that element. But what happens is, when you're confronted with a fearful situation and you know that person is going to throw back at you exactly what you've got in your hands the thing changes. Survival. You're back into survival. And you will shoot people. But the deliberate hunting down or something like that never dawned on me until I did officer training. Then - this is after it.

- 38:00 After Vietnam it hit me. Because in Vietnam our whole role was purely to protect the wounded and to fix them up and try to get them home, things like that so we were so flat out doing that. It really ended up satisfying work. So I was I suppose overall glad that I chose medics.

When you told that friend you were scared of blood what did you mean?

I was. When I was a child

- 38:30 when we were living in Brunswick one of the children we were with, they did chicken runs in front of the railways in front of the trains. He got hit, got killed. I wouldn't go to school with my eyes open, I wouldn't cross that railway line with my eyes open because I might see somebody. For a week. My mother had to take me with my eyes closed, leading me across the railway lines. I was so fearful. Because that was a shock. A friend dying and having his head smashed by the wheels and all the blood that was there and that. All the kids

- 39:00 were talking about it. And I just couldn't take it. I couldn't stand it. So up until that time I'd never seen any bad injuries or anything.

So that was the association you made with blood.

Yeah. I'd learned by that stage in the army that you can be trained out of certain things, out of certain fears. I woke up to that and I just threw that in as a bit of a macho joke and I got medics. And it worked eventually. Things have changed since then.

- 39:30 I'd be quite shocked if there was a car accident out there. But had it been Vietnam days it would have

been nothing for me to walk out there and pick up limbs and do whatever I had to do.

Tape 4

00:30 **So you've kind of graduated and you've got the corps that you're going to. What happened after then? Did you have leave? Did you get back to see your family?**

Yes. Because not having leave at Kapooka you got a couple of days - I'm not sure whether we got a weekend where we could have gone home. But see the people were spread from all over the states when they were recruited and they ended up in our unit. There were some people from Darwin

01:00 in my platoon. They certainly weren't going to go home for the weekend. So we spent the rare days we got just local in Albury or Wagga seeing the sights and things because the local population wouldn't touch you. You know the military, it's a military town. "My daughter's not going to associate with them," that sort of stuff. We used to just go to the movies or to the pub. You kept to yourselves.

01:30 But yes after corps training you got about five days' leave. Five days' leave, a weekend and a weekend - nine days. At home or wherever you wanted to go. And then you had to turn up at your official unit to start your corps training which for me was to become a medic.

So when you saw our parents on that leave, how were they?

'Oh gee. Look how fit you look," and all this. Sun tanned.

02:00 "What are your experiences? How did you survive?" Mum wanted to know. That. So Mum was shocked at that. It was good. So I was paraded in uniform at the Litho [Lithuanian] Club and all this sort of stuff. There he is in uniform. I believe that's when I got one of the photos taken in uniform, one of the very rare ones in that type of uniform. Because it was getting to the stage after that, that you didn't dare wear your uniform

02:30 after that because of the attitude in Australia towards Vietnam. A lot of the guys unless on official duty would not touch their uniforms. It got to that stage. This is why I think a lot of Vietnam vets are not too pleased with what happened to them for their participation what they believed was for their country.

Did you know anyone else from the Lithuanian community who joined up?

Yes. But he was from

03:00 Adelaide and one of my parents' friends, their son, had been a dentist who ended up in Vietnam at the same time I did. 'Cause it took him longer to get there because the military said, "You decide to come with us, we'll pay the completion of your dentistry." So he was all right. He was there. I had heard of a couple of other people that I did not meet over there.

03:30 So there was only a few.

So the community was proud of you.

Yes. Because we were doing what they were trying to do. We were physically stopping Communism. And again amongst the community in Europe the element that there was a respect for the military basically. And I think until Vietnam, Australia had respect for the military and then everything changed.

So how did you feel about that when you saw that there was this criticism to the point where you

04:00 **couldn't proudly wear your uniform? How was that affecting you?**

The understanding that Australia was no longer the Australia I thought of. To me. I'd been spat on. In a formal uniform when I was a duty sergeant once I had to visit some of our soldiers in hospital and I got accosted twice in the street - by women of all things - spat on and abused. And you couldn't do a thing.

04:30 You had to try and go past and get into the Land Rover and go off. Not a pleasant situation. But we certainly never socialised in uniform and I never wore uniform out of barracks. Unless on official business from that time on.

So your mum was feeling better about the whole thing, was she?

Yes. But not at the good prospect that we'd still end up in Vietnam.

She was still

05:00 **worried about that?**

Mm.

But she was impressed with how you looked?

Yes. That I survived too which was good.

She was worried that you wouldn't survive the training?

No, no. I was too weak. I was too skinny. Her little boy couldn't put up with that. He's not a sports person. Couldn't cope with all that. I did.

And how did she feel about you going into the medical corps?

She thought that was quite good. She thought that would keep me out

05:30 of the front line. No. She was quite okay with that. That's okay because I wouldn't be subjected to what she thought to what an infantry person would or what they call the fighting arms. But medics are usually in the thick of things anyway in relation to that.

So then where did you go for your medical training?

It was at that time the school of army health was at Healesville

06:00 at a lovely manor and grounds and golf course overlooking the Healesville Sanctuary where all the animals are and we remember some of our training you'd be lying along the fence hiding from the enemy and the emus would come up along the other side of the fence and look at you and then the enemy would know exactly where you were. So we had little things like that. No. At the school of army health. And when we went into training to do that

06:30 winter was upon us. It was extremely cold. They had to accommodate us in tents, the old World War II canvas tents. We remember we weren't given sleeping bags. We had the normal type sheets, the normal type beds inside these tents in the floorboards. Huge openings at either end. I remember sleeping in my pyjamas covered by my uniform, covered by all the blankets you could grab hold of

07:00 and still being cold. We had one guy die. We believed it was of hypothermia. The army covered it up. I'm quite willing to talk about that, no problem. Because that was documented in the newspapers. He'd come back from a drinking session and we believe he just lay down on his bed for a few minutes and after having alcohol in him fell asleep. And the temperatures in the morning were - ice buckets had at least two inches of ice in them. So it was quite cold. And none of his buddies thought to

07:30 put him in bed because everyone else was a bit tipsy at the time. So we believe he died of hypothermia in his sleep which is quite common in that sort of environment. The army basically said it was a virus and all that and we were sworn to secrecy. Well we didn't know any different. But as medics we'd already known the likelihood was it was hypothermia.

And how did they put that to you? That it was secret. What did they say?

I think we

08:00 were willing to go along with it because what else would you say? What could you say? That he wasn't being looked after? He wasn't being given the facilities for those things. The worst thing we felt was that we were training in the middle of winter in Victoria with snow-capped mountains around Healesville in tropical clothing. That's what was difficult to accept. We went through a lot of cold pain because of that and we had to cope as best we could. That was another thing we learnt of

08:30 how much the human body, how much pain it can take and survive really and what effects it does have on you, how tired it makes you, because all your energy is used to keeping your temperature in your body. So every night we ate everything. We were ravenous to eat. Some quite exciting times there.

Was there any heating at all?

No. They couldn't. They were canvas tents. They couldn't put any heating in there for fear of fire.

09:00 But around the place?

Only in the lecture rooms. That was another problem because we all smoked - no, I didn't smoke at that stage - but a lot of people smoked and the usual thing is the lecturer walks in, you sit at attention or stand, salute, okay, sit down, lecturer returns to the board. MMS calls out. "Alright." All the packets come out.

09:30 MMS. "Men may smoke." No women in those days. Except at the school of army health because there was nurses there. They had to train us. Men may smoke. Those of us that didn't smoke you're covered in this room. If you were up the back you couldn't see the front because of all the smoke in there. In those days, you know, no-one got sick from smoking. So that. And the way we were chosen for our particular skill sets was that when we got through the theory bits they said, "Well we now want to know

10:00 who are the people who can do the medical work, who are the people who'll do the administrative work." So they put us into a lecture theatre with everyone smoking, the heat up and they pumped movies - as many kinds of ones as they could - of injuries and what you do. Amputations, cuts to veins, smashed heads, abdominal things and all of this taken in battlefield conditions, filmed on the battlefield. Whether some of them were D Day

10:30 and that I don't know. But that was all done. And the people who got ill and stumbled out the door, there was a sergeant sitting outside the door and having a cigarette and writing their names off. I was one of the fairly many who sat in there overawed watching this thing without getting sick. So those of us who remained in there were chosen to be trained as medical assistants, meaning hands on. Those who stumbled out were going to be trained purely as medical orderlies, the word in the military meant

11:00 administrative staff in the medical corps. So I gradually got over the fear of blood.

What kept you in there do you think?

The fascination with what I saw, but the other element is that I joined the medical corps to get over that fear. So I thought, "I've got to watch this because, hey, I'm going to be doing this to somebody. I've got to be prepared for it." I suppose it's a little element of a sense of duty and this thing that

11:30 that's going to be my trade, I need to know this, I need to be able to do this.

So did it become rather than a psychological response, something more pragmatic?

Difficult to say because what we ended up wanting to do was that towards the end of our training,

12:00 because we knew we had to be confronted with this more and more, at the same time of our training we also had a group of SAS [Special Air Service] guys come through who were trained separate to us. But they were being trained in the basic first aid we were being trained in. And we knew from them that they as soon as they left our training would go back to Perth, would immediately go on the civil ambulances of Perth. That's the correct way to train because you're going to go immediately

12:30 to car crashes, to violent scenes, to the blood and guts situation. But they were SAS. We were the supposedly trained medics. We weren't permitted because we weren't qualified for any civilian duties so we couldn't do that. In Western Australia with the government they had some sort of arrangement that these guys were appeared to make look like orderlies or nurses et cetera and they could do the hands on things there that we were never officially

13:00 as medical personnel trained to do which we ended up having to do a few things in Vietnam because the doctors couldn't cope by themselves. We were not permitted to officially be trained to do that in Australia.

So does that mean that those SAS guys could work in those medical services if there was some sort of an emergency and they were required?

We were disappointed that they could do more than we could and we were supposed to be the official army medics.

13:30 They could do more than we could do.

Even though you had the same training.

Supposedly yeah. But they ended up having more difficult training later because again of the nature of their work. So they actually ended up being what they called - the common term now is the level between a nurse and you might say a doctor is a paramedical. No. Paramedics, they're calling them. Much higher skilled than

14:00 your standard ambulance person. They're the guys who can do the heart shocks, intravenous, tracheotomies in the throat. They're the guys that can do all that. Just to keep the body alive. We weren't permitted to do that or trained.

Let's talk about the training that you did get in medical training. So nobody had any experience with medical training before presumably.

No.

14:30 **You started from the very beginning.**

So everything from nursing training which was the basic medical terminologies, anatomy, drugs - you had to know that so you could identify, not give the wrong thing. All the way the doctors wrote their scripts. So you had to be able to read the script so you knew what timings and drugs to give and the procedure to take, complete ward procedure. So we got pretty good at making beds,

15:00 things like that, keeping things spotless and polishing floors, things like that. And how to give out food. Because not everyone can eat the normal food so people have to have soft rations because of mouth injuries or alimentary tract injuries, things like that. So the whole gambit of nursing, giving drugs, giving injections, that sort of work. That's all we had to qualify for.

What about wounds?

15:30 **Different kinds of battle wounds?**

That was more difficult to train. This is why we thought why we should have had similar training to what the SAS medics got which is immediately you had your training to a hospital, sit, and go out with the ambulances. That would have equipped us more confidence to deal with battle casualties. Because

we had problems with medics in Vietnam from battle casualties. In there.

16:00 Because, remember all this so far, the probability is, it's book learning. It's having seen on the film etcetera. You get some guy screaming and you're the man in charge, everyone's standing round watching, "What are you going to do to my mate?" The world changes completely. Everything. You are god and everything, the responsibility of the world is on your shoulders. Very frightening. We had people lose it and get traumatic shock out of that. Sent home.

Once we get up there. So no

16:30 **practical training at all?**

Not that element. Not what we thought was the need for us to have that battle training with the battle wounds, which the obvious thing is, go to a hospital in triage or go out with the ambulances. But then again there was so many they had to put through. I couldn't have seen how they could have administratively organised that anyway. Remember, now they were pushing us and training us number wise because they were going to need all these troops in Vietnam. At that time, not to our knowledge. But that's what they were preparing us for.

17:00 They had to get the numbers through for that. You get the element that you're going to be the skilled person, you need to know that, to give you confidence. Because in the medical area you want the medical person to show confidence. Therefore, if you're the injured party you feel a little bit better that they sound confident that they know what you're - the worst thing is "Oh you'll be right, mate." That's the worst thing you can say to a person. A person who's in severe pain, "I'm not going to be right. I'm seriously injured," and they know it.

17:30 So these sort of things. So we never got that element of it. Immediately after the corps training most of our guys were shipped to Puckapunyal - not shipped, it's just a drive - and set up in some very old World War II barracks. They wouldn't let us have the heaters on at night because they were scared of fire. That's where we started preparing

18:00 to set up a unit, a field ambulance, to go to Vietnam. Once we were there, that's when we realised, yes fellas, we're going to Vietnam. So again the seriousness of the situation, of any further training, the role we had to play, became serious. We then started - national service and regular troops - we started forming a really cohesive unit. Because we were all going to be in the situation together. So we had to do that.

18:30 **So you actually set up the field hospital.**

We were the first people in. We went in there and had to actually clean the buildings. You had to clean the rooms that you were going to sit in, you had to clean the mess hole because we were going to eat in there. It was all closed, it had been closed since the Second World War. We had to scrub everything down. We got pretty good at cleaning. Then all the equipment started to arrive. We started getting these new fangled general

19:00 purpose boots. Wow. "Look at this new equipment. Oh, we're going to Vietnam. We're entitled to it." Then the new machine guns come out and then oh we got all these new things and we thought, "This is great." We actually had what we call a ready reaction group which they probably have now in case of terrorist activity. But we had to have a group of people that would be ready to leave in twenty-four hours. So you ended up having your weapons inside your cupboard

19:30 at home. During leave one of our chaps down in Tasmania took his weapon, his submachine gun home, to Tasmania and regaled us with stories of how many bunnies he'd knocked over with this machine gun. Because he'd bought the bullets in Tasmania. So he went rabbiting with his submachine gun. In those days you could take firearms, anything you wanted you could take on aircraft naturally. No-one was ever going to check what you were carrying. Specially soldiers. You're in uniform.

20:00 Don't care what you've got in your kit bag. So all these little things happened. So we were flat out getting those things organised and there were periods of lulls in the training. We were waiting for more people or more equipment or big exercises that we could actually train as a cohesive unit. So eventually we went to north of Rockhampton, getting back to my old area, Shoalwater Bay, for this huge

20:30 exercise called Barrawinga that was in the beginning of '66 I believe. That could be wrong. It could be the previous year. But it was a big exercise there with everything - American troops, New Guinea people, British troops. The biggest problem was they got sunburnt. We had to take a few out of service because of sunburn.

21:00 But so they were there and that's where we learnt how to function as a unit. Set up tent hospitals. We actually had real life casualties there. Injuries, falling off, knife wounds, mainly accidental type things like that. Barbed wire everywhere and we used to have an aircraft, Canberra Bomber fly past us almost every morning with all the alarms would go, we'd dive into our pits and watch this thing. It got monotonous.

21:30 Fly over and drop something on the airfield and then it would fly off. We didn't learn till later that it was dropping all the bundles of newspapers for the officers' mess and for the intelligence unit. So I thought - I had a camera by that stage, I always carried a camera. And I thought, "I've got to get an action shot

of this plane flying past." So I jumped out of the pit one time because a tree was in the way. So I ran along the barbed wire, zip, and took a shot of it. Which I don't have here, but I was quite proud of it because all the land was blurred and the plane was in focus. And

- 22:00 sergeant roared at me, "What are you doing?" So as a result of that incident I was sure I was going to go down and get charged and things like that but eventually one of the commanding officers called me in one time back at Puckapunyal later and said, "I hear you're interested in photography." I thought "Here I am. I'm going down. I've had it." I'm standing to attention, quite fearful of the commanding officer.
- 22:30 And he said, "Look, the unit needs a medical photographer. Would you be happy if we sent you for ten weeks to the Alfred Hospital to learn what you should not do?" "In photography, sir?" "Yes." "Yes, sir, I wouldn't mind. Where do I stay?" "I believe your family lives in Heidelberg? Can you live with them?" "Yes sir.
- 23:00 Do I have to wear uniform?" "No. The hospital doesn't want you to wear uniform." "Can I go sir?" "Yes." Ten weeks I was a civilian commuting to the Alfred Hospital learning medical photography there. Best time the military had ever given me for that. The first operation I ever saw because the first thing I had to learn what not to touch in the operating theatre. First operation and there's a medic knows all his anatomy, "Yes, it's a woman. Yes, it's an abdominal operation.
- 23:30 Terrific." And the doctor reaches in, pulls something, and I go "Aha! Intestines. Yes I know. It's got toes on it!" Was a Caesarean. So anyway from then on I got quite used to operations after operations and where you can move, the lighting and things to learn. There's a multitude of things I learnt there from various diseases. But the photographers there at the time had to take - the technology
- 24:00 they had to use in those days to get these particular photographs for the surgeons, for all the doctors and things. So I had a whole heap of mental knowledge by the time I left there. Back to my unit. I came back to my unit after that ten weeks and half the unit was wearing wings. Parachute. From that day because they had nothing to do for us and they had a course at Richmond or somewhere I think and they needed troops to keep the instructors operating. So they sent
- 24:30 half our medics to learn parachuting to be paratroopers. So they went off. So they came back and this is our unit which eventually was called 8 Field Ambulance. They either called it Active 8 or the called it the 8th Airborne. Because of all the guys with their wings on their shoulders. So I never got the chance to jump so I did a course by myself with the parachute school out at Pakenham. Ended up doing one jump and then we had to go to Vietnam so from then on I never did it.
- 25:00 In my log book I've got "One Jump." One jump out of a Cessna.

At least you did the one. But I think we should cover the course at the Alfred a bit more, the training that you got there, that sounds fascinating. You talked about a number of different aspects from the technical. like the camera, the lighting, but also the diseases. You would have been briefed I imagine on what kind of photographs they wanted.

No. Because

- 25:30 the commanding officer didn't even know. All the commanding officer at my unit knew that they were getting surgeons straight off civvie street [the civilian population]. Just going to put a uniform on them and tell them how to salute and go and work there. Which ended up being a terrific thing, a terrific concept, but the surgeons there wanted someone to photograph what's going to happen. I realised later that to surgeons like to soldiers or to people in their own industries,
- 26:00 they want to be good at something. They want to show, "I'm good at this. It's a difficult task. I want to be part of the elite." So the surgeons they were going to get had their minds set for the future to teach others. And to trauma surgeons it's a pride that you can deal with battle casualties. So we were going to get surgeons who were fixated on that - which is a very good thing for the troops. And they wanted someone to record all the things that they were
- 26:30 able to cope with in very poor conditions so they could lecture people later. I didn't know all this. So I went there. I tried to learn everything that they were trying to teach me at the Alfred Hospital. It's just that one of the guys there was saying, "Hang on." Whether he was an ex-military person or not he said, "You'll need to know this and this. You're going to be in the field. There's tropical diseases so you'll need to know how to do close ups. You'll need to know this." So what they prepared me mainly was for
- 27:00 in the operating theatre. So anything which was post-operative which was bad - like a person had been shot by a shotgun and he died, but they removed most of his abdomen before that. So we had to take before and after shots etcetera. They're the sorts of things that they had to get me conditioned to, that I knew how to cope with that and how to stay out of the surgeon and the anaesthetist's way to do that.

Did the hospital usually have photographers working there

- 27:30 **at the Alfred?**

Teaching hospitals always do, yes. It's part because there are so many things that you can't describe. Only visually can you do that. Later on, reflecting on things it's in the visual telling that you can actually

see instead of being able to verbalise something. That's another thing I learnt at school was the element that people were looking towards the future saying, "This is how you're being taught at the moment, but in the future, future people in these future years

28:00 will need to be able to absorb more than double the information you kids are learning. How are they going to do that? How are they going to fit it in? How are they going to learn this double information?" And I've learnt from the military how that's possible in their training methods and the element that everything's going to be visual. It's the element that you can I suppose now looking at this people can - body language - read what I'm saying. Things like that which is different just to hearing a voice or reading it in print or type. So they had already

28:30 fixed that visual is the way to do it especially in medical surgical matters because you can't describe colours. One person's impression of colour for a some sort of mould that's growing on their skin or something could be quite different to what the other person imagines that colour to be unless you're an artist. And artist would in fact have a different impression of that word.

So the camera that you were trained to use, was that a special camera in any way?

No. In those days

29:00 single reflex cameras - SLR, single lens reflex, yeah, camera - was the camera of choice of anyone who can change lenses. At that stage even I didn't own one. They gave me one to play with and use. They also said to develop photos etcetera, "You need to learn that. What we'll do is, we'll prepare the chemicals for you." And being so enthusiastic I used to come in an hour early

29:30 use the chemicals but brought my negatives in from my young days. So I made up a lot of prints and things and anything I didn't understand they'd come back and show me how to do it and things like that. So that was a good element. Because in those days, colour slides you couldn't touch, you couldn't develop yourself. You'd always send them off to a laboratory. Kodak were the main provider in those days. So you'd do that there. So it was a lot of black and white work initially. They showed me a few things about colour that I should

30:00 keep in mind. Being in the field I wouldn't have resources. It was very basic. Because they knew that I wouldn't have lighting facilities, only a flash gun. So they didn't go into any of that. But I saw them do things. Saw them use examples where they used to have every light they had in the studio they had to put on a particular gentleman who the doctors were studying for varicose veins, not in the leg, but the body.

30:30 The amount of light actually penetrates the skin and goes in to a certain depth. What they were doing was infra- red film. When I saw the film developed this person looked like a massive tree covering his front. That's from that the surgeons and the specialists were able to work out where the problems were in this gentleman. I found that fascinating. Psychologist elements of people doing nasty things to their body.

31:00 Did you use a telephoto lens or a zoom lens?

They didn't have zoom lenses in those days. No. In those days there was either the standard lens. Because you were inside the studio telephoto you normally would just not use unless you were using Ballards etcetera for extreme close ups. The other thing they showed me was how to do through microscopes, but when we got there we didn't have microscope fittings so I couldn't use that anyway.

31:30 How do you do that? How do you take a photograph through a microscope?

With great difficulty because in those days there was no metering system. You had to work it out by tables of lighting conditions and things like that. It was rather difficult. That was the days - I actually bought a camera overseas where it had a coupled exposure metre you could lock onto it and as you turned a dial it turned the aperture settings or the speed settings. Very primitive for what we did now.

32:00 So it was basic things that you could only learn and use. So I ended up using only basic procedures. But you got so good at it, the lighting was so consistent in the operating theatre, after a short while I just never used exposure metre because the lighting was consistent and you knew the distances you were at. You approximated or just guessed the setting.

So you would have learnt about different speeds of film?

It was standardised only on one film. I think in those days

32:30 it was only Kodachrome Two Sixty ASA was the main one that we used. Because in those days you didn't have a range of film. It's only in the black and white films that you had a range of sensitivity settings on them. So it was so standard that I got so good at it without having to use an exposure metre.

So you're talking about your training also involved being in theatre at operations

33:00 and taking photographs there? And you had an instructor there telling you what to do? What was the set up?

Yes. Normally they'd walk in, say "We have a trainee. He's going to Vietnam. Treat him well, tell him

what not to touch, let him observe everything. Pretend he's got a camera." That's what the surgeons used to be told. "Alright." They used to go ahead and do all those sort of things.

33:30 I think the doctors appreciated it. As soon as they heard, "He's going to Vietnam," it sparked an interest in their minds. I think they knew I was going to be a medic there. So they were always helpful to me. Every now and again one of them would point out, "This is complex. When we're doing this, don't come near us here' or this and that. Things like that.

So at first you just observed the operations?

Yes.

What were you looking for do you think

34:00 **when you were observing?**

Nothing. How close I could get to take a shot that the doctor needed. That was the basic thing. Where could I stand to get it? What is the lighting in there to take whatever you're taking? You imagine things would be anything from an amputation to any injury in the operating theatre that they were operating on. If I needed a photograph I must be able to access it and to take the particular shot for the distance I would have had on the lens. And I ended up only using a standard

34:30 fifty, fifty-five millimetre lens in the operating theatre. Nothing different. Didn't even have a wide-angle lens in those days. Had a massive telephoto lens. I got a huge kit the army sent me. Couldn't use half the equipment that was in there. The engineers couldn't even work out how to charge the particular flash battery so we never used flash. Or if we did use flash, I bought a little flash unit that I used personally but the military one was so complex - it came with no instructions. The impression was, "You're the photographer, you know how to set all this up'.

35:00 How to put all the acids in there and things like that. No way. These things don't come with manuals.

Ten weeks is a quite a long time for a course like that.

Yes. It was lovely.

But you were kept busy?

All the time. There was things to do, things to watch. Never dull. I was so fascinated with what they did. There was a medical artist there. I used to watch him working and doing the medical sketches which can be

35:30 clearer than photographs, but he was working off a lot of the photographs that the photographers there had taken. 'Cause it's a teaching institution, so they were preparing information which was going to go into manuals. That's where I woke up. "Ah, so that's what I'm going to be doing over there. The surgeons all want to later do teaching." That's where I woke up to that factor.

What about your medical knowledge, was it progressing from being in a medical situation like that?

Only

36:00 of in civilian life the huge range of medical problems people can have. From abnormalities, from diseases, degenerative diseases, accidents, shotgun injuries, psychologically self-injuring yourself. Injuring yourself. Basically the massive variety of things that can happen to you which was proven to me in Vietnam how you can have

36:30 the most minor appearance on you and you can die from it. Or you can have the most traumatic injuries and still survive it. That was brought out in Vietnam from what I experienced. So you can never tell from looking at a person, "Is that a survivor or not?" Just by a quick look you can't tell. That impressed me. That shocked me. Having learnt that. What the human body can stand and sometimes can't stand. That was my big revelation.

Were you traumatised at all

37:00 **by what you were seeing?**

No. See, I took that as being my trade. That's what I was going to do. I had to learn it. I was so fascinated. Probably the same fascination that a surgeon or a doctor would have to learn to be able to do that sort of work. Definitely not traumatised. No. The only traumatised bit, I think, was where people where we considered the personal repercussions of that disease or that injury to them in their life. Or to their families. That's the part

37:30 you just didn't think about it, tried not to think about it. You concentrated on what you had to learn.

So you'd had an interest in photography before you did this? Could you say there was specific things you were interested in photographing?

No. Just taking photos. I had never considered doing anything formally, like doing a course in photography or anything like that. It just that there was some sort of need

- 38:00 in me to record things. I know I got my first camera when I was seven. From then on I just slowly kept upgrading with my little gains in knowledge. Fortunately all the negatives from the age seven have disappeared. Couple of photographs hanging around. But from then on I started keeping all the negatives which have now been affected by mould and a few other things which I'm going to go into a lot of detail to perhaps scan for later use. That's going to be
- 38:30 very important for me. Because I believe I've got records of things that have now become historic, that don't exist now. I've discovered the element of what we're doing here now and keeping things for families and keeping things for pure history because people will investigate these things in the future or try to cross reference things. And if they don't exist it's very hard to do things. I've woken up in my old age that there's a reason for all this.
- 39:00 **So you had your camera on you when you went into the army?**
- Yes. Always.
- Did you take many photographs during that training time?**
- When you could. They always took a dim view. If you're carrying a camera you're not carrying something else that should be necessary. So you try to do it on the quiet, taking photos. But no I always tried to have a camera. I've destroyed at least three by carrying and falling and doing things like that. Coming home from Vietnam
- 39:30 I had to get rid of it because all the internals, the shutters and the aperture blade became mouldy and corroded. Because we were basically stationed on a beach living in sand dunes. I do regret not having formally studied photography as such. I do regret that. I'd be well in advance now.
- But it was quite okay for you to have a camera in the army.**
- Yeah.
- 40:00 Eventually they pulled me out of all sorts of jobs to take photos, cause eventually they knew that's what Ziggy does, he's good at it. So therefore take him off to do this thing and every now and then you'd be called off some boring duty to go somewhere for a couple of days. They give you the film, they give you the camera, you take the photo, then you leave it with them. You go, "Oh gee." And sometimes you don't know what you're taking photos off. Classic example was, I was taken to a field, trees and that and they say, "Okay, take a shot of all the troops." "What troops? I can't see anything."
- 40:30 'Just take a shot of that area.' So I took a shot. Then they blew a whistle and the guys moved. What they were testing was the new camouflage material. All the guys were in plain view standing absolutely still. That fascinated me. That's why I had to take a shot. You couldn't see anything until they moved. And the pattern, all that sort of stuff. That was well before this new disruptive pattern uniform came out. So there's a lot of research going out there that you don't see
- 41:00 the results for ten years or so. So I've seen things that I've got no idea what I took photos of, but I took photos of it. Left it with them.

Tape 5

- 00:30 **You've told us about that ten weeks at the Alfred learning your craft. At the end of that time how skilled do you think you were?**
- In photography I thought I was reasonably competent in taking the photographs, not necessarily taking it any further than that. But the important thing was that I could get the records back, I could actually take them, keep them, basically get the processed and get them back to
- 01:00 the people who needed it. It proved in the long run I was competent at what I was doing for their needs.
- So what sort of feedback would you get from the researchers or the doctors or whoever needed to be looking at the photography itself?**
- They'd look at the shots because I had to pass them on to them. Then they did whatever was official at that time - remembering that the doctors were officers and in those days you as a digger
- 01:30 had very little connection with the officers except in the line of work. So I never saw, once I gave over the photographs to them I never saw the results. Although, since that period of time I have seen photographs of injuries in Vietnam in at least five different books and every time that's mentioned I can look at the photograph and say, "I'm the one that took it," but the caption always is, 'Courtesy of Army Archives'.
- Of course.**
- 02:00 **Let's pick up the story from the end of that ten weeks. What preparations followed?**

After that it was to get the whole unit conditioned to operating as a medical unit. Or what the concept was dating back from the First and Second World War of a field ambulance. So basically was a unit that could move with the troops to wherever it was required to set up an interim station to perform certain surgical procedures

02:30 on troops and to decide whether they had to be kept in the lines or to be shipped home. So we were a staging point with a decision making to keep people alive and then send them back to Australia in this particular instance of Vietnam.

And you were establishing yourselves at Puckapunyal, I think we got to that point didn't we?

Correct. So that's where we were getting our strength up of the number of people we

03:00 would need to carry out the supposed role that they had in mind for us. Because we were to replace another unit that had gone prior to us over there which was called 2 Field Ambulance. Their terms was finalising so we were to take their continued work and continue with the role expected of us as a medical unit. So the training there in medical work was accepted. We all knew what we had to do. The major emphasis would have

03:30 been on the surgeons themselves, the anaesthetists and the laboratory people who were highly skilled elements. The other elements were basically just medics, provisional troops, transport people who were part of the unit but needed to operate to run the whole facility. We had that major exercise called Barrawinga which was held in Shoalwater Bay north of Rockhampton which tested the unit and proved that, yes, it was quite a viable unit as was expected.

04:00 It was all tented accommodation. Hospital. We never had to perform to my knowledge any serious surgery out there because then we were within flying distance of Rockhampton main hospitals anyway. But the people learnt how to get along with each other there which was extremely good and as an introduction into what was supposed to be the field area. On returning back from that exercise we had to complete according to our instructions either

04:30 some of our people had to go to Canungra to do their jungle warfare. Those of us who didn't have time for the unit to go there, that didn't have the facilities to take the extra troops, we were sent to a facility here in one of the hills outside of Gisborne I think. Somewhere in that area. Where a shooting range was set up basically to learn what we couldn't learn at Canungra - jungle warfare in the middle of winter, which was rather a unique experience.

05:00 But that was an area where some of us, again, our skill set was not to be good at firearms, but it was interesting to physically use firearms in the real live situation in heavy woodland and heavy conditions where you actually had to fire from a pit, jump out, shoot at things that actually if you hit them they spun around and did all these wonderful things. So you had immediate feedback that you were actually hitting a target, doing the right thing. An area where you walked along, an instructor behind you, you could

05:30 hear wires going off in the ground somewhere. You could hear the twang and all of a sudden a target would pop up in front of you so you had to blast it and keep going. Always very nervous because you didn't know when something would spring from anywhere around you and unfortunately if you turned around with a live rifle at the instructor he'd whack you one pretty solidly because he didn't want to get hurt. So it was interesting.

So it was combat?

A combat situation, yes.

Whereas up at Rocky, Barrawinga, that exercise was more acting as the field unit.

The field unit, the medical

06:00 unit, yes. This was more individualised for our own survival.

So what did you learn from those experiences. Especially going back to the medical exercises up at Rockhampton, what did you pick up there?

First thing was how to operate with different nationalities because we had the Brits there, Americans, we had some New Guinea people and Ghurkhas were on that particular exercise.

06:30 So it was interesting just to see between those nationalities the different ways their own medics operated, the different techniques and things and just to get that feeling co-operating with people who are not Australians. So that was good. I felt that. And to actually see what we would expect of a medical unit on the ground with all the dust. Things operating out of tents. Things of that nature. And that was the first introduction we had of helicopters actually coming in and

07:00 doing anything. But at the moment most of the helicopters were in use in Vietnam at the time so they couldn't spare a whole fleet of them for us to get that required experience.

Okay. And are you doing any photographic work at this time?

No. That's where I got into trouble for taking a photograph of a bomber landing. So that's the one from

- that exercise got me to the Alfred Hospital. From that we fixed up, we actually got
- 07:30 the unit all together and then prepared to go overseas.
- Okay. So you'd done that combat training in Victoria, Gisborne ...**
- Around that area yes.
- How long was that period?**
- I think that was only about a two week period that we had to do that. I can't recall a lengthier period than that. I think the people who went to Canungra may have gone for a little bit longer.
- 08:00 Again it was the element that it all hurt, it all was uncomfortable so we were quite happy to do a shortened version of it.
- Yeah. How arduous was it really? You were telling us in the kitchen earlier about I think a later experience with the officer training course but even that combat training you were doing, how tough was it?**
- Something that always puzzled us initially because in all the training we had led up to it was always go go go. There was no rest.
- 08:30 They always had something for us to do and we thought we would be thoroughly exhausted in a real battle situation. This is silly. We couldn't get over it, but the theory of it was that they try to drill into our minds that yes, we're training at triple the pace so you can hack it when it comes to the real world. The real world is not as intensive as this. In the real world we would actually sneak up on the enemy, not force march and be exhausted at the end of the day.
- 09:00 Things like that. But it was the pace and the physical effort involved I would safely say it was painful to say the least.
- And before you embarked what was your state of mind? You had actually been told this is the day you are going, this is what the plans are?**
- I think it was more excitement. Excitement that we were really going to put our training to the test, that this was for real.
- 09:30 The satisfaction knowing that they considered you a person worthy of the position I suppose to go to that area. I think it was satisfaction really because we trained for it. We thought we could do the job. And the element was that yes we were going to go, we were not going to miss it. A lot of us were concerned that we didn't get any medical injury here like a broken leg or something that would preclude us from leaving with the unit to go overseas.
- 10:00 That was in the forefront of our mind. Three days later after arriving in country it was a little bit different.
- Okay. Can you tell us about the actual departure and what that was like and just saying goodbye to family and friends?**
- Our departure was unusual because again it was a period when a lot of troops were being sent over there. The normal way the infantry went over there was aboard I think it was HMAS Melbourne. They went across on troop ships. And they had a fairly lengthy period of time
- 10:30 to get there and along with the journey they could acclimatise to the tropics because it took, I think it was two weeks sailing to get there. So that took time. With us, my unit left in dribs and drabs because they couldn't ship the whole unit at one time. My contingent left from Mangalore Airport which is just north of Puckapunyal, just about an hour's drive north of Puckapunyal into that area, which was okay because the family could come to see us off. I've got photographs of
- 11:00 my close friends wishing me goodbye and there I am in green uniform and things and it was a commercial flight up to Darwin. DC6B, a four engine aircraft that flew and because of the amount of weight we were carrying we couldn't fly higher than eight thousand feet. Which is absolutely marvellous to see Australia from that height. Flew off before noon, arriving in Darwin after sunset so we could see fires going in the Northern Territory
- 11:30 where natural grasslands were burning off. That is one area where would you believe it got a bit boring so everyone smoked and my mate said, "Look, try one of these," and I said, "What the heck." So I tried it, coughing and spluttering a little bit. By the end of the flight I went out and bought a packet. So that's when my smoking started. And my parents got a shock when they saw a photograph of me with a cigarette in my mouth. That's later. From there. From Darwin -
- 12:00 we overnighted in Darwin, had a meal there. A few of the guys unfortunately had a few drinks because the next morning we departed aboard a Hercules four engine aircraft. And it was an unpressurised aircraft so again we had to fly below a certain altitude and the most exciting thing to me was that when we were flying over Borneo we flew through a tropical storm. We were able to see in the mountains actual villages of natives out the windows and this was fascinating to us. During the lightning

12:30 storm my first and only experience of what's called St Elmo's Fire of electrical interference around spinning machinery. The propellers, on the periphery of the blades was beautiful purple blue light that was coming off and spinning around the propellers. It was absolutely magic. But we had to confirm that we weren't in trouble. But the crew captain came through and said, "No. It's St Elmo's Fire, gentlemen, log that for an

13:00 experience." It rarely happens and it happened to us.

Right.

We landed in the country late afternoon. The back doors came down in the Hercules as they can. The plane started taxiing backwards to get to where we needed to go. Our weapons were stored in the storage compartment below. We only had loaded magazines in our hands and no weapons and all of a sudden we see black pyjama clad people with the 'slanty ants' running around everywhere.

13:30 We thought we had been invaded. We panicked. We didn't know what to do. It was the first real fright we had because we weren't forewarned that basically this is the national work dress. So they weren't necessarily the Viet Cong. But it gave us all a big shock.

Could I just pause there for a second. What had you learnt about Vietnam and Vietnamese before you headed off? Had there been much training in that respect?

Very little. We got one lecture

14:00 from somebody who had not been there on it and we couldn't remember much from it except that they were Asian, that they'd been under French rule and that was about it. That the pyjama type clothing was the male type attire or women wore it too as a work attire. We'd seen a couple of photographs of what the people looked like and a little bit about how the language was written. And

14:30 I can't remember much more about that. But what was brought home to me was what our impressions of the people were there, after a few nights - skipping a little bit further probably - when we physically got to work in the wards I was on night shift and one of my fellow comrades was there helping me in the wards. We had a Viet Cong patient with a painful leg injury who had to be within full view all the time.

15:00 So he was there and he couldn't sleep. I'd given him some painkillers because that was on his chart. We were there. I just accepted this person as who he was because he was amongst all the other Australians and every one else had accepted him. But we were new to country and my companion was sitting there staring at him all the time. This is Viet Cong, this is the enemy. And this chap leant into his bedside locker, pulled out a comb and started combing his hair. My mate thought this was incredible. I personally thought, again having been from a different background,

15:30 in Australia, I thought why are you so amazed? What did you think he was? A monkey or something? That shocked me. The attitude of someone who was looking at a totally different culture as probably sub human I presume. Totally shocked that the person could use a comb. That was a surprise to me.

Given that they can use a gun.

True. The whole thing always come up to

16:00 what you read in the military - you should never underestimate your enemy. Never.

So obviously there was a fair bit of ignorance there on the part of the Aussies.

That's right.

I'm sure the Americans too. Did that translate into much racism at all in those early days?

I don't think it was racism. I think it was the feeling of belief that - that could have been a sub-culture. And unfortunately that tended to

16:30 get over the way you treated people. Although we actually had Vietnamese working in there amongst us - people from the local, it wasn't a village, it was a town, Vung Tau there. Some of the troops got on quite well. Some of the troops went into town on a regular basis, they tried to pick up the language, certainly drank the Asian beer, some of them went out with the young ladies there, but not in the particular ward that I worked, no. I followed exactly

17:00 what the army said, stay away, don't do anything. Don't even eat the food. So I didn't even eat the local food for the fear of all these things that might happen that I ended up taking photographs of. Things that when they went wrong, certain diseases that you got, I'm the one that had to take shots of it. No thank you. But yes besides the concept of looking down on people because they were different, no, I didn't find that there was any racial tension as such. The guys

17:30 got along with people, they got along in town. No. Not amongst the Australians anyway.

Okay. Just a couple of points about getting there. You flew into Saigon, is that correct? Or Vung Tau?

Straight into Vung Tau, bypassed Saigon. That was when we got out when we finished our time.

You've told us how your mum's had a couple of cries so far. What was it like that departure?

She cried again, but this time I was surrounded

18:00 by friends and people. No, there's too much going around, too much happening. People were distracted, there were other troops, aircraft being prepared at Mangalore so no that wasn't too bad at all.

You were saying how your mates had a few too many in Darwin?

In Darwin, that's right.

You didn't indulge to that extent?

No. Because again I'm one of these properly analytical types who looks a little bit forward and I knew the aircraft had no toilet as such.

18:30 So why drink too much? And they had to have a set up on it. I don't know how it worked but you couldn't go to the toilet so all you could do was urinate. And they had this thing set up. It was weird. Of course some people got ill from what they had imbibed before. Because it was a very bumpy journey in that aircraft. That was interesting.

So it was one of those 'pissaphones'.

That's what it's called. It was a RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] one.

19:00 After that we had them scattered around the unit where we were.

You're taking over from the 2nd Field Ambulance and you're the 8th Field Ambulance, can you tell us just basically what the make up of the field ambulance is. You've told us what their purpose is, but who you were going to be working alongside? The different roles that were part of the 8th Field Ambulance.

Because the roles from

19:30 the way it was written on paper, it was written on Second World War theory the way it was laid out I think. But they realised very quickly that we were going to be a static unit and in one place. Therefore we had to shuffle things around to cope with that because we were going to run a fully fledged surgical unit out of there. So the actual layout of how people worked, what the officers did, the Q store [quartermaster's store] people did, again, being

20:00 a private soldier in those days I didn't have much access to it and I didn't have much interest in it at that time. What happened was when we hit the country, although we were supposed to have two weeks to acclimatise, there was no time for that. A lot of 2nd Field Ambulance had already been partly shipped out and what we found was a lot of the guys who were left were switched off basically. So we had to take the mantle on very quickly in relation to it. Because we went into accommodation which was canvassed, tented accommodation.

20:30 Most of the medical facility was aluminium huts with louvre windows wall to ceiling through there on a concrete block. But we were in tents on the sand dunes there so we had to operate out of that and the humidity as it hit you was so difficult to accept because you had to go straight into twelve hour shifts no matter what you did. Whether you were doing sandbagging, doing other work, cleaning up, whether you were on the ward -

21:00 in that moment to be working in the ward, not working in the hot sand, yes, it was a Godsend. So that was beautiful. Then this big box of photographic equipment arrived and was unpacked. They said, "Okay. Check that it's all there." Checked the list and I didn't know what half of it was. I had this huge telephoto lens which we could never use except probably taking shots of warships off the sand dunes. That all occurred. I tried to get conditioned, but by the third day in the country I was quite happy to break my leg and

21:30 go home. I felt that alienated to the locality and the humidity got me so bad and I was getting heat rash and things like that so I was quite happy, I thought, "I've done my bit. I'm quite happy to go home." But gradually you got used to it because again there was work to do. I never found a boring time as such. There was work. Twelve hour shifts. For me it ended up being slightly different because quite often - we came in - I think

22:00 almost immediately we started getting casualties. 'Cause that never stopped. It's just that our unit changeover was occurring. So the surgeons quickly found out that I'm there to take photos so I was called at a moment's notice. That's why I worked in the ward facility but I didn't have much to do or responsibility as such so I could be called off at any moment. But the worst thing is, you finish your twelve hour shift usually a daylight shift, you go to bed, you're exhausted, you lie down and you hear the

22:30 chopper coming in. You go, "No." And you're lying there. You know it's landing on your field. The speaker comes on like if you've seen in Mash, the loudspeaker, "Private So and So, report to the operating theatre." "No. I'm not hearing it." And the guard comes around, kicks you out of bed. "You're on there." Grab the camera and stumble in. Could be there for two hours. Go back to bed and an hour later you're back on shift. So sometimes it was quite exhausting work.

23:00 **Can you just maybe tell us a bit about the base itself and a bit about the geography and the atmosphere of where you were working before you get into the nitty gritty of what you were doing perhaps?**

Well Vung Tau was basically a peninsula jutting out into the South China Sea. I don't know what the big river was on the western side of it. I'm not sure of that. The geography - again

23:30 being only a private there at that time I wasn't responsible for movement of troops and things, and the locality didn't mean much at the time.

I mean more the layout of where you were working. Your barracks in relation to where you were.

The living facility was only about a two minute walk from the actual working facility there. It was just on the other sand dune. The hospital was actually set up on one sand dune -

24:00 a more flatter, more stabilised sand dune with a concrete base. The officers' mess was on another sand dune - the highest sand dune of course. They lived on Mount Olympus which officers often do. Closer to the gods. We lived on a series of other sand dunes which eventually were converted in concrete slabs with wooden structures into a type of tropical barracks which when the monsoons came the rain came straight through it. 'cause it was a big open window situation.

24:30 So you actually lived within your work area. So at parts it was your responsibility to protect your work area. All the compounds and the various areas were surrounded by barbed wire. There were only certain entrances and exits. Basically to feed people through areas. So you were your own little world in there. It was only later on they got more confidence in us they let us have half days off or full

25:00 days off in town. There was always a curfew there and everyone had to be back by about ten p.m. You could either walk down the beaches towards the actual headland. There was a rocky outcrop with an old French port on it with the old French guns still there. And you walked around that headland and you were actually in the township itself. Which for an Asian township what struck us was a butcher with no freezing facilities, the

25:30 butchery occurring right in front of your eyes. Flies everywhere. People generally not overtly friendly, but accepting you might say. Because when you went into town you were mixing it with Americans, Koreans, I think they were the main ones in our area of responsibility. So you were there and the Vietnamese were trying to sell you things.

26:00 Or trying to just live their lives in there. But it was a beach area with a marine area around it. Because one of the industries of Vung Tau was fishing and they used to get a lot of the fishing boats come in and unload the catches and things. How they processed them or moved them I don't know because we had trouble moving in there. It was either you fly or you go by armed convoy. That's after they repaired some of the bridges that were blown up. Leading off that peninsula. So there was a lot of

26:30 barbed wire. There were limitations of where you could go, could not go. The main thing that struck you was that Vung Tau was a major American air base. Not suited for fighter aircraft or bombers, but small aircraft - reconnaissance aircraft, helicopters, yes, but what we learnt later was that the spook aircraft which were ugly looking twin engine things which as they came in at night from the sea there's just a humming sound and

27:00 and you thought, "Uh oh, what's this?" The back of your neck would prickle and you could see this thing like a bat glide in over the sea over your buildings and just disappear, no engines going. We thought that was fascinating. Coming in there. So it was pretty much a coastal marine environment we were faced with. A lot of salt, a lot of sand, a lot of glare from the sand and being Australians we were not permitted to wear sunglasses on duty because we looked like Americans. That was forbidden.

27:30 I think from that I've had photo sensitivity. Means that if I get a flash of light through windows or out driving - I must always drive in sunlight with glasses, if I get a flash of light within about fifteen minutes I've got a migraine where I do lose sight for about fifteen minutes. I've got to stop, pull over. So I think it stems from that. Later, much later, they learnt that unless you protect the troops' eyes - all modern troops wear these fancy glasses and protective eyewear. That's what you get.

28:00 But you can't claim on it.

So sorry what was the reasoning behind your not being permitted to wear sunglasses?

Because we looked like Americans.

And that ...

That was the only reason given to us.

And further behind, that was a bad thing, was it?

It didn't suit the British military image. Because in those days the Americans tended to wear the aviator sunglasses,

28:30 so it wasn't the done thing for Australians. That's right. We were very British in that element. But eventually the unit deteriorated into a workable situation. Still the dress sense had to be upheld and things, but the psychology changed of the unit after a few months in the country. Very similar to and I don't mind saying this, people who were there with my unit would probably vouch for it that

29:00 that show on TV that we're all familiar with, Mash, hits home very readily. The humour involved in that - being American a little bit more forward you might say, more disrespectful of authority, but similar to what we did, but we respected authority and we tried to follow the British military system. All these funny things happened there.

Well you've got to tell us all of those please.

29:30 **You mentioned how when you got there it seemed that the units on their way out had switched off, but in general what did you sense the mood as being amongst the Aussie troops and other units that were there?**

If you had a lot of work to do everyone actually went out of their way to do their work. The notable thing was if there was any trouble and you were off duty, people would turn up and they would pitch in. And they didn't have to.

30:00 That was the thing notable. The thing that got me that although the unit we were replacing the guys had been switched off - they'd been there for twelve months, they'd had it, they didn't want any more of it, they just wanted to go home. But when something happened, when a chopper came in, things changed dramatically. They were back to what their job was and they did their job. All of a sudden you'd get this - let's say it was an impressive sight. It was an impressive feeling.

30:30 **That's with the Aussies. What did you make of the Americans and the Koreans, their morale?**

Koreans we didn't have much to do with because we couldn't speak the language. Almost got into a fight in one bar one time because my mate couldn't smile because he had this shocking look on his face all the time. I said, "God, better lighten up," because the Koreans had a few to drink. And these Koreans, in the morning, we drove past their compound once, they did martial arts for their

31:00 morning thing. This was a Korean officer too of all things who'd had a few looking at my mate and my mate's staring at him like that. I thought, "No, lighten up. We're going to get into trouble. We don't know martial arts and things." But eventually some Yanks or one of the guys with us - and there are people in every group that can blend so well with other cultures and he saw that we were going to be in trouble here. I think he just grabbed a drink and

31:30 walked over to the guy and a bit of sign language etcetera, let's drink and phoo! Just defused the situation instantly. But my mate still wouldn't smile. So sometimes how you reacted, the body language - because you don't speak the language so it's the body language, the smiles, that's what you get across. That's the way you communicate basically all the time there.

You share the language with the Americans though. How'd you get along with those guys?

Yes.

32:00 Didn't deliberately mix as such. The only shopping facility which was of any value was their PX [Postal Exchange - American canteen unit] where you'd go to as soon as you got - cause we were paid, you could either exchange the money for Vietnamese money or you exchanged - it was actually American money that we were given. American military money. Not the American dollar. So the only place you could spend it was usually in the PX there. That's where you could buy cameras,

32:30 transistor radios were there and tape recorders which were just starting out. They didn't have cassettes. So it's a little reel to reel thing. Things like that. Any goods like that you'd buy from there. Mostly because our unit had no direct relationship soldier to soldier with the American base although there was an American hospital there. We used to ship - depending on the type of injuries, they had certain specialists, we could do certain things,

33:00 so we'd either ship them there or either ferry them by an ambulance or by a helicopter that short distance to the airfield where the Americans' hospital was. So with the Americans we had no big deal. Typically if you get a lot of stores from the Americans - classical thing over a card game or a bit of money exchanged - you'd be surprised what you could get. Stuff that's bound for Alaska and ends up in Vietnam. And the American supply thing is, you can't take it back.

33:30 "So, fellas, we've got to get rid of it. Anyone want something that's for the polar regions? You want it? Want to buy one? Take it home to Australia."

What sort of things?

Huge anoraks and things with beautiful fur on them that you'd use at the North Pole. They were shipped to the wrong area so they had to get rid of it. So who wanted it? One of our guys come back with an American jeep. Wasn't allowed to keep it. Had to give it back.

How did he get his hands on that?

I don't know. Over some

34:00 thing or other. See the Australians had to normally bring everything back. Australians'd account for every little thing. We're not that rich. Americans, once they issue it to a war zone then they don't want it back. They'll leave it. Sell it. This is what engages them in their little black market or people who are willing to do that. You've seen it often in American movies because it's just the system that they had with supplies. It's such a rich nation. We had to bring everything back. The Americans, no. Tip it into the sea.

34:30 Do something with it.

Give it to them Aussies.

We would take it given the chance. We did get some equipment from them. That element was good. Anything we were short of, you usually had no problems. If the Americans had it they'd be willing to exchange it or give it to you.

Now did you say before you were paid in American military currency?

Military money, that's right.

Was that the only way it was done or could you choose to take Australian currency or have it paid?

You couldn't do anything with

35:00 Australian currency.

But could it be paid into an account back home?

Yeah. What it was, there was a certain amount that went back to your home account. The guys had nowhere to spend their money so there's only a certain amount of money you drew purely for your needs. And you could calculate, "I want to buy this." You knew it was on sale. "I want to buy this, that, so therefore I need so much money from fortnight to fortnight." You could save it up and do it that way. So money was never a problem that way. You could get your hands on it, but most of the money

35:30 was going home into an account.

Do you remember how much you were getting? What the wage was like back then?

I know the wage on the day I joined. My first ever pay at Kapooka in army training. That was only a year's difference. Would you believe I got my first fortnight's pay in pounds, shilling and pence and dollars and cents. Talk about confusion. Didn't know what I was getting paid. But it worked out to my whole fortnight's pay was sixty dollars.

Why in the

36:00 **two?**

It was the changeover between decimal and the old system.

Imperial.

Decimal currency. That was the thing we found unusual.

Okay. 8th Field Ambulance has come in - is that the name you maintained for the entirety of your time?

Yes. All our symbols and all our markings, all our documents were 8th Field Ambulance.

36:30 **Okay. So what were your primary duties first when you arrived? Was there much establishment work required or was it straight into the medical thing?**

We had to continue the development of the unit. Being a static unit we had to keep developing what I call the infrastructure of the unit. So to improve pathways. Remember, we were on sand. And the sand always blew. So you had to try to stabilise the region. Couldn't grow anything on it.

37:00 Except weeds. So we had to lay paths. We had to do a lot of sandbagging. There was plenty of sand to do that. So that used to stabilise surroundings and things. So all our buildings had to be surrounded by sandbags. So it was basically just to build up the pathways and to make sure that the hospital facility was in a number of rooms could be air conditioned. The actual operating theatre was conditioned. The pre-op wasn't.

37:30 Not in my days. I later learnt that most of the wards were fully encased and air conditioned then. Later.

But all the wards were in permanent structures. There wasn't anything under canvas?

Not for the wards, no. But our living facilities were, but gradually changed into solid buildings as we went through. The only excitement we had early in the piece was being in canvas that one night we woke up and somebody's running around screaming, "Fire!"

38:00 We thought, "What the hell are we supposed to shoot at?" We couldn't hear anyone shooting. What it was, it was the next unit, an engineer unit. One of the tents was on fire. So that's what it was. We woke up to it quickly. But a couple of our guys were ready to shoot somebody.

It sounds like from the minute you get there you're on tenterhooks. Talk about the getting off the plane and thinking we've just landed in the middle of an enemy field airstrip or something.

Yeah. You always had to walk around with your firearms. If you were on duty in the wards you had a rack outside the door of the ward that your firearm

38:30 had to be on. You had the magazines taped. The submachine gun just like a tube, but it's got a magazine that goes this way with thirty-three rounds. So we used to tape an empty magazine to it. So you could have an empty magazine on the weapon to keep it there and in an emergency you just clip it, reverse it and you're ready to shoot. Unfortunately because of our twelve hour shift, one time we found one of our corporals who did the weapons inspections, he had to clean and oil your weapons every day otherwise they'd rust,

39:00 had put the magazines back on with the live rounds on them. The submachine gun, if you cock it back and leave it cocked it's just something under pressure, it's open. And if that thing drops on the concrete or on the ground it loosens the bolt which immediately changes it around. Bang. It shoots the first round. So we could have had a rack of guns fall over and there'd be a little bit of fireworks going around. Again because

39:30 of the pressure that everyone was under, twelve hour shifts and sometimes you were a little bit vague as to what you were doing. Sometimes.

So incredibly long hours. The stress of the job. Was there also - how much tension was there in the air, just the fact that you are in a country that was at war?

Tension wasn't that much where we were because again we were protected by other units. We knew that. And you'd get very few alerts. We had bodies

40:00 wash up on shore. That caused an alert. Because you didn't know if they were enemy frogmen [underwater commandos] or whatever was going on. On there the Americans would do a sweep of that area and then we'd get all clears. Because you always had your defensive positions you'd jump into in case something happened when the alarms went up. But in our specific area, no, there wasn't much tension because we felt pretty secure where we were.

What was your defensive position? Where would you go on alert?

Depending whether

40:30 I was in the ward. We would stay on duty in the ward making sure that patients could take cover if necessary. Because we were sandbagged all around by that stage. If you were in your building you had sandbag positions outside your building that you could go to. Cause you always slept, you always lived with your firearm so you always had something to fall back on. Also, not only after your twelve hour normal shift you could also be called upon to do what they called picket duty, a guard duty that you would do usually two hours on

41:00 four hours off. And you'd do it that way. One night an officer and I we could have shot each other. Because what happened was, there was a truck coming through our area of responsibility just away from the hospital. And it stopped. And everyone's on picket duty. "Why has that truck stopped? Uh oh, no-one's getting out of the truck. What's going on?" So ring ring. So I said, "8 Field, you're responsible for this. Get out there and find out

41:30 what's wrong." And I was the guy on duty. The officer had his pistol. We came out. Not having been trained to search the vehicles we came up with a suggestion, he opens one door, I open the other door, guns at the ready - what we didn't realise was, should we have to shoot we'd be firing at each other. But what we did when we flung the door open - he was on the driver's side. He flung the door open and there was a drunk Frenchman in there who'd been called in for a few beers at one of the units.

Tape 6

00:30 **Let's just hear the end of that story. We got to the point where you both opened the doors, and what was inside?**

We were quite worried because we didn't know what's going to happen, whether the vehicle was booby trapped. That's what our main concern was in relation to that. So we didn't know whether the vehicle would blow up and the doors or nothing. But we were already in panic stations at the time and everyone was watching us because all the guards from the other units are going, "Oh this is going to be interesting. What's going on?" So as we flung the doors open - the officer was on

01:00 the driver's side and the driver slumped basically into his chest. A good thing his pistol didn't go off. It was a French, one of the French contractors or one of the Frenchmen who'd lived in the country. He

was stone drunk on there. He just stalled the vehicle and had fallen asleep. So that was quite a surprise. I don't think I slept that night. Something as simple as that could have caused a little bit of fireworks

01:30 and two people getting shot needlessly. Purely in the way we approached it.

Yeah. I guess you can't be prepared for every eventuality. Some of the guys we've interviewed who were in Vung Tau - everyone's got a different take on it or perspective - suggest that even though you're not on the front line there is an edginess about the place. The fact that little things like that which can set you off on edge. Do you find that

02:00 **sort of thing to be the case? Or was it early on in the piece - someone yelling, "Fire!?" Was it a matter of getting used to?**

Well the thing you never knew what was going to happen. As a Digger you never knew what the plans were, what's in the background - is there something's going to happen that you weren't told about so therefore you'd see something happening you'd be quite concerned about. A number of times we saw huge smoke pillars. Very close by.

02:30 Sometimes we found that somebody had either dumped burning tyres or burning oil or something because you couldn't hear firing. Then the worst thing was American jets would break the sound barrier anyway, so you'd hear explosions. So you'd go, "Uh oh, where was that? Was that a jet? Is it close or somewhere else." An example of being on edge time would be that again, tension - depending on what you were involved in, what you were doing. One night again we went to bed I had fortunately not night duty I was

03:00 asleep that night. You hit your pillow, you're lying down and all of a sudden you hear brrr brrr brrr. "Oh no! Somebody's using a submachine gun." It's the type you use. You listen again. It's not in your lines. It's not too far away. "What's going on? Oooh dear me. I'm not being called." Fast asleep. In the morning we found out it was one of the other units. A guard going around doing his rounds

03:30 had snuck into the kitchen not knowing that the cook was going a little bit troppo. The cook was up there doing something hidden away in the kitchen. So the guard went in to make a sandwich. And the cook got very upset about this. Got his weapon off the guy and stood him up against the pots and pans and started shooting around him. That's what the brrr thing was. So he shot up a lot of pots and pans, thoroughly scared the guard out of his wits. Then the other guards came, overpowered the cook.

04:00 The cook ended up in our ward under great sedation and was eventually shipped home. But people break. So there must have been tension. But I think it had all to do with again your impression of what you were doing and how much other pressure from different areas you were subjected to. So sometimes you were worried, but not so much from attacks on you personally from the periphery. I didn't really find that

04:30 personally.

Let's talk a bit more about the work you were doing. You were stationed to a particular ward for starters were you?

Generally yes. The social diseases ward and the officers' ward which contained a six bed ward and usually the officers had nothing serious with them. Back problems or needed a skin graft - something that wasn't too

05:00 great. So you had a fairly easy time there. Either just giving routine injections, routine delivery of drugs to them, things like that. So I could be called away at any time from there and they could quickly call someone in who didn't need to specialise in another area. The guys who worked in intensive care, they had to have a little bit more training. They had to be specialised to react quickly to certain medical emergencies.

So that's the officers' ward, social diseases which is

05:30 **basically ... ?**

V.D. [Venereal Disease] Yep.

How busy was that ward?

We got those fellas out there sandbagging and things like that. They thought it was against the Geneva Convention to do that, as patients, but basically besides doing the morning treatment, doing sample taking for the laboratory and hitting them with penicillin on a regular basis there was not much work in there at all. So that was good. That was considered a cushy

06:00 position if you got it. But I had it nearly all the time 'cause I could be called off to do other things. That was the main area. If I got called off I could be called off for up to eight hours. Because once you're in the operating theatre, not only did I have to take photos, I couldn't stand around there doing nothing and they'd hand me things, they'd ask me to move things, I'd go fetch things.

Let's focus on each of those roles, focus

06:30 **on perhaps the officers, the VD clinic. If you can talk us through the routine of a typical day in**

those wards starting with the officers perhaps?

You'd start on shift. You'd be briefed from the previous person what the - you'd have them on charts anyway. So there's routine things that you have to do. Check blood pressure, pulse, temperature, fairly

07:00 routinely. No matter what you had, that had to be done on a routine basis. Put on the chart. As a follow through you made sure you gave them the treatment, re-bandaging, cleaning of wounds, or anything else that had to be done, taking any samples that you had to do and then just making sure that the paperwork was done, that the wards was clean. That was the basic thing. That was fairly spot on. That wasn't too great. Unless the particular routine, if it was a post-op, clean the wound, maintaining cleanliness,

07:30 that could take a little bit longer, there were more things to do. Your normal injection giving sequence. Apart from that there's no pressure at all.

How big was that ward? How many beds would you have had in there?

The VD ward would have contained about twenty beds. Officers only six beds.

So would you have been on duty by yourself, or how many were there?

Usually

08:00 you only had to be there by yourself. Because you always have the sisters and we had a number of female sisters, all officers, who were the experienced ones. They would take the direct orders from the doctors. They were the ones who would impart information to you. And if you needed help they'd be the ones to come in because they could do all these unusual procedures that you couldn't do. Cause they'd done all that in civilian hospitals and places like that. So if you had anyone with tubes hanging out of them,

08:30 drips and things, they were the ones who authorised to change the drips, inject drugs into the drips. So you had always someone to call on from that element.

What were they like to work with in general, the sisters?

I was always wary because again they were officers. So you always - in those days I had a little bit of fear for officers. I was brought up to respect authority.

09:00 It was only that until I became an officer that I decided, they're only human beings. But that's not the way I looked on it. So I was very wary all the time of anyone in that sort of position. And did what I was told basically. That's what I had to do. Did what I was told. So I wasn't one of the diggers who would play pranks on them and things like that which used to go on. They generally took it in good faith. No. They could always trust, Ziggy's not going to do anything stupid.

09:30 **Were you able to learn things from them as well?**

Yes. That was one of the things because what became very apparent a bit later that the surgeons - because they were straight out of civvy street and you'd get a great deal amount of wounded coming in, the surgeon would turn round and say, "Do this to him." You'd go, "Uh. We're not allowed to do that." So eventually they got some of us to do on ourselves like you cut the skin to put the big

10:00 veinous needle in. You had to do it to yourselves. You had to do injections to the veins, so sterile water, and that stings like hell. You had to do that to yourselves, each other. So there's a few things to do. We were taught urinary catheter, to put that in. That was necessary. People who are totally unconscious, things like that. Monitor the fluid rate.

10:30 So there's a few things that in Australia you just wouldn't be allowed to do. But doctor said, "You've got to be doing it because no-one else is going to do it. I'm not going to do it. I'll be too busy doing other things, more serious things," which is true.

So you're working in the officers' ward and the social diseases ward. What happens if an officer gets VD? Where's he sent?

Officers' ward. Oh yes. No, we're very British. You keep the officers

11:00 separated from the men all the time. I think they only had one officer. Otherwise they'd ship them to the American hospital because officers never got VD

Of course not.

There was ways and means of dealing with that. There was some strange things I won't go into, but it was sort of a giggle throughout. Even the doctors thought it was a giggle. One particular officer.

You've got to tell us.

11:30 Yeah? Okay. He believed he had, the story was, he had constipation so he thought, "No good with paper," so instead of taking something - he ended up with the old razors, the metal handle, he ended up with that in his rectum. So that had to be removed medically, surgically, you might say. So the poor guy never got over that. They kept him for observations

12:00 for a couple of days I think just to teach him a lesson. So that got around.

So he was an officer you say. American?

Yeah. No, no. We only treated Australians. The Americans, we'd take those back straight away. Only if there was an extreme emergency and we had Americans mixed up with Australians, we would have to treat them immediately and then when it was safe to do so we could transfer them out. At one stage we had unbeknown -

12:30 a large action had carried on and we had a lot of casualties coming in. A lot of our unit they had set up a recreation area further down the beach where we mixed with Americans. It was an all forces type area. The word got around, "All 8 Field Ambulance people move back. There's been a battle. We need all assistance." So we all ran up back along the beach to get back to our unit. What we didn't realise was, the Yanks thought they'd help the Aussies. They all piled in a truck,

13:00 drove round the other way to give blood to help their Aussie mates. So what happened was, we were doing all this. These black Americans, these big American league players, hopped out, drunk as skunks coming up and saying, "We're here to help. We'll give blood full of alcohol," and all these casualties and the surgeons didn't know what to do. They were too busy. But it's surprising what a woman can do. Because our women wore the white veils. Americans were

13:30 shocked - "Wow, what's this?" So two of the women went out and calmed these big Americans down and said, "Thank you so much. Thank you for coming. We're right. We've got all the blood we need. Just go back and think of the guys, but have a few beers back at the pub." Unfortunately they got back on the truck, it's an open truck, the guy put it in the wrong gear, took off and we had gravel paving, and about four of them fell off. Got gravel rash, which is serious in the tropics. So we had to keep them too until

14:00 we could fix them up and send them back to the Yanks. Fun and games. Guys everywhere.

If only they'd given their blood just before that, they could have been re-used to recycle their own blood. You know what I mean. Can you tell us a bit more about - at the risk of sounding like I'm really prurient or something - the VD clinic? How much education did men receive on the dangers of - ?

14:30 I thought it was quite sufficient. It was ad nauseum. You really got sick and tired of it. And condoms were given out with your Weetie packets, you might say. On it. And all the dangers of going out with the local girls and all that. It was promulgated everywhere. But some guys you just can't do anything about. Unfortunately that's what happens. Some of them that got R and R [Rest and Recuperation] - I never got R and R. I got

15:00 three days in country, but never permitted out of the country. At the time that I wanted it I think a few of the officers needed it too. I never got out of the country. I had it all scheduled to go to Hong Kong but never got there. No. All of these things were available. But some weird tropical results of the VD did occur. It was my job to photograph the developments of this. Things like genital warts.

15:30 Things like that coming through. All weird stuff. And there's all sorts of rumours going around that there's certain diseases that nothing could cure and you'd be sent to an island off the coast somewhere and you'd be worked to death and they'd put you off as a war casualty. So that was supposed to scare the troops, but never did work. But no, you couldn't do anything about it unfortunately. All the education in the world and all the provisions. Some guys just won't take advice at all.

Were they, other than just being treated for what they had,

16:00 **were they taking information about where they might have contracted the diseases in order to build up, I don't know?**

They did have something that they were keeping a file on, yes. But they couldn't control what the Vietnamese did. That was passed on to the Vietnamese police or the 'white mice' [due to their white gloves] as they used to call them. But again nothing ever eventuated to my knowledge. So there was never such a thing to say, that's a clean area or that's not. That never eventuated.

16:30 Not to my knowledge. For that.

Right. I think we interviewed someone who was working in that clinic later on and saying that he was quite popular because apparently he had a list of the places that were cleaner.

Well the guys supposedly had these lists. Supposedly. But they weren't official. Anything's not official you could - I do know that our doctors as part of their you might say

17:00 help to the local community did check out some places, or the staff in the places, yes. But again there was nothing long-term you could do because if you stopped the disease you had to stop them from re-getting it and that's where the problem was. I don't think that was ever successful. Sure it wasn't.

What was the mood like in the clinic. Were the men able to ... ?

17:30 They're jovial. Not a problem. Unless you didn't like sandbagging and working. But apart from that, no.

Because it wasn't that painful. They got the injections twice a day I think it was. About all. They'd quite often be sent back to their units at the completion when they got the all clear. With a lecture of, don't go there again, or whatever. The worst thing was because most of the guys were from Nui Dat which is the forward zone.

18:00 They'd get very few opportunities to come into town whereby our guys had very frequent opportunities to go into town. So it's the guys who came in on say two days' leave or something, they're the people who we had all the trouble with.

And would the repeat offenders be dealt a little more severely with? Would there be charges?

There were provisions. You could be charged because it's what's classed as self inflicted wound. Like sunburn.

18:30 Could be charged for that too. But I never saw any of that done. They were reprimanded probably et cetera but I think Australians took a fairly light view of it. I never heard of anyone being disciplined.

So what were the most common sexually transmitted diseases?

Jeepers, there's a number of them and I forget the technical term for it now. I used to be able to pronounce all these.

19:00 From the pus sampling that you had to do, take it to the lab and the lab comes back and tells you how many spores and how many bacteria are there and this is what you count, you watch that it's getting down with treatment. I even forget the most common one.

Gonorrhoea.

Gonorrhoea. That was the most common. Yeah. And that was the easiest to treat. I don't think we got any cases of syphilis, because that's very serious. There was gonorrhoea

19:30 and there was combinations of that. There was variants of it. That's what our laboratory was always flat out monitoring the variants. It's the variants that you couldn't pin with the modern in those days anti-bacteria drugs. That was where the difficulty was.

And as you're taking swabs and giving injections, what sort of conversations are taking place at that time?

Usually they're talking with their mates. It's a very quick procedure. Nothing.

20:00 The guys are talking about when they're going home or what they're doing, what's happening back at the unit or whatever they've read in the magazine. The magazine used to be usually at least a month old by the time we got them. Or what was at the movies tonight. Because we used to have in a sand pit almost every night we had some sort of movie playing and the reels used to break and be the monsoon and got to watch in the rain, you're suffering there watching it all happen. It used to be hilarious sometimes. Depending what movie it was. If it was a sexy movie, yeah.

20:30 Comments and jokes and all sorts of things happened. Plus the shows, the live shows that used to come were good, very good. It was a real morale lifter, they were. We used to get as many patients as we could, even some of the serious guys, to manoeuvre them so they could see what was going on.

Speaking of that we saw photos earlier, one of those entertainers made a surprise visit to the VD ward. Is that right? Can you tell us about that story?

Oh yeah.

That'd be great.

21:00 What happened was, one particular time we had an Australian group called The Shadows. There was Denise Drysdale, Patti McGrath, who is now Bert Newton's wife. They came out as very young entertainers there and we were all thrilled because again a lot of us were from Victoria I suppose and everyone in Australia knew them at that time because of In Melbourne Tonight and a few shows like that. So this was

21:30 great. This was someone you knew who were genuine performers back in Australia. So this was tremendous and they were coming through where they'd do their social presentation first where they come and meet the troops and in the ward et cetera. Then they'd do the shows at night. So everything was set up for that and they were coming through and Denise Drysdale hung back with the main dignitaries and visiting the wards, saying hello. I think Patti McGrath got a little bit bored with this and she was ahead of the pack.

22:00 I was told quite distinctly by the commanding officer under no circumstances must any of these artists go into that particular ward. That particular ward being the VD ward. So that was between the officer ward and the ward, there was only a small gap. So here I was because I was taking photos and I thought, "The entertainers, I'll take a couple of shots of them," not realising that as I walked out the other group was slightly behind. Patti McGrath had shot through. Went straight through the officers' ward

22:30 without saying hello to any of them. And straight into the VD ward because it was full of guys. The guys in there at that time were knowing that they were not supposed to get any visitors were leaping around like baboons playing a stag party record and having a jolly good time and they thought they would disrupt the particular tour - not realising that all of a sudden one of the entertainers, one of the stars, has walked in. So everyone made a mad dash to their beds, jumped on, were lying or sitting in their beds at attention because they thought the officers would come in at the same time.

23:00 But it was only Patti McGrath. So I naturally positioned myself as a photographer. Took a shot of her speaking to the first patient. So natural thing, she looks at it and she thought "Uh oh, what's going on here? There's all this noise and it's all gone quiet." So she thought she'd do the right thing and she looked down innocently, asked the gentleman in the bed, "Oh hello. I'm Patti McGrath." and the guy says, "I know." And then she says, "What's wrong with you, soldier?" And he goes "Ah, tonsillitis." and it was sheer bedlam from then on.

23:30 It was an absolute riot in there. The commanding officer stepped in immediately, glared at me, grabbed her by the arm, and out they went. And to this day I don't think she knows what she did. In that area.

It's a great photo. Putting that story with that photo is classic.

Oh. Okay. Good.

Did you get to see the show itself?

Yes. Because I actually took some photos of our Q store captain dancing on stage with Patti McGrath. He was somehow

24:00 manoeuvred into that position to be up there on stage with her. We must have got a bit of rain because I can see that he was dressed in his raincoat at that time. Nobody cared about the rain because the show was classic, it was great.

How often would you get light entertainment like that?

If we were lucky, once every two months. From what I remember. (INTERRUPTED FOOTAGE)

24:30 A lot of people come from other units so from that point it was good.

And how important do you think that sort of thing was for morale?

I think it was very important. Because you see something which is a bit more normality in relation to that. I don't know how - 'cause one of the things is you don't often see women, especially Australian women, in that sort of

25:00 environment. We had our nurses there, again, but there was no intermingling or anything like that. They were officers. They lived up on Mount Olympus with the other officers. And that's it. So strictly off limits. But to see someone, especially women entertainers all dolled up, you could see the stares and the looks of the guys and it was just a complete digression from the condition that they were in and where they were.

25:30 It was just so foreign. It was a little bit of a taste of home and you know that you're not at home. You know that you're a long way away.

Now you probably were involved with the dust off as well, weren't you? Could you tell us a bit about that?

Most of our injuries always came in by dust off whether it's the marked helicopters with the red cross, which were the official dust off choppers, or any chopper, even mounted with machine guns,

26:00 they were fitted out to take casualties on stretchers. They were all fitted out either to take two or up to four casualties depending on how their internal workings were. Now we normally got a warning that they were coming in. Normally if there was a position where Australians were going to be involved in any predicted battles or anything like that we would be on standby. We would be ready. We would have rosters organised and things like that. What would happen is that

26:30 quite often the first thing you would hear would be from the orderly room the radio used to be on fairly frequently, it was on the particular channel that the helicopters would only use, so we were either getting American helicopters in a dust off field, Australian helicopters that had to get onto the emergency frequency or the medical frequency or naval helicopters that might be delivering something to do with naval supplies. I think naval were Albatross. Americans had all sorts of call signs. But our call sign everyone liked very much.

27:00 Being medics, they considered us blood suckers. And we fortunately got the call sign. Vampire. So Americans used to love coming in and calling - whether they were recording it or not I don't know - and saying "Vampire, Vampire, this is flight such and such coming in, will be on deck in ten minutes, is that a roger?" "Yes yes." They loved that thing of Vampire, Vampire. That stuck. Actually our football club was called Vampire, a big bat was our symbol. That was carried through, I

27:30 believe to 1 Aust Field Hospital. That eventually eventuated from our position. Vampire was a thing that

they used for their call sign and even on their web page at the moment I think. Their web page is entitled, "Call Sign Vampire." But the stories involved there. Typical. You get so much radio traffic the guys in the orderly room would be working, you wouldn't be listening to anything on the radio. Soon as the word, no matter how quiet, came on, the word

28:00 'Vampire' everything stopped just like an alarm. Somebody dashed to the phone ready to take down all the details, how many wounds were coming in, what the conditions were so we could immediately prepare what it was. As soon as that happened an alarm would sound. People who were on that particular shift who were rostered would immediately prepare. There was a time sequence. You would rush out. There was an area where you would pick up stretcher. Or the chopper may be carrying stretchers.

28:30 The usual thing was, you got a stretcher off the chopper, you gave one back. So you'd be ready with stretcher to give them while you take - 'cause you never changed the person from a stretcher. Any movement of them caused more aggravation. So you had that ready on standby. Chopper would come in, land, you'd be clear of the blades, come in and depending on how many people had to be evacuated, that's how many you had on standby because you really to move an adult you really

29:00 need at least four people to do it properly. Two doing one adult can drop them and that's not good if a person is genuinely ill, to do that. That was a constant thing. When you hear people from Vietnam saying that the most memorable thing or the thing that really gets them aggravated is the sound of the Iroquois helicopter, the chop, chop, chop of those blades. Everyone I think who worked at 8 Field Ambulance who worked at the hospital knows that sound. And that stirs you when you hear that.

29:30 Even on some of the choppers that fly around today that have got similar engines and blades. Never forget that.

And what was your personal involvement there when dust off happened?

My job was if there were sufficient guys out there, I would be out there with the camera to record every step as it came in. Record for our unit particular casualties coming in. 'cause we could get anything from military personnel, Viet Cong, people from villages, coming in and

30:00 unfortunately sometimes by the time they'd get to us they were already deceased and we had to treat them in another kind of way and this was so interesting from the type of injuries because you'd get people with very open, multiple injuries where the particular medic in the field wouldn't have had the number of dressings to cover the one body and what interested me was that the body had shut down and gone into such shock that the wounds weren't bleeding. This was the surprising thing. You'd expect wounds to be spurting blood everywhere.

30:30 But only the major wounds would be covered, the others would be left. No, as you were coming off, they might be dribbling, but no great things because the body had just shut down. And think there's been writings about it regarding that. Normally the period from injury to the time we got there was about half an hour. So the surgeons were keeping records of all these things to see what the survivability factor was for people injured and some people were very severely injured

31:00 in these areas.

Yeah. And I'm sure you saw some really - we've seen some of the photos - grizzly stuff. Had your time at the Alfred prepared you in any way for what you were going to see?

I thought it very helpful. That's right. Initially when some of the medics - because we used to have also drivers who had no medical training as such, also standing by. They'd volunteered their time for this to happen. Or they were just passing by when the alarm went off and they'd look around, "Ah, we're short of guys'.

31:30 So they'd immediately drop what they were doing and come in and be ready to pick up. Just the look on their faces of seeing some of the wounds, you could tell that they were just able in their own shock to carry the stretcher. It was so evident. Anything from massive wounds to people already covered up to one notable thing was they brought in a Vietnamese teenager who must have been helping the Australians

32:00 but it appears later that a grenade had gone off somewhere. When we brought him in we knew he was deceased because that was the report from the chopper. And we were moving his body and we thought - all he had was a pair of shorts on and he was completely naked everywhere and we thought, "Well what's killed him? There's nothing there. Can't see anything. Strange." But by the time we got there the doctors started investigating him and all he had was on his inner thigh was one hole. One hole, little finger you could push in it. And what it was, it appears that

32:30 part of the grenade that blew off had gone into the inner thigh, punctured the femoral artery and he bled internally and just from shock of that had died, but not bled out. So that was another revelation when you think, "What's killed him? There's no blood." Things like that.

So just talk us through what happens next. The Iroquois come with the casualties, whoever's on hand grab stretchers, takes them off, then what's the next?

33:00 Okay they bring them straight to, we used to roughly call it pre-op or in the modern world I think is

triage where the people are brought in to be assessed by the doctors. So the doctors quickly go round. Generally the casualty would have a tag on him saying what was wrong. 'cause some of these people are already heavily sedated with morphine, so they've got the markings on their foreheads and writings on these documents. Surgeons go round trying to pick the most urgent

33:30 cases first. Other cases are timed to say, okay we can leave them for a little bit, or their fluids are placed into them. They got ready for that. Maybe their painkillers are adjusted for the areas. They could be left outside lying out of the sun hopefully. But lying around the ward. People running around them etcetera. The doctors inside the triage would, could work on at least four cases on there at the moment. There'd be one

34:00 anaesthetist. All the rest of the doctors would be doing an assessment of what needed to be done. The ones preparing for operation would be stripped of clothing, any equipment etcetera, being prepared for surgery. Sometimes the people would come in almost clothing blown off them just from the nature of the blast - except their boots. The boots were so tightly on that you can't blow them off unless you blew the leg off. That was one of the things and

34:30 they'd be assessed. They would then go into the operating theatre. The operating theatre was always set up already. There was two tables in there always ready to go. Two operations always going mostly simultaneously, the anaesthetist going between the pair of surgical cases, the nursing sisters sometimes would be performing actual surgery on minor parts of the body while these surgeons would be operating on organs.

35:00 The thing that used to get me was - I truly believe I've seen miracles performed there where we were asked and I was asked to shut the air conditioning off because the anaesthetist couldn't hear the heartbeat. The anaesthetist would be listening and it was dead quiet. Nothing. And all of a sudden the anaesthetist would either go like that or go down like that. So we either rushed the body out or continued operating, switching the air conditioning back on. So it was touch and go many times. I really thought that

35:30 the surgeons would really fight desperately to keep people alive. And if there was only one or two casualties they had all the time in the world to do as best as they could in that same operation. They'd operate for hours some times on the people. And that was great, really great to see in relation to that. But that was all the time. At one stage we were called up from a barbecue. We had a football barbecue after a football match down by the beach.

36:00 And unexpected casualties were flown in. And what happened was that everyone was recalled - I have photos of one of the anaesthetists working in his little green gown in footy shorts. And I had to ask the anaesthetist to take his thongs off because the floor of the operating theatre was like a bath, slightly edged, so the fluids could be contained in there. Supposedly drain out of one hole. Because you use a lot of flushing of organs and things

36:30 with saline solution plus all the blood that used to come out. The floor was always wet up to about a centimetre. And what happens when you wear thongs? Flip, flip. Was getting on my camera. So I had to ask the surgeon to take his thongs off. If I had a dirty lens I couldn't do the work for them. So it got to that stage. No. The surgeons were brilliant in their work there.

Obviously your role here is to take a visual record of

37:00 **what's going on. Were there times it became so hectic you had to put the camera down?**

Yes. At times because something like an amputation can become routine because of the number of casualties. You'd either be the person liaising between the operating theatre and the doctors in the triage passing messages back and forth or some of the things which were unpleasant like to actually pick up the limb and take it out into a special facility

37:30 to be discarded later. That I found rather difficult myself. Quite often if there were body parts that had to be taken out in dishes - unfortunately we used to let some of the other non-medical staff - there used to be a viewing window - we used to let them watch because the more you're interested in the subject the more helpful you can be. Quite often we'd have to be careful as you took that out you'd get these people collapsing and you'd have to look after them. So you had to be careful what was going on, but

38:00 I'd be used anywhere that it was so busy that, "Ziggy, no, put the camera down and do this." At one particular stage I'm a negative. It's not that popular blood. And they got one person in and was in such a hurry that they said - the doctors knew who had what blood around - "Quick, Zig, on the stretcher. Lie down." So off I get. I knew exactly what was going to happen. They prepared

38:30 my hand ready. They actually had the tube in there ready and it was going to be person to person transfer of blood. And they said, "How you going there, Ziggy?" And I said, not feeling very comfortable in myself and all of a sudden I feel this thing being pulled out. Because I couldn't watch it myself. Being given. Pulled it out and said, "Off you get. Go out and help." "What happened?" "He passed away." So things like that used to happen on some occasions. As soon as they decided

39:00 someone's deceased, can't operate any more, so, "Next."

Incredible experience.

Mm.

So what were you looking for as the photographer? What did you need to be recording?

Out in triage it was mainly how the people came in, how they were first aided, what treatment had been given in the field. You could tell by the type of bandages that were

- 39:30 admitted, the way the body was twisted or limbs and how it was splinted or anything like that. That was to be kept and basically the human interest part of our work, that side of the work we did. In the actual operating theatre was always colour film that I had to use. Normally unless I brought my personal camera in which was the same type of camera the army had given me, that would contain black and white film. The military film was colour slides for the surgeons who would actually pinpoint
- 40:00 and at certain stages say, "Step in. I want a shot of that. I want a shot of this angle," et cetera. And that's what I would do. As an example was the element of one of the diggers was shot in the back of his head. And when we got him in, before they shaved his head, the back of the bullet was just poking out in a nice little copper coloured finger like protrusion out of the back of the head. They looked at that and they said, "Uh oh this is going to be serious." The patient was unconscious at the time.
- 40:30 It was fairly stabilised so the sergeant had no great panic on him. But then they started, the head was shaved, they drilled three holes in strategic positions around the wound, submitted certain wires that they can do, sawed the piece of skull out, opened the wound, asking me to take photos of each stage. When they removed the bullet very gently they found that the meninges, the skin of the brain had just been lacerated a little bit.
- 41:00 The brain looked very neat. No blood coming from the brain. The surgeons gave a sigh of relief, cleared up a bit of bone that they'd dropped. Then they had special material that they could also pack in there which I was told later causes oxygen or something. Bacteria doesn't like oxygen. So they packed that in. Put the bone back into its little position. Bandaged the head neatly, made sure there was no bleeding there.
- 41:30 Sent him off to the ward. Actually to intensive care for a while. And the gentleman survived that quite neatly. He was blind for a couple of weeks I believe because of the sight area where he got hit. And I met him eventually in Australia with a huge crop of black hair that I didn't recognise him. Never seen him without his hair on. And he recognised me and shook my hand and said, "Look, it's fantastic. Thank you for the photos that you took. My family's got them."
- 42:00 Not the medical photos though.

Tape 7

- 00:30 So he remembered that little thing. This is where you start talking to each other and you bring the time scale together and then you try to work out, who were you at that time.
- That's extraordinary.**
- But there's some other very curious incidences that resulted from accidents that might have happened. And
- 01:00 usually all the things that you say and even now in Iraq and Gulf War and all of this, the military should be quite positive about answering them because you've got young troops, you've got people who think they're infallible and they're superman and never going to die. So people take risks and unfortunately accidents happen. One of the examples is, people are never thorough enough. We had one instance where engineers were cleaning out
- 01:30 grenade boxes. They were empty so they were throwing them into the tip to burn at Nui Dat. Were just throwing them in afterwards. Well if you don't take all the grenades out what do you think's going to happen in a fire? So one of these guys, tossing grenades and he turned around and the fire pit exploded with the grenade. So he got injured and a couple of other engineers got injured and they were flown into us. Because all the soot and everything was blown onto him, the other two characters had to have immediate
- 02:00 attention surgically. Because I'd already taken the photographs and there was nothing much to take shots of I was told, "Can you take him and get him cleaned up?" He was covered in soot that had been blown on to him. So, fair enough. And because we were working out in out of doors in the sunlight in a secure position they only had their shorts on and their boots. So eventually we undid his boots, but the interesting thing was although he had soot all over him you could see blood running through the soot. The surgeons did a quick check etcetera and "He's fit enough. Get him cleaned.
- 02:30 We can't even find all the wounds, he's so dirty." So walked him into the showers and there he is in the showers praying, shivering from fear and shock, because he's been injured and he doesn't know how badly. I said, "You're alright. You're not as bad as your mates." And he's just mumbling a prayer and he's shaking like this. I got him under water and every time I tried to - I got him clean eventually - but

every time I wiped something off him, red ooze just came out of multiple little holes in his body.

03:00 The American grenades were just smooth shell and inside serrated wire wound round tightly. And it's the wire bits that fly out. Meant to cause a lot of minor injuries instead of deadly effect as such. So he was there, he was doing all this and the interesting factor was, I'd cleaned him up as best I could, I couldn't clean him any further. I couldn't stop the bleeding, there was too much of it. So I wrapped a towel around his midriff and said, "Come on, let's go back. They've got to stop something."

03:30 And everyone was peering through the ward windows. "What's going on? What's Ziggy got?" And this poor red headed chap, white as a ghost, I'm leading him out, he's got a towel around his midriff, walking barefooted and everywhere his footprints went there's bloody footprints all the way back to the theatre. And people just looking down, going, "Oh." So he had minor things and then as he was recovering eventually, scratching himself while he was playing cards he'd go, "Oh,

04:00 there's another bit." Because your body rejects a lot of these things if they're not deep. It's rejecting foreign matter. He'd be, "Oh here's another bit to put in my collection."

So how much information or description would you get of the accident or the event that's happened that's injured people?

Usually the surgeons, yeah, the doctors get it. We just told we've got so many coming, be prepared for such and such. No further details. We wouldn't be getting.

04:30 So we were lucky to know how many were actually landing by helicopter. Usually it was correct information.

You mentioned before, maybe you just used this as an example, but seventeen people coming in one day. Was that a lot?

A great deal. That was the most we ever had in one period. Some of them were walking wounded. They could walk in and basically as long as we kept them comfortable their wounds could be treated hours later. So there was no great

05:00 urgency. Give them a cigarette. They were so happy to have survived. You could see it on their faces. They're not in immediate danger. There's somewhere they know they're going to get treatment. They know there's guys there all cleanly shaven and fresh uniforms on etcetera. They knew they were safe. So they didn't worry so much about the pain. They knew that they hadn't lost a leg or an arm. So therefore they were quite, thank god, so relieved. We always worked on the priorities.

05:30 Some of the guys just the nature of the injury couldn't sit up, couldn't get up. I'm not sure how many we lost that day. That was the most I think we ever had in one hit. So it was a bit of bedlam at the time.

I can imagine. How many stretcher cases could they fit in an Iroquois?

I think four because they can tier them. As far as I remember, four. But we normally only got two at a time because they could put them on the floor.

06:00 The crewmen either sit on the sides, depending on the type of chopper. Because Dustoffs had no guns. The fighting choppers had two machine guns hanging off either side so therefore they had less room. Because the crewmen had to move around. They had two pilots, two crewmen so the crewmen could operate the guns. The Dust Off I think is one crewman and two pilots.

06:30 **They would bring in the first load, then they'd be going back for another pick up so it would be constant like that?**

No. They won't go back. It's all done at the spot. You only do one flight. Because you've got to get them in quick. So you don't have the time to get there, drop and go back. So whatever the injuries are, if it's safe enough for the choppers to land they come in and land. There could be a fleet of them. Because that's the only way you used to travel, it's all by air. It's surprising that was so many years ago.

07:00 And even now for you or I to travel by helicopter is still a big deal now and expensive to do it. Yet over there that was the most common way to travel. We were fortunate that as long as we were with Americans you could go to any airfield as long as you were in uniform and you could hitch a ride to anywhere. A couple of our guys actually had a couple of days off and got told off because they ended up on the DMZ [Demilitarised Zone] up near North Vietnam. They call it swanning around, you know, touring. Into a

07:30 war zone. Just by hitching rides on American aeroplanes. We actually - I don't know if anyone else has mentioned it from our days, but that show "Good Morning, Vietnam" the character was during my time there. We used to actually record his voice. Because it wasn't shown in that film where Robin Williams played the character that he actually started his programs every morning dead on eight o'clock with "Gooooood - "

08:00 and he'd drag it out as long as he could. "Gooooood morning, Vietnam," and then go into his spiel. And we always used to listen to how long his breath could last on it. And one time we were working, we knew he was going to come up, the radios were set and all of a sudden - what was wrong. The radio was going. Something's wrong. We're all looking around. He never introduced it. He just started. "Good

morning, Vietnam." And went straight into it. We were so expecting him to do this long drawn out thing and he didn't do it and we thought, "What?" We couldn't identify

08:30 what went wrong until somebody said, "He didn't do his normal thing in the morning." And again something like that - and I'm sure I've got that on a little reel disc at home amongst my mementoes. I've got nowhere to play it now, but I've got that man's voice making that presentation. Because we thought it was all quite unique even in those days. We couldn't understand his American politics that he used to give on the radio. We thought, "That's on Americans," and we used to think, "How could he

09:00 get away with saying things like this?" Because we always thought he was an American military person. "How can he get away with saying things like that?" In between his DJ [disc jockey] type music he used to put on. So that's another little sideline side issue there.

You've talked a little bit about what your process was in photographing operations and stuff. I'd just like to explore that a little bit more.

09:30 **Would you be documenting the step by step process of an operation? So from the point at which the patient is brought into the theatre and their wounds are fresh off the battlefield so to speak and then the procedure that the surgeon and the assistants?**

Normally not exactly step by step. But what you would do is, the surgeon would want recorded what the person's body looked like

10:00 at the beginning. That's where they decided to take it further. But the person was alive so you would attempt to photograph the particular wound or the worst wounds and the surgeon would get to work on them and the surgeon would call on you when at any particular stage the surgeon though, "I need this recorded because this is some unique thing I'm doing that I've never done before," or whatever. So that's when. Sometimes I'd be in the theatre and I'd only take about two or three shots. Sometimes

10:30 I'd go through the whole roll, have to go out for another roll of film.

But you would be directed by the surgeons.

Exactly.

I know this wasn't an official photograph but there is a photo of a man in there who's lying and the shot is from his feet, straight up his body and the doctor's massaging him. Was there a particular reason you took that shot in that way?

Yes. Because that was triage. That was before going into the operating theatre.

11:00 And he was a person who was brought in with a chest wound, directly into the chest. He was actually - because there was a number of people brought in the same day - I was actually carrying part of the stretcher as we came in. And this person was moving and alive. When we got him in the surgeons were already investigating other people there. And usually someone sits with the stretcher or sits with the particular person.

11:30 This particular person said something. And I said, "Okay," and I was wondering why the surgeons were passing him by. I said, "Doctor, sir? I've just been talking to him." They said, "You can't." I said, "Why?" "He's been shot through the heart." I said, "What? I've just been talking to him." So they said, "What?" and they put him off the ground onto the frames that we have where you saw in the photograph the surgeon can

12:00 actually look down on the person and actually his legs at one photo moved back and forward - the surgeon, the look on his face, "What! - and then they checked. And said, "No. His heart's not going," and immediately because they actually saw him move, that's when they started doing external heart compressions and they heard a very unusual, I can only describe it as a squishing sound inside the chest which first of all means air is escaping from the chest through the wound and there's

12:30 fluid sounds in there. The surgeon said, "Look, he's shot in the heart," and I said, "But I was just talking to him," trying to convince the surgeon. And the surgeon had seen him move. So quickly the surgeon put his hand, an open hand, straight in through the hole, felt around and said, "No. Look, he is dead. He's shot through the left or right ventricle. It's there. Take him off." That was a shock to me. Because from what I considered,

13:00 because he spoke, that he'd survived half an hour in an aeroplane flight with a bullet to his chest. And it's in the photograph. I don't know how they documented that or whatever because they made a decision right there. But that was a serious chest wound. They couldn't operate on a person's heart. No way. Not even if they'd like to. They wouldn't have been able to do it. But just the element the person had lasted that long. One thing that's always surprised me was because I was so closely involved in the

13:30 triage area, that you see this in movies quite often where you see the hero or their sidekick has been shot and you see them lie there and they say their final words. I've seen that three times. Where people have come off the chopper still alive, get there and they're either asking for their parents, or one guy just tried to get up on his side and said, "Look, I'm all right. What's wrong with my mates?" And he just said that and just slumped back.

14:00 When the surgeons come, "No." Checked him out. "He's gone." Three times I personally have heard face to face, near their face, people saying things to me and then they pass out. They live all that time. And they pass out, but they do say their final words. I found that a little bit disturbing I suppose, but unusual. I think, well I've seen it in the movies too often, but it does happen in real life. That final bit with that final bit of life.

14:30 They carry on till that moment.

Did this take an emotional toll on you day after day?

Not there. I don't think so. See, because we were young and this was what we were expecting and you might say this common word, gung ho, this was our work, this is what we prided ourselves being able to do. So in those days it didn't affect us. I don't remember it affecting us. But when we got back to Australia and when you have a time to reminisce

15:00 and when you consider as you grow older, your family attachments and things that happened within families and relationships to people. Then it dawns on you what effect that one person passing away could have had on many more people. Although to you it was a daily chore to see that happening. Because you weren't their friend. What did play on you was the factor - we had a person who

15:30 came through the VD ward, came through with an injury to his back, a gunshot wound, and the next time he came through he was dead. Three times we had him in the hospital through his term and the final trip he had to us he'd been killed. So we knew him. That hurt.

You knew him because he'd been in the hospital.

He'd been a patient. That's right. We'd had a

16:00 beer with him as a patient. You'd given him injections. And he kept going back to his unit because it wasn't life threatening things that he had. He was able to be picked up. He was a good guy. He had no problems. But the last time we saw his body. The race - a couple of vehicles did. You know, you get lackadaisical day in, day out doing something. Typical young guys they thought "We'll race these vehicles."

16:30 Unfortunately there was an ambush set up on this particular day so the vehicle that won got shot. Both drivers, five people got killed in that vehicle and he was one of them. So that was difficult.

That must break your heart a bit. It's something so unnecessary.

Unnecessary, yes. Especially when you knew him. This is where the guys in the field who were their friends who were in the same unit that would have much more impact

17:00 on them. To see what had happened in relation to that.

You said that you were also called on to take photographs for non-medical reasons.

Yes. Mostly in Vietnam it was medical reasons or when we went into villages to help out - our unit did

17:30 work in the villages that was almost like adopting a village. So our unit was always there doing regular medical checkups and things like that. The doctors were quite happy because you give them a shot of penicillin and bang! miracle cure because they'd never experienced that type of drug before. So it worked very well. It's only Australians who've been used to antibiotics etcetera that things were a little bit more difficult in those times. But back in Australia, yes, I was called upon to take shots of things that I didn't know about. But in Vietnam

18:00 there were things of a medical nature that I was called in. I suppose the unusual places would be for actual autopsies. And when you consider, well why would you take a photograph or why would you do an autopsy on battle casualties - because they weren't battle casualties as such.

How do you mean?

Well, things happen. Out there. Let's say

18:30 from my experiences and then my experiences once I became an officer was that you have to treat Australian troops as individuals, as people. You don't downgrade your people. You look after your people. If you don't there are repercussions for doing things. If your troops don't respect you things can happen and I won't go any further than that.

19:00 But yeah. So therefore a number of autopsies were held for that.

To prove the cause of death.

To document the cause of death. One of them got into the newspapers. There was a trial. In regard to that would you believe the actual person flew back on the same plane with me. We didn't know why we were kept in the plane while a couple of black limousines turned up at the airport and a couple of military police as

19:30 the gentleman was marched off the plane. Didn't know. We were too busy drinking on the aircraft. We

were on a civilian aircraft when we flew back to Australia. It was a big thing in the newspapers etcetera and the person got away with it eventually because he was charged incorrectly. He was charged in war service and Australia was never at war. Technical matter. So it was in the papers and I can say that.

What's the story?

A guy had killed his officer.

- 20:00 And he was charged over it because they were able to prove it. But one of the things I learnt was - we were speaking before about the effects of grenades. I suppose I can say this. The chap had a humorous element to him. We got a patient in one time. Chopper came in at night. I wasn't able to photograph it because they didn't have to do much to him. He'd been blown up in a grenade explosion. Drinking too much. We always
- 20:30 carried firearms and this is at Nui Dat. And he had a beef about his sergeant and he was going to do his sergeant in with a grenade. And all his mates were ho ho ho. So they all stumbled after him. He had the grenade and he said, "I'm going to get that bastard," in the thing. Unfortunately he stumbled around. Whether he meant it or not, but he dropped the grenade and a pin flew off. The handle flew off. I mean, the grenade was armed. All his brave mates shot out because they knew the results of it. He bent down to pick up the grenade. And it went bang!
- 21:00 He lost one hand and fingers off the other hand and got a few minor cuts. That's what picking up a grenade when it went off. Just lost the hand. Yeah, a hand and fingers off the other. Picked it up like that. Later on I was talking to him in the ward. I said, "Jeepers," after he'd recovered and everything. "God, why did you do that?" Because we heard the story what he did.
- 21:30 He says, "Utter stupidity. Look!" And he's all bandaged up. "Jeepers. Won't put me off drinking though." That was his end. But again it was just the attitude. Utter stupidity. I shouldn't have done it. His mates never thought he would. It was just that he dropped the thing. He fumbled it all through his drink and bang! It went off.

That's a pretty minor injury, though, isn't it?

Not when you lose your hand. His hand and fingers off the other hand. The rest he just had those minor perforations.

- 22:00 It was okay. I don't think they even charged him because they thought he's suffered enough from being so stupid. But then again I had to photograph a body where somebody was sleeping in the pit and somebody threw a grenade in there. And from what I saw of the body I would swear that the person had been raked up and down by machine gun fire. What had happened was, the explosion had ricocheted the shrapnel backwards and forwards inside there.
- 22:30 So from one bang his body's ripped to shreds really. All I could tell was that he had a moustache. Couldn't tell you what his face was like or anything.

Why did you have to photograph him?

Again because it was an unusual case. They needed proof, an autopsy, for their records and things. I don't know how they documented that particular

- 23:00 thing. There was a number of other cases where autopsies were done. All I can say is that the reports that went back to the families was compassionate - death due to battle injuries. Although that may not have been the case.

So you were told what was going on when those autopsies were being done?

No. And the doctors didn't talk about what caused it. They had to report

- 23:30 on the actual physical condition. So they did and they said, photo. It's just that my first autopsy I saw because you know if you watch CSI on television they major slit down and the way they finish it, I thought, "Oh," and the surgeon looked at me and must have seen my expression and said, "I don't think Saint Peter will mind." We left it at that. You couldn't do neat things there and
- 24:00 after what I've seen in coroners' offices because I have worked in the funeral industry here in Australia for about six months too, yeah. So it wasn't that much different. To me it was a first time experience so I was a bit shocked at what I saw. But to the surgeon this was just a routine type autopsy and how he left the body.

If there was a bullet or some sort of shrapnel of some sort in the body that had been

- 24:30 **friendly fire so it was either American or Australian weapon would that be obvious? Would that be something you'd photograph?**

Not necessarily. Unless the wound was unusual. Because it was friendly fire usually you know about it and it's all documented. We've had Australian troops ambush each other. Accidentally. And we brought both groups in because they did a lot of damage

- 25:00 to each other. Fortunately no-one died. But the humour of it was, we had them on stretchers lying down.

One person had lost a finger, someone had damage to their eye, people had damage to the rest of bits and pieces of their bodies. And there they were lying there and they were arguing and, "Wait till I get out of here. I'll fix you! Shooting at me!" And all that - good naturedly. Because they knew, thank god, they weren't seriously wounded, they haven't lost limbs and

25:30 what's a finger. As far as they were concerned they were alive. And this is the big thing. The thankfulness on the people's face to know that they're alive. And sure they might have lost, in some instances had lost a limb, but "Hey. I'm alive. I've survived this. I've been in Vietnam. I've survived." They knew it was a go home free card. That's all they cared about. So the thankfulness you could see. And they were most co-operative patients. But the humour of this. Both sides had shot each other up. Arguing and saying, "Wait till I get out."

26:00 'I'm not going to buy you a drink," things like that.

I heard about someone who'd been shot somewhere in the jungle but wasn't - had a bit of an idea of where he thought the bullet had come from but it wasn't confirmed until he was opened up and they found that the bullet was an American bullet. That's what I'm wondering is,

26:30 **in the course of your work doing these autopsies do you recognise if a bullet is pulled out of a body are you able to recognise where that may have come from?**

You should. Depending on the type of firearm used. Because Americans didn't use the nine millimetre pistol that we used. So the pistols were fairly obvious. Submachine guns were different and the American rifles were the M16 which are smaller round than the Australian ones. We had the Nato, huge round

27:00 that we used same as the Vietcong AK47. So yeah if it was an American one we could tell because at that time Australians weren't using the American weapons. Later we started using their weapons. We had their machine guns which used the big rounds or the standard six point two millimetre that we had. So their machine guns, the M60, had that type of round. So if that fired you couldn't tell whether it was Australian or whatever so you wouldn't go to all that trouble.

27:30 The agreement would be, if friendly forces are together and a bullet is fired, normally you can tell, yes, probably friendly fire. What are you going to do about it? Depending. There's not much you can do sometimes about it. We've had instances where we've had a guy sitting having a break in the jungle, sitting back having a smoke, had his arm resting on the log, having a smoke; thankfully having a rest, and all of a sudden out of the blue, nowhere, thunk! "Oh!" His hand's pinned to the

28:00 log by a bullet. Just come out of the sky, straight through. But it went through the bony structure so all it left was a hole. We had to clean it up. Bit of physio and he's okay. I think we actually kept him on. I don't think we sent him home. But that's his story. Just sitting there and out of the blue and this thing just fell out of the sky and thunk! and pinned his hand to the thing. If it was fired at close range it would have gone right through and blown his hand apart. The usual thing.

Was it

28:30 **identified where that bullet had come from?**

No. It was a seven point six two. Someone said it could have been an enemy round. We don't know. We weren't sure what it was. But they couldn't hear any firing. So I don't know how. These things can travel over three miles. These things. So sometimes depending on the nature of where you are you can't hear the sound although they're fairly loud. So all these strange things do happen. With unusual conditions or people

29:00 hurting themselves - we had one which I've documented in photos too - is the element that at night time they had Paul Hasluck, the then Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs came through. Big dignitary, everyone knew him. So he was brought through and he was coming through. "Yes. Hello." Comes up to just outside of the intensive care room. And there's a gentleman lying on his stomach there. And Paul Hasluck - I'm taking photos of the dignitaries so I'm there and I can hear every word and I've got photos of Paul Hasluck, but not the patient unfortunately

29:30 because it was too close quarters. And Paul Hasluck says, "Hello. I'm Paul Hasluck," and the young patient lying on their stomach says, "I know, sir, yes." And he says, "What happened to you son?" And he says, "Shot in the bum, sir." And he said, "Ho. One of theirs or one of ours?" "No, sir. One of mine." He shot himself. Accidentally. Climbing over a very slippery log in the jungle. He was one of the scouts, carrying a submachine gun. As he went

30:00 over the log he slipped. "Oh!" Because you normally try to grab something, he dropped his gun to grab the log. The thing fell and as he bent over, boom, it went in the cheek and out the cheek. Thankfully not hitting anything else. It went in and out. Unfortunately in that type of medical environment, although it's an in and out, you think "Oh terrific. Two bandaids." Doesn't work that way because usually there's damage inside to the muscles etcetera. So they've got to open everything.

30:30 Make sure there's nothing remaining - dirt, leaves or anything. Then they pack it making sure there's no infection and later they suture everything back. But you have to give the muscle a long time to get fixed. We thought that was quite humorous, that story line.

It's good he could have a laugh about it himself.

That's right.

So

31:00 **what were you photographing there? You were photographing the arrival of Paul Hasluck and his tour or ... ?**

Yes. One of the main things was also photographs for the unit. So someone had been told, "Now you need photographs of any visiting dignitaries. It's valuable for us in the future," whatever. Unfortunately I didn't realise at my young age that that type of photography I was also doing. So if people such as General Westmoreland visiting, Paul Hasluck,

31:30 there was a couple of other famous Australian generals that visited through. So I trotted along with the commanding officer and the generals and made sure I photographed them in their right positions and everything. And the photos, once developed, I gave to the unit and what the unit did with them I'm not too sure. But I have seen them re-occur in books and things. So I know that they were used with the unit in mind and things to illustrate that.

Even though your photography was technical, did you consider

32:00 **yourself an artist at all - like thinking about composition and framing and so forth?**

Not in those days. No. It was because - wounds, you never considered that at all. It was mainly get the subject. With people it was just groups. No. I didn't really consider composition at all. It was only later that I thought there were better ways of taking photographs and what tends to happen is that

32:30 I suppose if you're artistically minded or if you like something, by looking through a frame in the view finder you tend - if you're conscious - to place the camera at the right position. It naturally falls to the eye. This is why you see artists or people or even photographers do this. They frame. They see a scene but they're not sure how to capture it so they frame it and they go, "Oh. That's what I want." Quite often when you see a beautiful scene or whatever, you go "Oh isn't that nice."

33:00 You don't know why. Because it's pretty, you think. But what you're capturing in your eye automatically composes it and that's where the satisfaction comes through with it. All a photographer does is know the technical limits of how to do that composition. And record it.

So were you aware of angles and that a slightly different angle might give you a better frame?

A little bit because I tried to get down on people's levels. In that, because again we tended to have a lot of people be on the ground. So you tended to

33:30 kneel down beside them or something like that because you had this feeling that it's not right peering down on top of them and just photographing down. I did become aware of that, but at that stage you were so busy you didn't consider the finer points.

Just remembered what you said about the man you spoke to on the phone about the parking fine who turned out to have been injured and he remembers having a photographer climbing

34:00 **all over him.**

Yes. Stepping all over people.

Did you upset people at all do you think, doing that?

I always felt conscious, because there I am with the camera and these people are in dire straits etcetera and I always thought "Well how are they going to perceive this?" It's even now. We've been involved in car accidents. I step out of the car accident with a camera. Snap! Snap! My wife says, "What are you doing?" But it's natural. It's what I do. Get out and take photographs.

34:30 People thank me later because for insurance claims and things like that. I email things to people. Multi-car collisions on the freeway that we've been involved in. Nose to tail. Multiple cars. So yeah Ziggy gets out and takes photos. Everyone else is so worried about their claims and "Why did this happen to me?" sort of thing. But so long as people are alive and not injured, that's my main concern. And then I snap away. Again, very cautious. But the people are usually so distracted by their condition that they don't know. Plus a lot of the people

35:00 we got - most of the people we got had already had first aid, being at least a morphine injection. And usually after the shot of morphine - I don't know what it was, amount or whatever, twenty-five grams or whatever, but they were in an amenable mood by the time we got them. I remember one which would be interesting to illustrate - we'd never seen this because we were never permitted to go close to the special air service. They had their own little

35:30 place at Nui Dat that they stayed and they kept to themselves. I think you've seen something in The Odd Angry Shot, the film with Graham Kennedy in it. That was supposed to be SAS soldiers. We kept away from them. We never saw them. You don't even see them nowadays. It was a mystique about them. Now

what happens is, we got one. And we didn't know but as he came off the chopper we knew he'd been injured in the arm.

36:00 And when they released him even the chopper pilots didn't want to touch him. He came off the chopper, no bandage on, half his arm missing - not half his arm. All the muscle below here was just missing and you could see part of the bone. And he's still carrying his armaments. Still carrying his grenades and he was one of the few people in camouflage. Australians were not issued with camouflage. These guys were. And his face was green and brown and black. He looked the mean bit.

36:30 Arnold Schwarzenegger. Young Arnold Schwarzenegger. You don't touch him. And the glazed look on his face we knew he'd been drugged. And one of their things is, "You're not going to get my gun." And one of the things about him, we had to take the arms off him and the grenade and we had a special storage area at the side of the chopper pad because we couldn't have these things go off inside the hospital. So we were preparing ready and everyone took one look at that guy's eyes and they were not going to touch him.

37:00 He was walking. We were trying to lead him up to the hospital. And he was walking. He wouldn't lie down. And he was walking. And we thought, "Shit, we've got to get this stuff off him." And one of our nurses - I think it was our New Zealand nurse because she was always in white, the white veil. And she just, "What are these men doing?" So she just walks up, right up to him, faces him in the eye. You could see his eyes go like that as if, "What am I confronted with?" He was so stunned

37:30 she just picked the stuff off him. We thought, "We wouldn't have done it at all." We were so scared of him. But she got it. She came in. "Sit down here." Surgeons took one look and they said, "More jabs." Out he went. And they could operate on him. But he was mean. Young guy.

What an amazing story.

It was. It really burned into my mind.

38:00 **I guess what's amazing is, the man could die, but he's completely conditioned to function as ...**

Yes. And that's what got us. And it's the expression, one of the things I learnt I suppose as a sheriff, seeing people, anyone from diehard criminals to your average parking offence person that won't pay that, was you can tell in their eyes. You can tell where you stand with a person. And you'd look and you'd go, "Uh oh, I'm not going to push this situation further." You look in some people's eyes and say,

38:30 'I can push this person around real easy.' Well you don't. Because it can backfire. But you let's say you can do your job without back-up. Some people you say, "I'm not going to do anything without back-up' to this particular person. There's things that you notice and you body read. I suppose you get that as a survival technique. We were doing that to this guy and no way are we going to go near this guy. We know what he's going to react. We know what he's going to do to us if we try to take his things off him.

What would he have done do you think?

He would have lashed out. He could have fired.

39:00 He could have just gone - not with his other arm. But these guys are trying to use the other, he could have just flipped straight onto them, just bang. With a rifle. A very short rifle. Cut down rifle. Which we weren't allowed to do. But they could do all sorts of things. So it was a matter of zip, bang bang. These guys were so good. I was privileged to read a report which was supposedly secret but because the officer couldn't sleep and I wasn't allowed to sleep I helped him.

39:30 He was a high ranking person who eventually became a general and he was reading a report and at that stage as a private I couldn't read the abbreviations. I didn't know what he was reading. It just looked like gobbledygook. And he's reading things through. He was saying, "Look at this. Here's a SAS report. Ambush successful. Seven enemies sighted. Seven enemy killed. Seven rounds

40:00 expended." What else do you have to say? Alright. I don't want anything to do with the SAS. But that's good. Normally they fire more rounds. But these guys were doing things that I don't even want to delve into. They were good. They were trained. We appreciated what they could do to the limits of their physical capacity. But their training was really

40:30 good. We all respected them. If they came in wounded, I tell you what, we'd all go out of our way to do things for them because we respected them.

So did they come in wounded often?

No. This is the only guy we knew of that come in. Because he came straight out of the field. Rescued straight off wherever they were. They had certain conditions they performed quite often, it was sometimes, they would actually abort an operation because they heard a shot. They thought

41:00 they may have been compromised in their landing or something. So they were very careful and we knew that they were doing things that no ordinary soldier could do. Like, they used to take drugs so that they wouldn't cough or sneeze, little things like that. But I'll stay off that subject.

Tape 8

00:30 **Is there anything else that you could say about your encounters with the SAS?**

No. Because in Vietnam they were too infrequent. That was the main one and the little report from the particular officer who remembered me much later in my military service and the reason he remembered me was - again, you're tired and you're doing all sorts of things.

01:00 Our salt, coffee and sugars were placed in unlabelled tins that we used to get from the mess. Just empty cans with the pop top lids and unlabelled. So we used to get a texta or something and just write on it 'sugar', 'coffee'. Anyway these things had been turned around and it was late and I was tired. And he couldn't sleep so he asked me for a cup of tea. Sure, Ziggy'll make a cup of tea because there's no-one else awake. So I made him a cup of tea, gave it to him. Took one slurp and spat it everywhere. I thought, "A full colonel. I'm going to be

01:30 court-martialled for this." What I didn't realise, I'd put salt instead of sugar into his tea. So as soon as he took it because he gulped one down he almost vomited. I was so petrified. He must have looked at the fear in my eyes and he burst out laughing. And he had a sore back - that's why he was in hospital. "Oh no, the pain, the pain." From then on we got on famously. And one other time I was a sergeant and the Urunga Military Hospital in Brisbane.

02:00 On duty there. We had Keith Payne, the Victoria Cross winner in hospital for a check up and the general wanted to come and see him and pay his respects. So naturally all the staff lined up there and the poor general had to do a gauntlet run through all these people, all the staff, standing to attention. He comes past and he's looking at everyone and he's nodding his head. He stopped in front of me - I didn't know who the general was until I saw his

02:30 eyes. He was the colonel that had been my patient. And he stopped. Looked at me. The first thing I did was salute naturally. He saluted and he stuck his hand out and we shook hands and he said, "How the hell are you, Ziggy?" I thought, "What?" "Oh pretty good, sir." "Good. Are you looking after my man?" "Yes, sir." "Good. Keep it up." And he walked on. Should have seen the look of all the officers etcetera, looking at me, I was only a sergeant. How does a general know you

03:00 by your first name? That sort of attitude. They didn't know the story that led up to it. "Oh I knew him in the war zone. I nearly killed him with a salted drink." But he remembered me. By the time he got back to Australia and I got promoted, he got promoted to Brigadier General. He came in to see Keith Payne.

What was his name?

The general? Brigadier White. Didn't know his first name. We were never on a first name basis. I wasn't.

03:30 I called him sir all the time. So he'd be well retired by now because he was much older than I was. He'd be well into his eighties by now I'm pretty sure.

You mentioned before that you went up to Nui Dat. What was that for?

To record our forward unit. We had like an outpost. It was a solid building out there and I think it was an eight-bed ward. Which means the people you didn't have to evacuate for treatment

04:00 at Vung Tau by surgeons whatever could spend an overnight. Things such as flu. That would knock people. You don't want them spreading it to their own mates in the tent. So you had to isolate them for a couple of days. That. Maybe some serious strains. Something that needed medical treatment for a regular time, we didn't trust the troops to take their own tablets

04:30 that you gave to them. That's one reason why people get hospitalised. Because the doctors can't trust you to make sure you take your medication at the early stages. Because if you don't take it on a regular basis their treatment doesn't work. Gives the bacteria or the viruses or whatever it is a chance to rebuild and hit you harder. So that's what we had out there. And there was a staging post for any flights of evacuations. Some of the evacuations come straight there to be reassessed quickly. And then

05:00 ongoing to our hospital. So I had to photograph that. Take a few records of it. Slept in a hospital bed for once without being sick which was good. But the interesting thing there was that they were surrounded by the actual fighting troops and they had a couple of very huge American cannons there somewhere. Or some massive Australian ones. Knew nothing about artillery. But what they used to do was at certain times they used to fire. They used to fire on targets that they'd

05:30 have on maps. Was basically to deny the enemy coming back to certain positions. So they used to fire on that position and then recalculate the gun and another time fire it at another position. And you're trying to sleep during all this. I didn't realise that all the guys that lived there got used to it. And once I saw a gunner sleeping beside the gun when it went off. Didn't even stir. I thought, "This is fantastic," cause as you were going to the meal when the guns went off and they could be something like fifty -

06:00 poof! the air pressure hits your clothing and you think, "Gee that's powerful." And the funny thing is the

toilets. There were pit toilets. And there used to be a row of them. So when you go to the toilet you're sitting with your mates having a chat. And you're sitting there - I was sitting there by myself and the time - and the gun went off. And the air pressure, all the village went. Mighty things those things can do.

06:30 **So what actually was the purpose of documenting this little clearing station there?**

Purely for our records. 'cause although the guy's there would be taking snapshots of each other and things like that - even I've got a snapshot of me standing outside because people say at home, "You're sending us all these photos, but where are you? Where are you all the time?" So every now and then I got someone to take a photo of me in front of something that I could relate to. It was basically just to record

07:00 what we had. See, some people were thinking ahead to the future or to history or something. As a young guy, at twenty years of age I wasn't. I wasn't really comprehending what I was doing. Just taking photos. I was very happy to do that because it got me around, it got me to see things. I realise the great value of these things now.

So those photographic records went into an archive?

Somewhere. What happened was that the

07:30 black and white ones I kept the negatives and I gave all the first run off proofs to the commanding officer or to whoever he appointed as the unit librarian. So that disappeared. Keeping the negatives - because I bought my own negatives - I had an arrangement with the commanding officer so I could do what I want. That's why I've still got them. The coloured slides that I officially had to take for them, I'd take them, the roll of film would go off to Kodak, would come back. I would check through to make sure the shots had worked. I needed that.

08:00 Otherwise I didn't know if the camera was faulty or anything. Then I passed the whole box of them to whoever, the surgeons or the commanding officer or his librarian or the historian or whoever was there. Because some people took on the role - some people are good at administration. And they'd take on the role of unit historian. In those days I was not interested in that part. I was only interested in taking photos.

So where were they being processed out of Vietnam?

Yeah. Kodak. Here in

08:30 Coburg in Melbourne in those days. So they had to fly all the way here, get processed, and come all the way back there. And thank goodness we never lost any of that. Black and white negatives we had processed in country in the town. Because my facilities we couldn't process them although we could process x-ray negatives etcetera, the solutions weren't good enough to process the actual film negatives at the ASA rating that they were. And they've lasted pretty well. Except they're

09:00 being attacked by spot fungus at the moment.

Did you get very much acknowledgement for your work, for the quality of your work?

No. Just a thank you for the shots. It's just that now when I actually blow up the photos and that you think, "Mm. Twenty years of age, not knowing much, I was taking reasonably good photos." That's what I consider back now for that.

09:30 **How many cameras did you have?**

Only one. It was a Pentax - forget the model. Might have been original SLRs and again no exposure metering etcetera. The model the army had given me was a full manual one. The one I bought over there, I tried to match it as close as I could. But it had the ability to stick an exposure metre on top and it linked in with the speed dial or something on it. So that was an advantage when

10:00 running around the bush. So I tended to use my camera when out in the bush because of the different exposures. But in the operating theatre I definitely used the army one all the time 'cause it was standard lighting and I had no trouble there at all.

When you say out in the bush, whereabouts out in the bush were you going?

It depends. Out into the villages or a number of times we had to fly out to the forward posts because people would either get sick or malaria. We were always so careful with malaria. We'd get people with malaria and

10:30 the last thing - once they start getting a fever you couldn't keep them out there. They're useless. All the guys want to do is either, usually die, they're feeling so ill with it so we had to transport them back where they could be looked after and not harm themselves with it. So you tended to fly out, fly in, and just to document them being put on the chopper and things like that. So I never had to go to an actual casualties of battles to be picked up because we were too busy already at the hospital for that to come in.

11:00 So it was only the routine cases we had to pick up in the field. One time we got a big fright because we

were coming in and the sun was setting. Come in and do a swooping turn and as the chopper's bending across I'm looking straight down and there's rice paddies. I think "Glad I've got my seatbelt on." 'cause you're leaning down. The whole helicopter's on its side and you're looking straight down. But the inertia of the turn keeps you inside without you falling out. Ooh dear me. And all of a sudden, in the rice paddy I see these red flashes going off

11:30 everywhere. "Oh. We're being shot at!" And I look at the crewman sitting by the machine gun. I'm looking at him and I'm looking at him and going, "He's not firing. What a brave Yank." He's chewing his chewing gum. I'm looking down again and "Oh no," I'm almost pooing my pants. Then I realise what was happening as we got a bit lower. The setting sun. The Vietnamese had tinsel on the rice stalks to scare the birds and the red rays of the sun was reflecting these all over the place. I thought there was a hundred guys down there shooting at me.

12:00 But then on another flight we were coming back at night. We were coming back and looking out of it I thought, "Oh my God." You could see the explosions going off in the ground. You could see trees being lifted up and dropping and you think, "Oh my God, they wouldn't be firing unless they thought there was someone down there," and this weird feeling comes over you knowing that there's people right there, right below you, and you're thinking, "It's only our side that's got artillery.

12:30 So we're killing somebody down there." And all of a sudden that's a shock. And all of a sudden another shock. I was wearing the headpiece with the microphones in it and I could hear swearing and cursing in American going on. I thought, "Oh. What's that going on?" We were flying through an artillery barrage. We flew into the wrong area. So that someone caught us on radar and was telling off the pilot. "What the hell are you doing there! Can't stop the barrage. Get out of there." So we just prayed for I think it was about two

13:00 minutes till we zoomed out of that area without getting hit. The Americans have got a photograph of a plane flying and it's just been hit and the tail blowing off. Somebody just took a snapshot and caught that in the photograph. And it could have been us through this artillery thing. So that was a big shock. It took me a couple of days to get over that one. Because it was so close. First of all I'm thinking, "Those people are getting killed down there." And all of a sudden we were the target. Unintentionally

13:30 friendly fire. That was a bit frightening. One of our medics got actually wounded. He was on the flight, just sitting there looking out. All of a sudden a bullet, just grazed his forehead. I thought, "What have I done?" Blood pouring down his face. Again, didn't hear anything, didn't see anything. People just sit there and take shots at Americans. Happens.

14:00 **Can we talk a little bit about your involvement with the local people? You went out to the villages. What were those excursions you were on?**

We had a regular schedule. We were hoping nothing was going on. What happened was, the tendency of any activity or sweeps or any searches that they were doing, that's where we expected the wounded or action to occur.

14:30 So therefore we were always on standby. This was predicted. As diggers we didn't know anything about it. All you knew was that you're there and you're not called out to do anything. Every now and then it was scheduled, "Ziggy, you've got to be on standby. You're going with the - " I forget what we called them. We never called it hearts and minds. But that's what the civilian medical teams did. Something aid to the community. And we'd chosen a number of villages

15:00 that we used to go into and we'd go in with an interpreter, a couple of the doctors and a whole pile of medicine. We'd go in there, document the population. Anyone that could be treated instantly they would. Either with just antibiotic shots and things which again as I say worked miracles to these people. They thought we were great. Did that. Then my job was to - anything that was unusual to take a photograph of it. I took photographs

15:30 of the kids and we went to - in some of these villages there were orphanages and so we went there, shots of the classes, there were kids playing and things. But it was mainly the medical work to do there. One particular place we went to and the anaesthetist has in his book that we went there and there wasn't too much to do and there wasn't many photographs. There was no photographs for Ziggy to take. We thought, "This is very strangely quiet. Usually people

16:00 come out of the woodwork to see us." We looked out and it was somehow intimated that we should get on the Land Rover and go back. And you looked at it and you thought, "No patients. No nothing." You got this funny feeling. "We're maybe not supposed to be here today." What I've woken up since then could have been that because we were doing medical things in the village maybe there was something going on in the village that we could have got into trouble about.

16:30 We only had defensive weapons etcetera. It was encouraged that you shouldn't be here. Please go back. And we did. There's no mention in the book of any premonition or anything. But it's only later on that I woke up that, "Mm. This is the most unusual situation that we faced. Maybe they let us go because of the work we were doing there. They didn't want to interfere with it."

So was it the head man that told you to go?

I think it was the local priest.

17:00 They weren't allowed to say it openly, but it was, "Look, no patients for you today." We thought, "Oh that's very odd," because we were the saviours. We had the medicines and all that sort of stuff. So we had no patients that particular day. I think we all realised we better take the suggestion that we move on and get out of there.

You think there were Viet Cong in the village?

Could have been something there, yes. Because you could feel the unease amongst

17:30 the people right? So something was going on. So I was happy to get out. Not realising till later that really what we'd faced. That's something that's always sat uncomfortably with me. Because we never knew really what went on. It was just so unusual. I thought, "Thank god for that."

How co-operative were the local people with photographing them? You said you photographed them.

Photographing them no big problem

18:00 because there were so many Americans there and things. They just got to it. They wouldn't go out of their way to pose for you or anything. But they wouldn't shy away. Some of the older people might turn their back on you. But that's about all. No. I had no trouble with that at all. But again, we would never go to any of the outlying villages totally unprotected anyway. That was a big no no. So it was mainly in the areas that we actually did some aid we could do things for people. And they were just so glad that we could

18:30 do things for them. So I got kids, happy smiling faces and actually there was always more kids than adults. Again, there was many females, less males, because the males were off fighting if they were of age.

Were you ever able to give them photographs?

No. We had no facility for that. By the time we got back, by the time I had photograph development, you never knew when you were going back to the same area.

19:00 That is something that I believe would have been a good gesture to do. It's like now if I'm taking digital photos of things - like an accident or something unusual - I say, "Have you got an email address? I'll send you a shot?" People say, "Oh really. Okay." And I do. A little bit of goodwill. Unexpectedly someone gets something. "Gee, that's a shot of me." 'Cause Ziggy always carries his camera with him wherever he goes. I've learnt that lesson. Always.

19:30 Keep it with me. That's why I'm very happy that they're producing very tiny, compact cameras with good resolution values that people can carry and carry in your purse and in one of your pockets or something. Nowadays it's good value. Never know when you're going to come across something.

Is that what you do?

Always carry a camera. Yeah. You've seen the one that's a bit bulky at the moment but no I've learnt to do it. The shots I've had published usually have been

20:00 because I've been at the right place at the right time. I photograph people at certain times. I've had photographs in New Idea, Wild Magazine. I've got the cuttings and things at home in relation to it. One in The Age purely because I was on an activity and the photographer's camera malfunctioned. They said, "Oh my God, who's got photos?" "Ziggy has. He's always there."

What about at Vung Tau? Did people get you to take photos

20:30 **for them?**

Not personally, no, because everyone had cameras. That's where I'm like liaising now with my old unit. There were people there I thought, "My God! You took some good photos." Looking at them and wow! And I didn't realise that later in life they started getting interested in photography. And they'd get their photos scanned and things like that. There were people - cameras were beginning to become an accessory that people had then. And people realised, "I'm in a very unusual situation here."

21:00 So people were snapping away. I don't know how many people would have taken their cameras to the jungle and whatever because they wouldn't last long with all that humidity. Mine perished after I got back from Vietnam. Didn't last very long. But a lot of people had their own cameras, yeah. Which is good. So which means a lot of people have got their own photos hidden away nobody knows about yet.

Were you responsible for putting names and dates and captions

21:30 **on the photographs when they returned?**

No. That's why I regret I haven't done them for the things I've kept for myself. No. You look at some photos and you think "Gee, when did that happen? Can I go back to my diary? Can I match the dates at all?" because I wasn't a very consistent diary keeper. 'cause you were so tired usually. But no I didn't. And I was thinking that the unit historian or the - what did we call him? Not the unit librarian, the unit

historian -

22:00 somebody took over the role in the clerical facility to do the things. They also published the little newsletter that we had there. So that's the person that did those sort of things. I think that particular person had ambitions to write science fiction books. I don't know where they got to, whether he ever did. But they used to disappear, all these photos. So every time they appear in books and that it's "Vung Tau

22:30 8 Field Ambulance, Colonel," so and so whatever. "Courtesy Army Archives." I think "Aha, that's mine. Don't believe me, see my negative." But these things are appearing.

So they wouldn't necessarily be accurate, would they? Dates and places.

Well whatever they've done - see I'd hand it to them - if they sat there and put dates on them and put names and things written on the back, that was up to them. Again, I did not foresee the future.

23:00 I did not see the need for it now. And there are people out there now who are experiencing all these interesting things at the moment - our troops in Iraq who probably are snapping away, but not realising what they could be compiling. It's something, a little project of mine, for the future.

I'm just wondering if there's anything more we can cover in Vietnam?

23:30 **Did you take photographs in town?**

Only for personal matters. Just of buildings, the people, some of the shops, things like that.

Never any problems?

No. Not from the people. None at all. As long as you didn't take photos of the people relieving themselves in the streets. Because that's what they did. There was no toilets - no public toilets there. As you learnt.

24:00 So, no, people did it in the street. Every-one turned a blind eye to it. So you naturally didn't, you weren't stupid enough to photograph someone doing that. But, no, I never had any problems with that. It's just that other troops, specially those that don't speak your language like Koreans, you'd be very cautious taking photos of the police there. I've got a shot of some divers coming out of the sea. They looked

24:30 either Vietnamese or Korean divers, military type. I thought, "Oh let's take a quick snap. I didn't know what they were up to." They were coming out of the water with things, but I don't know what they were. But no.

Did anyone in town ever ask you to take a photograph for them or of them?

Out of the population? No. None at all. Because again they were always wary of us. And

25:00 why would you want to take a photo of us sort of thing. Again, there was no way - it wasn't like a polaroid. There was nothing you could give them, return to them. And they, themselves, didn't have cameras. So it's not a sort of thing, "Oh can you take my picture please, sir?" Snap and "Here's your camera back." No. That's something I definitely never came across.

What about the nightlife in Vung Tau? Did you partake of that at all?

25:30 Very rarely. Because you had to be careful - first of all curfew was at ten o'clock, secondly you had to be careful that you didn't drink too much. And almost every bar you went to there was always girls that you could take upstairs, you see, so me I was very careful of all that stuff. And typical there - it still happens now - you sit down the bar, you go in with mates and the girls sidle up and "You buy me tea?" and you think "Yeah. Okay. I'll buy you a drink or something." Just so

26:00 you'll sit there etcetera. But then they try to say there's more things we can do for you sort of thing. And that, that's where their money comes from, and the drink. So you had to be very careful that you didn't drink too much because you'd miss your curfew and then you were in the poo. You'd get picked up by - you can by the Vietnamese police, but it's mostly MPs [Military Police] that you'd be picked up by and you could get charged for outstaying there. There's an interesting factor. On guard duty one night, knowing all these things,

26:30 knowing curfew and all of a sudden about midnight and the ambulance comes roaring in and you hear the message, "Ambulance coming in." "Which one, air?" "No. On the road. Coming in." You see the light flashing. I think one of our ambulances had a light. Flashing around. "Oh my God! Midnight. I'm the only guy there. What do I do?" Because everyone's asleep by this stage. This ambulance comes roaring in, comes big squeal, parks.

27:00 I'm by myself! What am I going to do? I'm expecting all these casualties in this ambulance. 'cause the driver looked serious. So, bugger it, I opened the door, the two doors, they swing open. Who have we got in there coming home after curfew? The officers with some of the nurses all tanked to the gills. They fall out of the thing and "Okay, sir. Okay, ma'am. Off you go." "Thank God it's not a casualty."

27:30 Keep all this quiet.

How did they manage to hitch a lift in the ambulance?

They had it pre-arranged. The ambulances could travel after curfew. So they were somewhere – maybe at the American base – you had to get past curfew to get from the American base back to us. You had to actually drive through town. So they had their arrangements by ambulance. So I thought later on it was quite funny, but it frightened me thinking there was all these casualties coming in. So that was odd. Reminds me of MASH for some reason.

- 28:00 Little things like that. We had people – the humour of it – coming up, we didn't have anyone go psycho as such and dressing up as a woman, but we had two gentlemen try to change their names to each other and the army tried to dissuade them from that and we didn't know what was going on, but mm, we won't ask any questions about that. We had one gentleman have a whole series of Dad 'n' Dave
- 28:30 audio tapes that he used to play. In Mash you hear all sorts of weird things being broadcast from the loudspeakers. We had that. We had stories of Dad and Dave and Mum and Snake Gully and all this sort of stuff. Somebody brought it. We thought it was weird. It was lovely. It was real Australiana being broadcast. Everyone of my vintage had heard Dad 'n' Dave. We grew up with that on the radio. We didn't have TV. So that was one of the hit shows
- 29:00 of that era. So that was something was broadcast. People would try to get away with all sorts of things just to keep the humour up. The officers used to "Oh I didn't see that," and they'd go off. We had something which was well documented. The Australians ambushed a party of – they'd been watching it for a while, they ambushed what later on turned out a family group – killed the adults. But they heard crying off in the distance.
- 29:30 So they went back to have a look and there was a young child sitting in the mud in the torrential rain, weighed down with machine gun bullets over him. "Oh. Okay. Child. We don't kill children." So they took the bullets off him etcetera, brought him back to us. "We don't know what to do with him. Here, you take him." And the nurses adopted him. Little kid. The Red Cross and the physio woman – because he was jaundiced, he had a problem with his eye and one
- 30:00 leg was twisted and that's what kept him alive. Because he was too late to get into the ambush zone. So I think we killed his family, but he was a young gentleman called Mot. And he's in some of my photos and he's in some official stories because I remember traipsing around behind one of our visiting generals and we were told, "Keep Mot out of sight." So we were coming around. I'm always right up to the head of the people. Snap. "Your photo, sir." And what happened was, the general
- 30:30 spied this child shoot across our path. Everyone said, "Oh my God," and the general turned to the commanding officer and he said, "Mm. If that's who I think it is you placed him into an orphanage three months ago, didn't you?" He just kept going. This young fellow was not only recuperated, he had physio on his leg, his colour changed, he had his own Land Rover to take him to school and he basically was adopted as a mascot.
- 31:00 All the guys used to look after him and the nurses used to. He used to live on base. Whatever happened to him later, I don't know. But he certainly recuperated and he knew all the swear words too by the time the guys had finished with him. But that was a very unusual thing, but something you'd expect Mash to do, a think like that.

Where were you doing guard duty? Was that on the main gate?

Sometimes. I've done a couple of duties on the main gate. We had to put people on there.

- 31:30 One of the impressions I got because we got – remember I mentioned we had the F1 submachine gun and nine millimetre rounds – we thought they were pretty good up to a particular stage until we got some wounded in. Some I think they were Vietcong, but we'd shot at them and they'd come in. And somebody said, "I can't imagine it. I emptied my gun at him and look, he's still alive." When we took the clothes off the particular chap – he had another injury –
- 32:00 he had bruises on his back. It was during the raid the guys go and knocked him over and that, but what it was, the bullets never penetrated. He had some bruises from the bullets on his back. After I saw that I thought, "I don't trust this gun if it's only going to bruise somebody." I don't know what distance they fired at, whatever. After that you thought, "Oh gee." But when you were on guard duty you had to stand at a rifle. You felt so powerful with that 'cause you knew what that could do.
- 32:30 You thought, "Oh. They could wheel a tank at me, I'll shoot the tank," which you couldn't, but you felt so good having a real powerful rifle. It did give you a sense of power, a big rifle. But that's on that duty. Quite often the main duty was within perimeter within your camp. You had to do that. There were certain things you had to maintain. Certain heating appliances you had to keep running, a few things like that.

The hospital was right on the beach yeah?

Very close.

- 33:00 We were in the sand dunes. But it was enough distance back that anyone had to get through another unit to get to us. And there was a whole series of barbed wire entanglements and things like that to get

to us. But we were in a very safe position so the only warnings we had was where for some reason bodies used to get washed up. There used to be a big clamp down, close, until they made sure the area was safe. The discomforting thing was - and those were the days that you used oil as a sun tanning lotion. Nobody knew anything about

33:30 UV rays or anything. So you'd go down the beach for a bit of suntan, oil yourself over, lie on the beach on a towel and the Yanks would fly over thinking "Ha, look at those Aussies!" So they lower their chopper. So what happens when the chopper gets close to the sand? All the sand blows all over the oil and you get up and you try to go back to camp like a sandman. We didn't like that at all, but the Yanks thought it was very funny.

Were you able to swim?

Yes.

34:00 We were. All sorts of odd things in the sea. I was put into hospital for two days because I thought I got bitten by a sea snake. Something got me in the face and they couldn't work out what it was, but one side of my face was all - not frozen, what's it called? Paralysed. I couldn't do anything. And I was a little bit sick so they thought you've been bitten by something in the sea that could have been a sea snake.

34:30 They checked me out. They did blood tests and things, they had me under observation for thirty-six hours or something. Then they kicked me out. Because I got better. But a lot of sea lice. So you'd be swimming and you'd go "Ow." All these little prickling feelings all over you. These little sea lice would get to you. Some guys tried to do a bit of surfing, but it was definitely not a surf beach, the South China Sea. You'd get all sorts of rubbish washed up and bits of bodies and that's the part that you didn't want to go into the water sometimes, that part.

35:00 That was one of the first times when we got there we got up in the morning not realising there was a limit and a fishing zone. Didn't realise until much later. So all the fishing boats - fleets of them, hundreds of them, they're out there and you're looking at them "We're being invaded." That's what I thought on the first night. Then someone said, "No. They're only fishing vessels. They're only allowed to come between certain hours and fish that zone." But other times

35:30 things that you always - it got you down sometimes because you'd finish your shift, you could sit there, you'd have your meal, you're waiting for the movie to start, you'd be having a beer - at that stage we could sit up on the roof if we wanted to and you'd be watching out in the distance right on the horizon back over land and you'd see by moonlight huge plumes of smoke rising into the sky. And what it was, it was American bombers dropping huge bombs into those areas.

36:00 And you could see that. Made you feel uncomfortable because you'd think they wouldn't be bombing it unless they think there's troops there. This odd feeling that you're sitting there having a beer, this is real life, right now, and that's happening. Then sometimes you could see choppers shooting tracer, a beautiful coloured iridescent red spiralling down from the choppers some targets out there. And again, just sitting there having a beer. And part of the bombing was, you'd go

36:30 to bed. You knew something was going on. By this stage we had concrete bases. You'd lie down in the bed. You can't hear anything. But every now and then the whole ground just trembles and you know it's the sticks of bombs hitting the ground out there. That's where you're reminded it's still going on. I'm sleeping. It's going on. They're still pounding, they're still doing things. That sort of caused you a little bit of uneasiness for that. The worst thing is now, that

37:00 everything is finished there and we're becoming trading partners and all this sort of stuff. You think, why? Why? And people in those days wouldn't have been able to predict it. You thought you were doing your duty and all this and thirty forty years later you're trading partners. You can go back for a holiday now. Have a look at all these areas. I don't particularly want to go back to that area at all.

37:30 That's what it was. You think, the futility of it all. We, as young men, didn't mind the adventure. And your big thing was that you got out there without getting hurt. That was the most satisfying thing. The adventure part of it was, look, you'd do things that you would never do in civilian life. That was the thing the army always said. "Stop complaining about all the pain you're having etcetera. People would be paying to do this." You know, flying around in helicopters, flying rifles,

38:00 getting all this exercise, camping out, getting bitten by bull ants. All of this. People would be paying to do this. "You're lucky. We're paying you to do this." So I never regret it.

So that was supposed to boost your morale?

It was an excuse to keep us quiet because a lot of the time when you're in the field you're terribly uncomfortable

38:30 and you've got to put up with it. Nothing else that you can do. It always hits you with pride, "You're special. You're combat troops. You're field troops." You know? You're not office wallahs. Little things like that.

Did you ever question your reason or Australia's reason for being there?

Not at the time. Never. I had a very strong belief in that. I had no problems with it at all. It's just that when we came back to Australia and continued my military service

39:00 here I very quickly learnt that you never go anywhere in your uniform if you could at all avoid it. Never. And the dead give away was when we were in Townsville - our unit moved to Townsville later. And you had to wear - you could wear shorts, the uniform, and they had to use up what you call putties. You didn't wear gaiters, you were putties who are those bandages which are wrapped around up to about there like

39:30 socks over your boots. We thought, "How old British is this?" Just they had the store so they had to get rid of them so they nominated that as an official uniform. We thought, "This is ..." but we had to follow army instructions. The only problem was that when you went into town people always knew you were military because you had this funny white leg and you had this white stripe down the side of your face from the slouch hat. So you couldn't even get away then. Not wearing uniform, but the suntan always gave you away.

40:00 People would know. Plus you tend to talk funny. Even to this day people at work say, "Ziggy, stop that." I'm talking to people and I say, "Roger." "Stop it." That's the only thing I can't get rid of. It's the same thing if I'm talking to police or if I'm hearing in a conversation somewhere "Ah. He's a cop." It's from the way people talk. Once you're in a couple of years there's speech pattern that you get into and you use that. And military

40:30 can get into that badly and you can spot it a mile away.

It's a kind of reporting style.

Yeah. Very short, to the point and ...

Were you getting any news from home? Were you writing letters?

Yes. Many letters. As many letters as you could. We had no problem with mail. There used to be about a two week turn around if you sent off a letter to get an answer back. That was quite regular. So you tried to send as many photos as you could.

41:00 All of that was quite good. We had no problems with that at all.

Tape 9

00:30 **I know it's getting on so we'll maybe do fifteen twenty minutes and then we'll wrap up. Can you tell us about - your tour was, what, you were there from ... can you give us a - ?**

'67. '68. So we arrived in country at the beginning of April '67 and I left there in February, could have been February 28th

01:00 of '68. I left because - I'll just check with my diary, I was one of the later people to go. I didn't mind because I was a regular soldier but I noted in my diary saying, "Things are getting a little bit depressing. All my mates are gone. All these new people are rolling in that you don't know and you know that you're not going to establish friendships because you're going to go in relation to it." Although I had applied to stay on. Because I got quite used to it. I got quite used to it after that. And then I realised later the reason why

01:30 they wanted to get all the Regs home was that they put us into a training role after that. They sent us to units that we could actually train others because we'd had the experience out there. The National Servicemen with the experience all left. They got home. They're out. So that was the element. So when we were prepared we were flown by military aircraft to Saigon and then we had to hang around waiting for the Qantas flight. It was 707. Sheer luxury. Actually

02:00 they actually had air hostesses which was most unusual. Because prior to that they only put stewards on board the aircraft. Too many men coming back from a war zone. Anyway, the drinks were free. Again I can't drink much so that was all right. I was more interested in the aircraft and things like that, but before we left we'd had a few drinks and we were sitting up in one of the lounges up top and it's the first time someone tried to teach me to play cards. Never played cards. Took up smoking, but could never get the sense or the interest in cards.

02:30 So we're sitting at the airport ready to go and all of a sudden the sky lights up and all these flares going off and everything. After a few drinks we said, "Hey, it's a going away party. They're sending us home. Looking at them, they're celebrating that we're going home. Isn't that great?" And all of a sudden we were shuffled aboard the aircraft really quickly. We took off and it was during the air we suddenly found out, "Fellas you might be interested or you might not be interested. This is the captain speaking. But we've just had a message that what we believe is a Tet Offensive has just started in

03:00 Saigon. You are leaving." And everyone says, "Hey cheers!" We flew out when all of the activity was starting. And that was the closest they got in to Saigon. We left just as it all started.

But not realising just how serious things actually were.

Correct. We'd been through one that didn't come anywhere near us and didn't affect us, but this one actually hit Saigon and on the night that we flew out. So we wouldn't have got back to Australia.

Those last weeks there you mention

03:30 **that things were winding down for you. It's almost like full circle you talked about when you were there and the guys were on their way and were slowing down and counting off the days. Is that something you did? We've heard some people talking about just marking on the calendar one more day to go.**

Although we had calendars, yes, there was a countdown calendar in various guises. But yeah it was counting down, but with me I didn't know the final date until I think it was only a couple of weeks beforehand. All I was told was,

04:00 'You're a Reg [regular army]. We're going to schedule you for when it suits us.' "That's alright." Because I had formally volunteered to stay on. I thought, "Well why send me back? I'm quite comfortable here thank you." Not realising what they wanted with me in the future. So took it on and left.

Just a couple of general questions about your time in Vietnam. You might have mentioned before, the nashos, how cohesive do you think the unit was with the nashos and the regular guys?

04:30 **How well were they able to muck in together?**

Very well. I never noticed any difference. What happened was sometimes you'd be going out with the guys and they'd say, "When are you getting out, Ziggy?" And I'd say, "Getting out when? I'm a Reg." "Oh are you?" This is how well it was. You didn't know who was - you made the assumption that most of the guys were national servicemen. It's only through conversations - but the way they worked, the way they did things, the way they thought,

05:00 it was all one unit, one military force. And one of the things I've realised since then and later when we were training people was that in reality no matter what you may hear, if a person was really fair dinkum he didn't want to go, he didn't go. The Australians, if they really felt you were genuinely against going there they - I don't think they wanted the feedback

05:30 or the flak coming back to them that they sent somebody who was really not wanting to go there. Most people went with the idea, adventure. I'll put up with all the pain and the training. I'll risk it. I'll go there for that. Because the other little bit of a come on was war service leave at the end of it. So that was a nice little enticement to people too. So yes I didn't see anything and I didn't see any difference. I thought, no, in our unit there was I don't think

06:00 there was even jokingly any differentiation between the troops. Because I think we worked in so well.

So at the end of your time in country, looking back, had it just been an adventure or was it more?

Well I looked at it as a job because I still had another four years to go. So I looked at it as a career move you might say. A very - well I looked at it, I was so fortunate I believed

06:30 because, look, I'd just joined the army, did the training, bang, I'm over there and bang, I'm coming back as a veteran. I thought, "This is all right. I wonder how that'll stand me in good stead for my future military service?" Which it did. It was favourable as a result of it. And, no, I don't regret it. The effect of people dying unnecessarily and us really losing the war, that's the sort of thing that sticks in your mind.

07:00 And the reaction, the most reaction is the homecoming - there was no homecoming for a starter. It was the effect of what Australians thought of you. It's almost like that ad they have on TV at the moment, the "Oh, you're a banker," and everyone quietens down at the barbecue. "Oh yeah. But I'm with St George." Oh fantastic. It was that sort of thing. As soon as you're anywhere in a crowd if you were in a new social group or anything. "Oh you were in Vietnam?" Ooh. Place

07:30 goes quiet. You think "Uh oh, what am I going to get hit with here?" Some of the young bucks would come up and "Oh what was it like?" And other people, don't want to talk to him. That became so clear and so apparent. A person who grew up with this attitude that if you served your country and you did the right thing and I suppose didn't carry out massacres and things like that, hey, your country would welcome you and reward you for what you did and for what you put out. Didn't happen that way at all.

Was that

08:00 **something you were anticipating? Was news coming through while you were in Vietnam about that growing sentiment?**

Yes. Because we were lectured of how to behave when we got back to Australia if we were in uniform. But because our unit was broken up into bits and pieces - we were not shipped home in a ship, we never came home as a complete unit which is what the battalions did. To keep it as a cohesive force. So

they marched off ships. And they went straight into a parade and things like that which we didn't do.

08:30 The thing that I noted so very clearly in my mind was that we flew from there overnight. Landed in the morning in Mascot, I think it was, Airport. Did the clearance through customs and then immediately onto a plane into Melbourne. So I flew into Melbourne and there was a few welcoming people because I was able to warn people I'm coming in.

09:00 All the garbage and the stuff that I was bringing home. Projector, huge box, and a slide stand and things like that and got in and a few people welcome me, my parents and my sister and that was great. Then you go home, you sleep in your own bed at home and you wake up and you think, "What happened?" You hadn't gone. You've dreamt all this. You're back in your

09:30 own home bed - because nobody moved in or anything with my parents' home. It was my own bed. I hadn't - what happened? It was this odd, odd feeling. And you looked down at your shoes because you had army shoes still because you'd come off. And you'd look at it and you'd see shiny black shoes, but look at the dust around the little rim on that side. That's dust. That's Vietnamese dust. I was there. It took me a week to settle down to say,

10:00 "Hang on, nine months I was away. And all of that happening and I'm back here with people who could not appreciate one day of what we'd gone through." That was weird. It was a really weird thing. The guys coming home on the ships, they had a couple of weeks to get their minds sorted out and mentally prepare and within twenty-four hours, we're bang from one bed to the other. To me I think that was a long lasting

10:30 shock, just that realisation. This is where I think people can be tipped a little bit overboard. My mother and father were involved - my father was killed in a crash on the Hume Highway. My mother was severely injured. There was a time there that I was out of it for at least - it was probably after the funeral, but I was out of it. I still functioned. Still did my job. Worked in the Sheriff's Department at that stage.

11:00 I did my job, but it's a blank and I got worried because I was not real. There was no reality there. Similar to that situation. So that concerned me and I thought, "Phew." And I thought I was tough. If that's affected me physically wow, I can appreciate why some of the guys have never resolved it.

It sounds like a feeling of incredible

11:30 **displacement. When you go away it's the adventure, but you know you're coming back so there's safety and when you come back it's this place where you're supposed to belong**

As if it never happened. That was the thing. It's a strange feeling. This is why now I think some of us are saying it did happen, we've got to document it, we've got to do things about it so maybe somebody can learn from it. Maybe people like yourselves

12:00 who are documenting these things now, whether somebody could put that into some sort of context for future people who are going to go and do these things, that there is some facility for them to be - the big thing nowadays is what's called counselling et cetera and surprisingly if you're able to talk something like this through, somebody sits you down beforehand and says these are the sorts of things that you're going to encounter, this is what's going to happen, this is afterwards, this is what you're going to feel - you're mentally prepared and you're ready

12:30 for all these little nuances of this going to happen, that's going to happen. If the person who arrives in country I suppose not with the attitude that I had of terrible grief and all this awful stuff that's going to happen - so I was always elated the awful stuff never happened to me and that I survived. So hopefully things do improve for people.

What sort of assistance was there when you came back to help in that adjustment?

None.

13:00 Went straight back home. Got a payment. Stayed at home because I had something like five or six weeks annual leave due to me. It was a long period. I had special leave etcetera after that. And just from there got a telegram or a letter, "Okay, you're leave's finishing. Report to such and such an area, you've just been assigned to 2 Field Ambulance."

13:30 The unit we replaced. Okay. So still in the military area and back to Puckapunyal. Oh my god! And just back into it, but here in Australia, so a totally different feel.

Was there ever any possibility of doing another tour in Vietnam?

Although I had volunteered and I would have gladly gone back, what they had scheduled was that they were losing so many national service people with experience they needed as many regular

14:00 soldiers who were signed up for six years to continue with it. So they shifted our unit from Puckapunyal to Townsville to fill up a new, totally new area, they called Lavarack Barracks near the Cook University up there. So we were one of the first units to march in there. I was there only about less than nine months getting used to the place, getting used to the heat, then I got transferred out of there. And I realised why, transferred down to Brisbane straight into a

14:30 training facility. Because at Urunga Hospital in Brisbane was one of the teaching areas for medics going to Vietnam. Or who'd been scheduled to go to Vietnam so eventually in Brisbane itself I was posted about three times. I was there for three years, posted three times in that period, one was 8 Battalion.

15:00 There. Urunga Hospital. Oh. I moved three times. They're the two main units. But it was at Urunga Military Hospital I got promoted to sergeant. That's where I was doing all the teaching. No. That was good. Because you teach people this is the way it's done and then they expect you to say, "That's the way it's taught, but what really happens in the real world." So you've got to prepare. This is what I thought, this element of

15:30 preparing them for what you knew was going over there would have been great assistance to them.

So what were you training them in mainly?

Medical stuff. Ward procedures. Because that's what they were scheduled for. No matter what kind of a medic you are, you have to know ward procedures. These were the guys who were scheduled to do medical assistant work, not medical orderly. So not administrative, but the hands on medical staff. We had to teach them to do injections and

16:00 here's the concept which you get which struck home to me again. You've probably seen this from a show - I don't know if you ever saw a show called Gomer Pyle where supposedly he's a very dumb character, but he's one of these, he always gets out of trouble and all that because he's got this whimsical, homespun philosophy and he's a good guy. Military have a thing that - you hear a lot of things bad, but here's the thing. If a person pulls their weight people will look after them. In this particular unit we had one guy

16:30 in this training group - "How did those psych guys let him through?" He's just not bright enough. We helped him with his homework and he used to drink like a fish and here's an example - we'd stand him up in class because he'd fall asleep. And he'd snore standing up. He was one of these guys. And he wasn't under any duress. So he'd do that. When he was practising hitting the orange with giving an injection, what did he do? He'd inject his own fingers. So he was the butt of everyone. But because he

17:00 was genuine guys would go out of their way to help him. And they'd rescue him from town at night when he's had too much to drink. All these things. So people look after each other. So that was good.

And was it in Brisbane that you met Val?

Yes. Again because of the social and ethnic background the first thing I did was hunt out other Lithuanians in Brisbane and sure enough there was a particular group.

17:30 They had mass at a particular church so I turned up there one time knowing what sessions they were on. Val likes this story. Typical young guy always looking out for young women and that. Here's a group. You're waiting there. Because I was only made aware of a particular family there. They were older than me, but they knew my parents. They said, "We'll look after you. Come along

18:00 to church, we'll introduce you to a few people." So I'm standing there, not in uniform - no way in uniform. Standing there and seeing all these young people coming in church etcetera. "Oh gee, now who's that?" At that stage tall, reddish hair and mm nice. "I wonder who she is," sort of thing with her two other sisters. From there on I got to know them. We were in the same social group, folk dancing group,

18:30 not basketball - volley ball team and a few things like that. The choir. And so I had a ball in Brisbane. Social activities all the time. Stuff like that and it was great. So that developed and eventually we were married there and so now we're all down in Melbourne. All the sisters actually ended up in the southern states.

You were talking about that difficulty of coming back and readjusting and

19:00 **people not being able to understand what you'd been through. Was there anyone other than perhaps friends in the army that you could talk to your experiences about?**

I think the worst things was that you couldn't - I mean, you'd talk to people like we're talking now, they'd ask you questions because they were interested, it was an unusual thing. But you could see the look in their eyes that they just couldn't understand what you were saying.

19:30 It's like you say with military people who'd been there you say well look there's certain things you don't have to say because you all know it. It's an instant bond. You know it and as I said, there's no need to talk about it. But no, there was no-one. Unless they were over there at about the same time as you. Because each year had a different effect I believe. People from 1 Aust. Field Hospital had a different experience than what we did and the people prior to us would have had a very vastly different experience

20:00 to us. So it changed as it got along. Plus it was the effect of what was happening in Australia changed also. And influenced people from that. But no there was nothing we could go and talk to somebody who understood about these things. What you did was, because, regular army soldier, you're a sergeant by that stage and "No, I'm not affected by anything. No mate. I'm pretty good."

20:30 Pretty tough.

So you were promoted not long after coming back were you? Is that when you went to Brisbane?

Yes I got promoted very quickly from Lance Corporal to Corporal then to Sergeant at the hospital where I was an assistant instructor, doing it there. Yeah. That was good. No it was just because by that stage we were getting into 1972, so

21:00 my six years were coming up and was married in '72 and decided not to continue with it because all of a sudden Vietnam was finishing. And for some reason I felt well Vietnam's gone, why would you want to stay in the military? I decided to go. I decided not to renew my contract. I don't regret it because I went then into army reserves and did the officer training.

So you're saying because of

21:30 **the failure in Vietnam meant that the military wasn't for you? What was the connection?**

No. It's because what happened was, in the Vietnam days money was pouring into the military. You had things to do always because the preparation was that if you were a soldier that's all the training was geared to Vietnam. As soon as Vietnam closed, because that was the time that I joined the army reserve, money was being cut, training was being cut.

22:00 You were getting people joining the army reserve - people who would have been of good value - but the interest factor, the training wasn't there. So all these advertisements of flying around in choppers and doing this and that - false advertising - it wasn't there. And you realise you're wasting your time. Although I was offered a position to go back because at that stage I changed from medical corps to ordnance which is supplies, I was a supply officer,

22:30 my whole attitude had changed and I said, "No. If you can't do something which is real - " I had experienced - it wasn't a good life, but it was the way the military functioned and I'd experienced that and in peace time that's not there. This is why it would be quite different now with all the effects of the Australian Army doing and I know my sister was very interested because that's when I think Timor had just started while she was in the forces. And to her everything was

23:00 new. So she continued with it for quite a while. She died while she was a major, so that's good.

Maybe just in wrapping up, how, what effect ultimately do you think that experience had on you - especially the army experience, but Vietnam itself? How did that, what influence did it have on you and the paths that you took after?

I've often thought about this, but I think

23:30 first of all my religious attitude changed. Look, I'll say even now I'm a big Christian. I believe in everything that I've been taught in relation to that. But not the ceremonial trappings. Especially of Catholicism. No. That's out the door. Big believer. Big believer in everything I was taught etcetera. Always willing to help out in those areas and things like that. But, no, that's changed. Because what we were confronted with there

24:00 and with the concessions we had, supposedly religiously wise on eating meat on Fridays and all these sort of things, all that ceremonial stuff, I thought, "No. If they're willing to change their minds so quickly on these things and they say that's no longer a mortal sin - so you mean everyone who died prior to that is in hell? No, hang on fellas, things are a little bit different." Ah my sister-in-law.

Sorry, your religion?

Yes so I think that took a big beating

24:30 or a shaking or a change in relation to that. Still go to church on occasion. But, no, that was different. I'm a big believer in - what do you call it? - Salvation Army. Because they have this thing called Everyman's which is always at the military side of things. They had an Everyman's

25:00 in Vietnam where you could go and digress from the military. Read books or have a coffee or something like that to hide away yourself and they had a library and the guy would come around in his Salvation Army trappings and offer you things and it was good. They're always there. They're doing things and they're not pushing anything. I thought, "This is good." So I'm a big believer in that area. The other thing is I suppose

25:30 this concept of duty, that you have a duty - you know, you make a promise, you complete things - I think that was reinforced to me because I think when I came back I found so many people did not abide by that concept or that principle any more and when I actually left the military I found that the way the military operated there was very set procedures. So no matter where you went in Australia, if you were in the army, the only difference, the only thing you didn't know, was the local

26:00 by-laws, the local culture in that particular area. But you could function in your job because it was Australia wide. And there was a system to operate that didn't change throughout and you felt so much

at home in it and you felt that you were always confident and capable in what you were doing. But when you move in the civilian life you might go to one company as one particular role. You change to another company doing that particular role and things are vastly different. You think, "Two roles, how come they work so differently?"

26:30 'Cause they're led by different people with different ideas, different concepts. The thing that I picked up was the way the military teach, the way they get the information through - remember it's to the lowest denominator they have to teach. And what I've found in civilian life in commercial areas now that no, they dispense with all of that. There are good ways to train and there are ways not to train at all and a lot of companies don't train.

27:00 I shifted around after that. I worked at the Austin Hospital for seven years after leaving. I've driven taxis for half a year, worked as a tour guide on camping safaris throughout Australia for six months - that was prior to getting married. We got married late '72 so I was already out but the marriage had to be set off for a long period because we had to get all the relatives in one spot at one particular time.

27:30 Those sort of things. Yeah and I suppose I've never fully settled down in commercial life. Although I've worked in a hospital for seven years - as the equipment officer eventually and office and all that and looking after their millions and millions dollars of equipment. Moved from that into sales. Went through a number of organisations in the outdoor sales industry. Because as soon as I came back I was into bush walking and going out bush.

28:00 Then eventually because these outdoor industries tended to be very small because Australia hasn't got the population for that area, they tended to fail depending how they were managed to go out. So eventually the job came up in the last industry I worked. I was made a promise to start, the promise was never kept. So I was looking for something. Then the job came up as sheriff. I thought, "What the hell's a sheriff?" I knew the American sheriff, what's this? So I went to one of their evenings and I thought, "This is interesting. Let's see if I can apply for it."

28:30 I applied for it. Did all the tests, got it. Oh you beauty. Good pay. Take home car. Unfortunately it has badges on it. Did that for five years. And again that's an area that I could use some of my military skills and that's an area that they had a few Vietnam veterans in. Cause we were permitted being in an official uniform to wear our ribbons. You quickly learnt who it was, who your mates were. And then we had very experienced guys there.

29:00 And the Sheriff's Office did not use them. The Sheriff's Office, people who were in the army reserve - at that stage I was an officer in the army reserve, another guy was a major in the army reserve - they wouldn't even give us sergeant rank. You thought, "What in the world?" Because we stood up and said things. We stood up and spoke for ourselves. The other guy who was the Army Reserve major was our association president so he spoke up. We don't like people who speak up.

29:30 So therefore no promotion, no nothing. That guy is now in charge of Melbourne City Parking Enforcement. Things like that. So he's moved. So I after five years got a package, left. I won't go into what happened, but there are certain things have been hidden from government - not my role to go into it and to reveal them. If they ever have a royal commission things can be revealed, but I'm not a whistleblower yet.

So I don't have to pay those fines that I've got building up, do I?

30:00 In Victoria we'll hunt you down. If I'm on the books I'll find you. So what happens now - again that's a subject I'm at home with. I'm very comfortable in the various laws involved there. I've ended up being just a call centre operator. I see things that are just not operated properly. I can't say anything because I've been sort of scheduled. So obviously, look, I'm 57, I've been scheduled into a position that they use statistics

30:30 and what they'd doing is, the older members are trying to get out of the system because they can manipulate the young people. Young people, look, I am finding, don't really have a sense of duty, commitment, certainly don't keep their promises and a few things like that and things are changing, the world is changing a little bit fortunately. Not the way us older people think it should go. Therefore that's

31:00 where I'm at, at the moment. Still earning a living. I need to earn a living to pay my house off. But I've never regretted my time in the military. Learnt a lot of things that I am still using those things, but other people cannot understand these things. There is one person in our building who is a Duntroon graduate working as a consultant there and he and I are the only people who can talk to each other and understand each other.

31:30 **Well hopefully with today, what you've done today, you'll be able to increase that understanding even just a little bit. I think you've managed to do that. Anything else you'd like to say, Ziggy, before we call it a day?**

No. Not really. I think I've covered many many things.

You have.

But you've prompted me for. Yeah.

No. It didn't require too much prompting. It's been really good. Thank you, Ziggy.

INTERVIEW ENDS