

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Barry Fairbrother - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/2210>

### Tape 1

00:39 **I would just like to ask Barry, where you were born and where you grew up, if you could describe your early life?**

I was born in Townsville, Townsville General Hospital. My mother and father are both Townsville people. My grandparents were yeah, one

01:00 was Townsville and one was a Pom [English]. I grew up in South Townsville for the first nine years or so, went to South Townsville School. And my father bought a farm which was in South Townsville now, it would be where the Dalrymple Hotel is. But it was all bush then. We worked out there on the farm. He also worked on the wharf as well as starting the farm until he got that going and then he left the wharf and went on the farm full time.

**What was South Townsville like?**

South Townsville was

01:30 known as the Mud Pickers, there was a lot of salt pan. A lot of the area was built on salt pan. They used to reckon we picked out the mud from between our toes as we walked around. So were known as the Mud Pickers in South Townsville, it wasn't as well connected to the rest of the town as it is now. There was only the one bridge, Victoria Bridge, which used to be a swing bridge.

**Was the Mud Pickers like a funny thing, was it a derogatory term?**

I suppose in a sense it was, but the people themselves never took it as

02:00 a, even today you will hear old, old people talking about the Mud Pickers. No it was a fact of life. It was a salt pan area, the king tides would come up to our house, up the gutters you know.

**What sort of a house did you live in?**

We were on a 4 foot type house, on 4 foot stumps. A lot of houses were the higher houses, 7 foot stumps.

02:30 **7 foot because the tides would come up?**

And because it was cooler. To get up higher and use underneath your house as well, store things or get away from water. Just generally make it a better living.

**And were these the classic Queenslander type houses?**

Yes, yes. Now you find more built on the ground. I don't know why, but the older houses were more comfortable, but you couldn't afford to

03:00 build them how. The timber that was involved in the manufacturing of those houses.

**Tell me about living in a Queenslander in a tropical city?**

Well, we never had fly screens or anything of that nature, my brothers and I slept out on the veranda, and it was open to the elements so to speak. If it rained you had a roll down blind. But, it was quite open not like now where you have it all closed in and air conditioning. You

03:30 have to find the favourable breeze so to speak.

**And what about the kitchen, what sort of stove did your mother have?**

Wood stove. Yeah and it was like recessed from the kitchen, like an alcove and actually set in there. It was alright in winter, a bit hot in summer. Plus it had to have a tin underneath it, a flat tin so if any embers fell

04:00 out of the fire place it was on the tin floor and not on your timber floor.

**Being a wooden house I guess it would be a bit dangerous. So, because it would have been a bit hot to cook up here, did you find you ate different meals or?**

No, you still had your traditional roast of a Sunday, your roast pork or your roast beef and potatoes, pumpkins and all that sort of stuff, which we don't have as much these days, but in those days that was the

04:30 standard thing, everyone had their hot lunch on Sunday. It was a bit strange, but that was the way it happened, I think it was more tradition than anything else. Yeah.

**And you mentioned you had some brothers, what ages are you, where do you fit in?**

My older brother is 4 years older, the second 2 years older and there's about a 2 year gap between the 3 of us.

**So you are the baby?**

I am the baby yeah. Bub is my mother's nick name.

**What's your mother's name?**

My mother used to call me Bub,

05:00 for the baby.

**Tell me some of the things that you and your brothers got up to when you were just 9 or 10?**

Well that could land me in jail. Well I didn't walk for about 6 or 8 months, because we were over at the rubbish dump one time, they used to burn the dump in those days, and we saw this little bit of a burnt out metal car, and we thought would be nice, and we stood on this little bit of iron to get to it, only the iron sunk into the fire and our

05:30 feet got burnt. So that was a bit of a drama few months but yeah. We had to keep going to hospital and get our skin peeled off. Another time we thought we had found a bottle of honey, only it wasn't honey it was ant poison. We gave that a bit of a lick and then we had to have the bit tubes down into our stomachs and pumped out.

**You found that at the dump too?**

No, no, that was at home. Dad had it out on the

06:00 veranda, but he apparently just used to put a bit around for the ants. It was like a honey type substance. Tried a bit.

**Obviously you had a need to go to the hospital or the doctors as a kid, what was medical treatment like then?**

Yeah well, I really don't know I just went there and they done the treatment but yeah, we were

06:30 pretty happy about it, Mum didn't seem to have any great dramas about it, they were free hospitals in those days, Queensland Government Hospitals. They were pretty good, I was pretty happy with them.

**You were in South Townsville, where was the hospital in relation to you?**

In North Ward. Down near the Strand between Castle Hill and the Strand there. Mum had to walk us or take us on the - she had a push bike, put us on the carrier on the back of the

07:00 push bike and take us that way. We never had a car, Dad never had a car in those days.

**So was it like a little trolley that she had at the back of the bike?**

It was like a little carrier on your push bike, or a carrier on the back of it. Or Dad took us and he would sit us on his bar, the bar of his push bike. When you got off, if you were there for any length of time, your legs had gone to sleep.

**What about you boys, did you have your own push bikes?**

07:30 Yeah. But Dad basically got them from the dump, he'd go to the dump and he might find a frame, and he'd buy a bit and might find something else. That's how we got our bikes, until we got older and could afford our own.

**It's funny because dumps these days are really into recycling all their stuff, so back when you were growing up people did that as well?**

Oh, people - that's why they have got scavenge rights to the dumps now, people, someone buys scavenge

08:00 rights because everyone used to go and have a pick through. What might be your trash might be my treasure sort of thing. You might not have a use for a particular item, but I might have a use for it. And

in those days a lot of people went to the dumps and as they thought, got some good things.

**Besides the car that caused you some pain that you tried to get, is there any other top thing that you or your Mum and Dad got from the dump?**

Not that I can recall of any great significance.

08:30 But it was a regular thing.

**So what else did you get up to as kids?**

Well, we used to go swimming in Bundy, that's where I learnt to swim, it's a salt water creek over in South Townsville. Now they tell you to be aware of the crocs [crocodiles] but in those days we never even, crocs never crossed our mind. We used to go down to the creeks swimming, where we shouldn't of course.

09:00 **So there were crocs in the area?**

Oh yes, but being kids you don't - that's never going to happen.

**Did you ever see any as a kid?**

No, never saw any, but I wouldn't be too keen to go swimming there now. No.

**If it was a salt water creek did you go fishing?**

Oh yeah we'd go fishing. You used to have the old string lines in those days. There were no mono lines out. And you

09:30 used to get the old bit of cork and go and catch a feed of bream [breed of fish], there was no shortage, there's no shortage of fish.

**What sort of fish would you catch in that water?**

Mainly bream, whiting. You get the odd cod and that but mainly bream and whiting.

**Healthy populations in those days?**

I thought so, we always come home with a feed, yeah. But in those days you didn't take more than you - of course you only had ice

10:00 fridges sort of thing, we didn't have an electric fridge. We had to wait until the old ice man come around and put the ice in your fridge.

**So how often would he come around?**

About every second or third day I believe he would come around. I can remember when we first got our first electric fridge. You would lay in bed of a night and you know how they go through a cycle, and it went off and Mum and Dad thought that the fridge had stopped, but it was just going through its cycle.

10:30 **How did it change your house having a fridge in the house?**

I think it made it easier for Mum. All we could see from it was the colder drinks. As far as keeping food and that went, it improved their lifestyle yeah.

**You must have got extra treats that you couldn't have before?**

Ice cream. Mum used to make her own ice cream and kept it in the freezer, yeah.

11:00 That improved things for us I suppose.

**Did it mean that you could eat meat more often because of having a freezer, or was it a fridge/freezer or just a fridge?**

Fridge/freezer. Snow Queen. I think we ate more meat in those days than what we eat now. Meat was more of a standard fare, either mutton or beef than we eat now I believe. Yeah we ate a fair bit of meat.

11:30 The old English potatoes and meat. Peas, the old standard fare yeah.

**Now tell me about school?**

Oooh, I went to South Townsville School. For the first 4 years and it was up the road, we probably only had to walk a kilometre and a bit. It was all walking. There were no buses,

12:00 there were buses but we didn't catch them, we didn't have bikes. And when we went out to the farm where the Dalrymple, where the Dalrymple Hotel is now, we had to walk to school there, it was probably about 5 ks [kilometres]. And then we moved out to another farm out near Cluden, out past Cluden Racecourse. We used to catch the rail motor to school. I went to - it was scholarship in those days, 8th Grade.

12:30 **So before your Dad moved over to the farm, what work was he doing in South Townsville?**

He was on the wharf. What they called a wharf labourer, when he got out after the war that was where he got his first job.

**So he was in World War 11?**

Yeah.

**Did he ever talk to you about his service?**

No, not a great deal no. He didn't.

**Do you know what he did?**

He was in the Armoured Division,

13:00 he was a trooper in the Armoured Division. But he never went overseas a lot because they were kept in Australia because the Armoured Division wasn't used a lot. They were to go to the Middle East but they didn't go. They came back to the Pacific and they basically stayed in Australia. And it wasn't until later in the war when they needed more infantry that they broke them up and sent a lot of them to other units.

**It's interesting**

13:30 **that he went on to the wharves, because I know that a lot of soldiers have bad feelings against the wharfies [wharf workers] in World War 11.**

But in Townsville the wharf was one of the major employers, the wharf was the main, the wharf and the railways was the major employer in Townsville. The railways were the major employer in Townville in those days, there might have been 6 or 700 people, not all working every day. You had a roster system and you mightn't get a job for a few days and then you might get work for a couple of days. It was on a

14:00 call basis, you didn't get a 40 hour week every week. But it was one of the major employers in Townsville.

**That's a lot of people, 600.**

Yes, see I think there's about 50 down there with mechanisation with cranes and when Dad worked there they used to load the sugar ships for example by bags. You had to carry every bag on and off so to speak. Well now, when I worked at the terminal

14:30 the sugar terminal we could put 20,000 tonnes on the ship in 10 hours. That's why you only needed - you could do that with 5 men. 10,000 tonne sugar ship in Dad's day with bags might take 2 or 3 weeks.

**Did you ever go down to the wharves as a kid and watch?**

Oh yeah, Mum used to take us down sometimes and that. You could generally travel around the wharves fairly easily, now like now there's restricted

15:00 access. As long as you kept out of the way of the workings and that you could go down there.

**It must have been an exciting place to go as a kid, can you describe your impressions?**

There was only the one main wharf, a very long wharf, and there was a very - to us it was very industrial type thing. But my grandfather used to go down there and harpoon barramundi [breed of fish] of a night, when the lights were on, the old barramundi would come under the lights

15:30 and he had a harpoon and we used to go down with him and sit and watch him. But you would be flat out [busy] finding a barra [barramundi] there now. It was interesting, yeah, as a young fella.

**What other things did you see, what other industries are in Townsville, obviously sugar is very big what other sorts of things would you see?**

Fishing was, but fishing has dropped off. The railways as I said was a big employer.

16:00 The services - do you mean now or back then?

**Back when you were growing up.**

Meatworks, there was 2 meatworks here in Townville then, one at Ross River and the one down at Alligator Creek, they were big, but they were seasonal, like only during the slaughter season that you would have full employment there.

**What was the slaughter season, was that different to the cane season?**

No approximately the same time because you can't bring cattle in all year round

16:30 because of the wet conditions the stock can't be moved. In those days they used to drive them over Harvey's Range, and drive them down by walking them down, and now they bring them in by truck and train. So depending on your seasons as to when cattle were available to slaughter.

**They would muster them all the way down?**

Yeah.

**Wow.**

They would bring a mob [group] down and

17:00 it was seasonal like as I said during the wet season, or if it was dry, drought. You didn't bring your cattle in because they wouldn't be in good enough condition to slaughter sort of thing.

**Sounds like it was a pretty delicate balance finding the right time to bring them down?**

Oh yeah. You know, when do I make a quid [money] or when do I lose a quid.

**So when your Dad ended up getting his own farm, what were you growing or what were you?**

17:30 Pig and poultry, mainly pig.

**Describe the farm to me?**

The farm was - as I said where the Dalrymple Hotel is now. It was a wooden house, and the styes, as you could build them you made your styes, and Dad probably run about 300 pigs and he sold eggs. He used to have to collect food

18:00 scraps from the houses, like you didn't grow your crops or buy grain. They weren't grain fed, people used to put their scraps in a bin. And you would go around on a daily basis. Not every house was - you might go once or twice a week to a given house and you would pick up their scraps and put them in a 44 gallon tin in the back of your truck, bring them home, boil them up and feed the pigs. If there was no grain or now and again

18:30 Dad might go to the mill and buy 44 gallon drum of molasses. As a supplement, but basically just house scraps.

**Did you pay for the house scraps?**

No. You were getting rid of their scraps as well as - some of the bigger places like the vegetable disposal places, they might have a bulk, they might have a pumpkin that had gone off or a cauliflower that had gone off, or a couple of bags of potatoes that

19:00 had gone off. And so you would get them, and at the end of the year your Dad might give them half a pig or something. Because they provided so much of the food source.

**I don't really know anything about looking after pigs, pig farming can you?**

It's a 7 day a week job.

**Tell me about it?**

Yeah, it's a 7 day a week job, you can't have holidays because it's not like cattle you can put them out to graze, you have got to feed them and water them and maintain them

19:30 because pigs only sweat from their nose, so in the hot weather you have got to make sure they have got plenty of water. There's 4 glands under each leg that they sweat from, but they get very hot if they are not kept reasonably cool.

**I guess Townsville is a pretty hot place?**

Yes. And, as I said it's a full time job because you have got to feed them and maintain the styes because they can get a bit smelly. So you have got to

20:00 keep them fairly well cleaned out.

**So how would you clean them out would you...?**

Just rake up the rubbish and shovel it and get it out of the yard and keep the styes clean or it's not a good environment for them. Plus as I said you have got to make sure they have got water and they are cool.

**Do you use disinfectant or anything or a...?**

Not that I am aware of. You'd hose it. No added disinfectants, no, not in our day anyway.

20:30 **And, what did the styes look like, how many pigs per - I don't know what you would call them?**

Well when the sow had its litter, they stayed with the sow until they were weaned and you would call them weaners and you led them into their own size yard and as they got bigger you don't put a full grown pig in with a weaner, because they knock each other around. So you had to progress them through until you got them to what you called the

21:00 killers - the killing stage, where they went to market. In those days we used to do our own killing and

dressing. The pigs but now you can't do that you have to put it through an abattoir and that sort of thing.

**Tell me about that how would you know a pig is ready for slaughter. Talk me through it, who would be the slaughterer in your family, what would you do to slaughter a pig?**

Dad would be the one who would determine when they would go. And he would

21:30 like them around the 60 or 70 lb mark not too much fat on them, so he would feed them accordingly when he got them to that stage. Then you would get hot water boiling, you would have your shed where you are going to do your slaughtering it had to be maintained in a hygienic condition, because it used to be inspected periodically. Then you would shoot one pig at a time,

22:00 bleed it to get the blood out of its system, take it up to the slaughter house, dip it in the hot water, scrape it and take all the hair off it. Because the hot water would soften the hair. You shaved the hair off it and hang it up disembowel it and cut it up.

**How would you bleed it? Would that be...?**

You cut the throat here and you go into the large blood vessel in there,

22:30 you cut into that, and that gets the blood out of the system. They do that with bullocks or anything.

**So who would your father be supplying with those pigs?**

In those days there wasn't a supermarket chain like there is now, corner butcher shops, he'd go around to different butcher shops and sell it to them.

**So would he take orders from them before...?**

Yes, they would say they wanted 2 this week or

23:00 1 or 3 or whatever and he delivered it on the day they wanted it.

**Would there be a busier time of year for pigs?**

Christmas time was the busiest time of year, because now you can buy ham or anything at any stage, but in those days you had your Christmas turkey or your Christmas ham or Christmas duck and that was the main time of the year. Easter might get a bit of a thing, but mainly Christmas.

23:30 **You must have eaten a lot of pork as a kid?**

I don't mind pork yeah. We had our own fowls, so you had your own eggs and when you wanted a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK [chicken] you found a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK .

**Do farmers ever among themselves say you give me a pig and I will give you a cow or anything like that or did your Mum just buy meat from the butcher?**

No we never really got beef off anyone.

24:00 We had our pork and poultry and turkey, but we never got any beef from anyone. I am not saying it didn't happen, but we didn't do it.

**So you mentioned about the inspectors who would come around to check out the piggery, what sort of things would they look for and what would they do?**

Well hygiene was the main thing, like your styes were disease free and you weren't leaving them, as I said about breaking them out

24:30 cleaning them out that you weren't leaving your styes dirty and that. Where you slaughtered them, they had to be to a certain standard, like your floors had to be clean and your walls, clean the building and that otherwise they wouldn't let you do it.

**It sounds like you had a fair amount of responsibility on the farm?**

Well yeah, we had to buck in all the way through. We had to hand with the feed and hand with the slaughtering and that yeah.

25:00 You had to collect the eggs and wash them on the run because Dad would take them with him, because if anyone wanted half a dozen eggs or a dozen eggs you would sell them. Another source of income for him. And it was good for the people because they were getting fresh eggs.

**Did you sell chickens for eating as well or just the eggs mostly?**

He sold a few but mainly for the eggs yes. Because you know that was another

25:30 time consuming, if you went into poultry too much. The main aim was the pigs, the pork.

**How much land would your family have had?**

On that one about 30 acres. But the last one Dad had he had about 160/170 acres.

**What was the country like?**

Good for nothing. No, it was clay soil, wouldn't grow anything

26:00 there, pig operations was o.k. because you didn't have to grow any food for the pigs, as I said we collected that from the household scraps. Plus I forgot to say the abattoirs, not the abattoirs but like Keery's slaughter yard which was a bigger complex, we used to get the offal from there. From the cattle they slaughtered. Plus there was a horse yards up from us that used to slaughter horses for dog and cat food.

26:30 And we got the offal from that and boil that down for the pigs also.

**Walk me down the main street of Townsville when you were a kid?**

Main street of Townsville had flower gardens up the middle of it and you could walk down the street and say g'day to every second or third person because you knew everyone. The towns in those days had a population of about 45,000

27:00 and friendly sort of place to walk down, as I say you say g'day to every second or third person. And then you would be talking to this one and talking to that one. It would take you a fair while if you wanted to get from one end of the street to the other, it would take you a fair while to get down it. But now I can walk the length of the mall and not know anyone. It was a friendly sort of a place to be.

**Tell me about fashion as a teenager,**

27:30 **what kind of stuff were you getting around in?**

Jeans weren't as prevalent as they are today. I can remember the big thing in those days was to get longs, trousers, like kids wore shorts, boys wore shorts. Until you got to a certain age and then you got your long trousers, and you were pretty right then. No, I got the

28:00 flat top [style of hair cut]. My mother went absolutely berserk when I got it but anyway that was the fashion in those days.

**Flat top that was a hair cut wasn't it?**

It was just flat, sticks up a bit with sides brushed back a bit. I didn't really - I was a bit of a country boy, I didn't really get into the fashions all that much. I was a bicycle

28:30 rider and a footballer. Played football and that, and out on the farm we didn't get into town all that often.

**So when you say you were into cycling, did you go on competitions, or long runs or anything like that?**

Oh yeah, we used to do Ingham to Townsville, Charters Towers to Townsville, 100 miler went from Eyre out to Inkerman and back to Townsville. But, plus we had the track riding.

29:00 Once I got my leg over a motor bike I couldn't quite get the same interest in the push bike.

**Tell me about your push bike, the model and did you alter it?**

It was a handmade one, a Malvern Star. In those days you would go into a bike shop, and they would measure how big you are and all that, and get a frame to suit and make it up what type of seat you wanted and all that, yeah.

**What colour?**

29:30 It was a kind of - well me main bike the one I finished up with was a maroon colour. You had your little, got them to put a little signwriting on them, it was all handmade there was no like stickers on, it was all done by hand in those days. And yeah, you had one for the track and one for the road. The one for the road had gears.

**So where would you do the track racing?**

The track racing out on

30:00 Murray Plains, we made that ourselves, the club. We carted the soil from the foot of Mt Stewart there and made the track and packed it in and rolled it in. Independent Amateur - can't think of it now.

**It would have been hard rolling a cycling track, because it is quite...?**

They used to have an old truck and they put a

30:30 roller behind it and roll it around, and you would come along with a shovel and knock any high spots down and they would roll it again and water it and roll it. That's the track we rode on.

**And the wet season would come along and mess it all up?**

It was sloped and a bit of a drain went under the track but yeah. It did have its problems.

**Would other cyclists from other towns come to compete?**

Cycling is – I think it's having a bit of resurgence

31:00 now, it went a bit slack for a while, but yeah, they would travel from Mackay, Charters Towers there, Ingham, Cairns, big meetings, but normally you had your monthly meetings but that was just the local club.

**So did Townsville have the main track in the area or did you travel to other places?**

No Townsville had the main track. The visitors mainly did roadwork but they did come for the track occasionally yeah, but it was mainly the roadwork they would travel

31:30 for.

**So was Townsville always a bit of a – the capital of North Queensland or...?**

Well Townsville likes to think so.

**That's what the sign says when you come into town?**

I think so because the ports are what made Townsville. The port and the railway out to Mt Isa and yeah Cairns and Townsville have had rivalry for quite a few years and Bowen was supposed to be the capital of North Queensland.

32:00 But Townsville was a better port. So the main peat works and that come to Townsville.

**Did you mention football?**

I used to play club level, that's nothing yeah. Like you had your WEAs and your centrals, just the club football. Rugby League.

**Pretty keen footy supporter in those days, like who were your teams that you went for?**

We

32:30 had nothing about the southern teams in those days, it was just your local teams. There was nothing about St George, or if there was we never had television or anything. It was only on the radio and I can't remember listening to any football games or anything like that on the radio, just your local.

**Tell me about the radio, was that a source of entertainment for you?**

That's all you had. That and reading. They used to have serials, at

33:00 certain times every afternoon and night they would have Martin's Corner and those sort of things, you would sit there and listen intently for 15 or 20 minutes, to the serial.

**What was Martin's Corner, I haven't heard of that one?**

Martin's Corner, just a family orientated one and that was the name of the family, Martin. Mum used to listen to Blue Hills and that sort of thing. But the radio was a good source of –

33:30 because that's all you had, except if you went to the movies.

**Where did the radio live in your house?**

Ah, in the lounge. Because everyone sat in the lounge and listened to the radio yeah. So when Mum and Dad bought a radiogram we thought that was the bees knees [best] that one, you could put records on and listen to them.

**What music did you like?**

I liked country music.

**Can you tell me the names of the artists you would listen to or the songs**

34:00 **that you would listen to as a kid?**

Oh, Gene Autry [American country music singer] and those sort of blokes, I used to like. The Yellow Rose of Texas and those sort of songs come out yeah. I was pretty country orientated. The classics didn't really do that much for me. I think I have changed a bit now, but.

**Was there a local radio station?**

Yes, 4DL.

34:30 Was the local station and 4QN. You used to also be around, it was a government station.

**So, would your family have had, how much would you have listened to the radio would it be**



**only?**

Well as children we played more we were out in the yard more. You probably come in for tea and listen to your serials,

35:00 around 7 o'clock sort of thing. We played more sport - and played more than just sat around listening. It's only when you have finished playing your sports that you listen to the radio.

**Would you get news and current affairs on your radio at all?**

You got news. Yeah. But current affairs shows I don't think in those days were in a big way. I think we

35:30 used to listen to the news though. It was the information sort of thing, it was your source of information.

**And how about newspapers, how often would you get newspapers?**

We got them daily yeah and I used to like reading the comics.

**What comics would you read?**

Oh Ginger Meggs and those sort of things. The comic strips in the paper. No they got their papers and every now and then they

36:00 used to get the southern papers up. My brother when he was a young fella he used to get involved with selling them in Flinders Street, they used to have like the paper boy and sell the southern papers.

**So the daily paper you would get what would that be?**

The Bulletin. That was the main source of information.

**You mentioned that often you would go to the movies, what sort of films would you like to see?**

36:30 Once again 'Cowboys and Indians' [westerns], and war movies. They used to have serials on, so you had to go every Saturday if you could, and watch the continuing saga of such and such a serial, that's if you could get there. They used to have the Movietone News, which was a good source of information like on TV [television] you turn it on now, but in those days you could only see it at the

37:00 theatre.

**Was there any movie that you saw a few times?**

No, we couldn't go all that often. No I can't recall any particular movie. Davey Crockett at the Alamo was probably pretty good I suppose. But not any movie in particular.

**Describe the movie theatre?**

They were quite plush in those days. They had usherettes to show you to your

37:30 seat. And the flooring was on a slope and you had padded seats. They were fairly large establishments. I would only be guessing at the number, but you would get 3 or 400 people wouldn't be short. And the screens were quite bit, and you used to get news, you might get a serial and you got a movie and then you had interval and then you got another movie.

38:00 **How much would that cost?**

Shilling or 10 cents or 15 cents in those days 1/3.

**Sounds like a deal?**

Oh yeah, but your wages weren't all that great either.

**You got to see a lot for that?**

For what you paid you got a lot, yeah. Movies plus shorts and yeah. They were fairly good movies. Like the Wintergarden in

38:30 town was a real plus one, you could sit upstairs, they were dearer seats of course, but the Olympia was open air, the State was open air, there was a few open air ones around. On a cold night or a wet night you got caught out.

**So there were a few cinemas?**

Oh in Townsville yes. 10 or 12. They were - people went out to the movies. Now everyone sits in their house and

39:00 watches TV and there's not the interaction there was in those days. Because you would run into Billy Bloggs, Joe Blow [various people] and have a bit of a chat. Of course now everyone comes home from work, walks in the door hardly walks out again until you go to work the next morning.

**Did they show different films in each of them?**

Oh yes. Different movies yes.

**So if you have got 12 cinemas would they all be showing different films or some of them the same?**

Well like there were 3 of them owned by the Felt

39:30 Brothers, and they would move their, like the Alamo for example they might have it at the Regent tonight and the Sun couple of nights later and the Plaza, so they would move it around like that. But yeah the one movie might be in the town with a few different theatres.

**I find it amazing that they would have outdoor cinemas up here?**

Yeah.

**Because of the wet season, I mean.**

Well the Olympia was open, the Minoomba

40:00 the Palladium, yeah there was a few of them.

40:12 End of tape

## Tape 2

00:31 **You were going to tell me about some transport that you...?**

Ah yes, instead of walking like where we lived, you had to do a big U-turn to get into the town. There was a ferry that used to across to the flying squadron. The flying squadron was where they used to have the sailing skiffs. And that's why it was called the flying squadron. A bloke in a row boat would take you from one side of the river to the other side of the river for a penny. And he

01:00 would wait on the other side of the river and he would bring them back. Or if not he would have to row back and get another lot and come across. That saved a bit of walking and he probably made a few bob out of it.

**Did you have much of a bus system, or trains or trams, what was there?**

There was a bus system but a lot of people were walked. They were quite content to walk, and you seen people along the way and they might be -

01:30 2 or 3 of you might start of walking into town and they might finish up half a dozen or 8 of you walking into town. Plus you had to pay go to on the bus. But yeah they did have a bus system.

**It sounds like there was more of a sense of community?**

Well, you knew people up and down the street. You knew people around the area, where now I feel like you are flat out knowing who is in the street, but in those days everyone talked and

02:00 walked and as you walked past - yeah, I think there was more of a community spirit in those days.

**Tell me about Anzac [Australian and New Zealand Army Corps] Day in those days as a kid, did you ever go along, did your Dad march or anything?**

No Dad never had anything to do with anything like that, he was dead against me even going in the army. No I don't think Anzac Day was a big thing for me in those days, you had to attend like with school, but I don't think I got the

02:30 full impact of Anzac Day until much later.

**That's what I mean though, as a kid in a school group or whatever, I mean what did you see in the town on Anzac Day, was it a big affair?**

I think it was a big affair in those days, because there was still a lot of in my time, a lot of chaps after they got out after World War 11, they were still pretty involved in it. The numbers were fairly good, fairly huge. Fairly good

03:00 public response and you always got a good crowd there to see it. As I said being a young fella.

**Where did you march?**

Usually Flinders Street down to the Strand, where the Cenotaph was on the Strand, that's where they finished. But it was always well attended by the public in those days.

**What about Remembrance Day was that marked at school or anything like that?**

Yes it probably was, but I can't recall

03:30 any great shakes about it so to speak. But I think it was remembered. That's the poppy day isn't it? I really have no great recollection of Remembrance Day.

**What about just thinking of school then, did you have to sing 'God Save the King' or Queen or anything like that?**

Hand over the heart and

04:00 yeah we used to have that of a morning, and march into school with the music.

**Sorry what you would have to do?**

Put your hand over the heart and recite whatever you had to recite in those days.

**So would that be on parade or something?**

On parade yes, before you went into class. And they would start the music and you would march in by class into your room.

**Did you have to say a prayer or anything?**

Once a week we used to have religious instruction. So you went to your C of E [Church of England] or your

04:30 Methodist or your Presbyterian or your Catholic, and went for half an hour I think for once a week, religious instruction.

**Did you come from a family that practiced religion at all?**

No, my mother was Catholic and my father was Presbyterian I think, and I am C of E. But no my father was - he wasn't religious in a sense, but for some reason he

05:00 was anti Catholic. So Mum couldn't get married in the Catholic Church and that sort of thing. But for whatever reason he was just anti. He wasn't a great pro, religion but he was just anti Catholic, why I never really found out. We never grew up - we went to Sunday School and that. But no we weren't really religious.

**Tell me about when you - what thoughts when you were**

05:30 **leaving school, tell me at what age you left school and what you wanted to do with your life, what were your plans?**

I left school 2 weeks after I turned 14 and got an apprenticeship as a panel beater. I wanted to be a mechanic, but there were no vacancies at the time, and if I didn't come home with a job I went back to school. So, I kept going and going and got on to the panel beating job, and I didn't know what

06:00 panel beating was. And yeah and I come home and told Mum and she said, "Alright then, he's doing an apprenticeship, you can leave school, but if you don't get signed up you are back to school". I was 14 when I started work.

**Tell me about a panel beating apprenticeship back then?**

You had to go to tech two nights a week, for 2 hours 2 nights a week and half a day a fortnight you went to practical.

06:30 You weren't examined pretty hard, there was no - I think I'll do this and if you didn't do what was set you didn't you could have your indentures cancelled. You had to put your head down and bum up and study sort of thing.

**What year was this roughly?**

1957 I started.

**And tell me who you worked for and how big the establishment was?**

I worked for C E Pride Limited,

07:00 who also what they started off was as sailmakers. And they also had motor trimming, sailmaking, panel beating, and blinds. They got into Venetian blinds towards the end, but yeah their main - originally they were sailmakers. Then they branched out into panel beating and motor trimming. They were over near the Victoria Bridge, they were an old company and old firm. And their boss

07:30 was really hard. He was one of the real old school [as old fashioned].

**What does that mean?**

There was no - Mr Higg, and even the mechanics you worked with you had to address them as Mr Campbell or something. Later on it eased off a bit, but the first couple of years, you knew where you

were sort of thing.

**How many apprentices started with you or were there when you were there?**

There was only one other beside meself

08:00 there was only about 4 tradesmen. It wasn't one of the bigger firms around town, like Eager's, and those sort of places. They had far more employees that we had. But yeah.

**Did they have any initiations for apprentices or mucking around?**

I never had any of those experiences, I heard of them but I never had any. As I say we were only a small establishment. And he if anything went on like that

08:30 old Charlie would have, here's the sort of thing. I think he would have culled anything of that sort of nature happening.

**Do you remember what you got paid as an apprentice?**

£4.8. That was my first year pay, I paid 2 bob tax. 20 cents tax.

**Did you give some of your wages to your parents or something like that was that part of the deal?**

Dad thought I was,

09:00 Mum give us a fairly good run. We were supposed to be paying board. As I said Dad thought we were.

**As a 14 year old it must have been good to have that much cash in your pocket?**

Well I bought a motor bike when I was 16 and a half, and I got caught for riding that without a licence. We saved a bit yeah, plus we used to work on the farm, we still had to give Dad a hand on the farm. We got a few bob from that

09:30 too.

**So your day, we didn't have much spare time.**

**You said that didn't really know what panel beating was when you started. What did you make of it when you found out, was it something that you enjoyed?**

No when I finished I never went back to it. I never went back to it, but I done it for the 5 years, but I would have preferred to be a mechanic.

**So it wasn't possible to switch over at any time or?**

Not in those days.

10:00 Not as easy as it is now. You were signed up and you could leave, and try and get a start somewhere else. But after you have done a year or two and have to start somewhere else, I saw it through for 5 years, and as I say I joined the army after that and never went back to it.

**Why did you want to join the army?**

It was just something I have always wanted to do. Just grew up with it I suppose post World War

10:30 11. There was a lot of talk of the war and things blokes had done and seen and been, and I just grew up in that atmosphere. See, when I was a young fella in the CMF [Citizens Military Force] a lot of blokes joined were down there and you don't get those same responses that you did in those days, I don't feel.

**So what did joining up represent to you, why did it**

11:00 **appeal to you I guess, what did it represent?**

The group mentality, being in with a number of blokes and like a football team. The army is much the same and just the comradeship and doing things in the bush, and things like that.

**Did you have ambitions to travel and did you think the army might...?**

I eventually joined the CMF that was like World War 11 militia. We weren't regular army, we were only

11:30 local units. The 31st Battalion was in Townsville and that's what we were in. You didn't go out of Townsville so to speak.

**Is that because you were too young or?**

I was under age when I joined, but my father wouldn't let me go in the regular army.

**Why?**

Well I had to be 21 to sign my own papers, in those days, and he wouldn't sign it. Mum I got around Mum and she - I put me

12:00 age up and I got into the CMF at 16.5. But the old fella [father] wouldn't let me go into the regular army.

**Did you ask him why?**

He just said, "You don't want to go there I have seen enough of it and you are not going". We had a few words, but he wouldn't sign it.

**What about your older brothers did they...?**

No they had no inclination about it. One was in the high school air cadets when he was at high school. But apart from that no.

12:30 **So tell me, finally you get to join the CMF, tell me about what you did, the training and so forth?**

It used to be two hours a week, we used to go down to what they called a night parade 2 hours a week, and then you done generally about 1 week end a month. And you might go out to the rifle range or out to Mt Stewart or Mt Fox and do field training out there. Yeah, I enjoyed it.

**What would be some of the training**

13:00 **exercises you would do, can you describe them in more detail?**

Bush navigation, which is given a map and a compass and have to get you from point A to point B and not be observed by the enemy so to speak, or find the enemy, yeah what equipment you had to carry and it was a good basis for soldiering I thought. Because a lot of them were World War 11

13:30 instructors. They knew what they were talking about. It was healthy good fun.

**So were you issued with your own kit bag and that sort of thing?**

Oh yeah you were issued with a uniform yeah.

**So tell me what they issued you with?**

Oh when I first went, I got a pair of boots that didn't fit me and a pair of trousers and a shirt, and that's the way it went for the first weekend and just a tarpaulin and a blanket on the ground, and that was a

14:00 but anyway, I got issued with the proper uniforms and that. But they - yeah you got the same as what you got in the regular army. We got khaki in those days, and you got your khaki uniforms and you got your battle dress uniforms. Great coat and boots and all the rest of it. But we used to take our rifle and bayonet home with us. Could you imagine getting on a bus or a train now with a rifle and a bayonet and see what response you would get. Everyone kept their rifle and bayonet at

14:30 home. And I had a motor bike then and you put the rifle over your soldier and bayonet, and go to parades, and could you imagine doing that now. People would be horrified, but it was just the thing you done. Just take your rifle home, put it in the corner, next week pick it up and go to the parade again, after you cleaned it of course.

**What was this rifle?**

A 303. 303 Lee Enfield.

15:00 Once the 7.5 SLRs [Self Loading Rifles] come into it we weren't allowed to take them home. But no, we took our 303s home yeah.

**You wouldn't have ammunition to take home or anything would you?**

Oh no, but you could always buy it. I am not sayin' I bought it but you had a working rifle.

**Tell me about learning to use the bayonet?**

Well they were never long enough for

15:30 me. I wanted them further away than the length of the bayonet. We didn't do a lot of bayonet fighting. Bayonet fighting is more or less, you know, it's only there for symbolic purposes now. Not like in the early days. We did a few periods with it, but you kept the scabbard on the bayonet and tied it on, so you just didn't have the bare bayonet. In case someone slipped. No, we didn't do a lot of

16:00 bayonet fighting.

**So what else can you tell me about your time with the CMF?**

I was in it for about 3.5 years. I rose to the rank of corporal, had the subjects A and B for sergeant, I enjoyed it. I was keen on it and as I said I had been trying to get my father to let me go to join the regular army since I was 17 and had to be

16:30 21 before you didn't need parental consent in those days. I thought it was a good time.

**So you had been in that for 3.5 years, did your Dad eventually come round and realise that it was something that you really wanted to do?**

Yeah, Mum ended up signing and he didn't.

**Was it really important for you to get your father's blessing?**

I would have preferred to have it, but I was prepared to go without

17:00 it.

**Was your grandfather still alive at this point?**

He was.

**Because he served in World War One didn't he?**

**He was in World War One. Did you ever talk to him about the fact that you wanted to join up?**

Never had much to do with him really, because my grandmother and he divorced, so he more or less lived in Brisbane and I didn't see a great deal of him.

**O.K. so tell me about joining the**

17:30 **regular army, what was that like?**

Well, it was a complicated thing in those days, you applied and you had to go down here to Kissing Point, and they give you a test and checked you out and all that sort of stuff. If you passed you then went to Brisbane, by train. Then you did another test down there. Then they sent you home to Townsville by train, and let you know if you had made it or not.

18:00 **What were these tests were they...?**

Medicals and then see what your aptitude and that was like fiddling putting a round peg in a square hole, not just that but basically if you have got the - enough intelligence to meet their minimum level. So yeah, I come home to Townsville and I got word that yeah, O.K. you are accepted. So by train again

18:30 down to Brisbane. So it was a bit of fiddling around.

**Tell me about when you get to Brisbane is that where you do your basic training?**

No, you do it at Kapooka, outside Wagga Wagga. No they hold you in Brisbane until they get enough to form an intake, and of course they come from all over Australia, not just Australia and when the various commands decide they have got enough for an intake, you leave what - Brisbane

19:00 used to be called the Northern Command Personnel Depot, you would be held there until they had enough and away you would go. On the train again down to Wagga. Never mind this flying business. The old trains were a bit slower in those days.

**So tell me about, your basic training, tell me what that involved?**

Basically you learned your left from your right, the basic things marching

19:30 initially, until you learnt to work as a team that's what it's all about. It's not a matter of beating you into the ground it's getting you to - if someone says, "Left turn", you left turn. It's just to get you to follow orders without too much of a problem sort of thing. Some people have that sort of a problem. Then you go on and do your drills with your weapons and learn how to handle your weapons

20:00 maintain them for your craft.

**Were you a bit bored in the beginning because you would have done all that marching and stuff in the CMF?**

I was, but was careful not to come over as a big head, saying, "I know that, I know that". You had to, well I did anyway, just go along as if you were learning afresh, or otherwise the other blokes would say, "Get on to this",

20:30 this bloke sort of thing, so yeah, that's the way I done it.

**What was different about it?**

The regular army? It was different to the extent that it was more efficient, more CMF was a bit, you work with the bloke today, and he was your officer that night sort of thing. But in the regular army it was more officious more efficient, more by the book.

21:00 So there was no, "Hey Bill come over here".

**Did you like that it was more professional I guess?**

I did, yeah, I did. CMF was fine but I found the regular army more to my thinking of what an army should be. I am not having a go at the CMF, it was just the circumstances. That says it. Because that was their job and me trying to do the same job as what you are doing I wouldn't

21:30 be able to do it as well, well it's the same with the regular army and the CMF.

**What was the additional say weapons training that you received in the basic training with the regular army that you hadn't done with the CMF?**

Yeah, well we never used any heavier weapons than we used in the CMF at the initial, this is at recruit training, from recruit training you go to corps training, which is more into your corps. Like some went to armour, some went to artillery,

22:00 some went to infantry, engineers. So in recruit training at Wagga you are just learning the basics. And then when you are allocated to a corps, you go to like Ingleburn and then you learn about infantry type work.

**Did you have it in mind which corps that you wanted to go to?**

Infantry. It's not hard to get into infantry. No that's where I wanted to go. If you have to be a soldier to my mind if you are not in infantry you are not a soldier. Silly, in those days, but that's the way it was.

22:30 Yeah.

**So tell me about your infantry training?**

That was done at Ingleburn, just outside Liverpool as Simon would know.

**What was the camp like there, just describe it for me?**

Well, I will describe Kapooka first, there was still the World War 11 buildings. And they had gaps in the floor boards like that, and if you have ever been to Wagga, it's freezing cold. The cold air used to come up through the floor boards.

23:00 The Quonset huts [pre fabricated huts] are round huts like that which they could build easy and quick and cheap. Even one day the front wall fell out of one. They weren't the best. And it was a cold, cold place, Wagga, particularly coming from up here and I had never been south of Brisbane before.

**You have got to tell me, there must have been one cold miserable night where you thought**

23:30 **Dad must have been right?**

That would come in the morning when they would come and take us for a run and you would have ice forming on your hair and you would see this cloud of steam from 30 blokes running up the road, this steam fog coming off. Yeah as you say, he might have had something, yeah. It was cold. Sometimes you couldn't get water out of the tap.

**It was frozen?**

And the hot water system wasn't all

24:00 that good for having a shower either. And they used to have drying rooms which was a novelty to me. You used to - when you done your washing you hung your clothes in these big drying rooms. They were good to hang out in, you would watch your clothes dry, it was also warmer. Yeah they were a bit of a novelty coming from up here, we didn't anything like that. Then we went to Ingleburn, it was a little bit better accommodation

24:30 still the old wooden buildings, and then you learnt what the infantry does. Wagga was your recruit to make you into a soldier sort of thing, and then the corps training was more specialised in infantry type work.

**So tell me what you learnt what an infantry does?**

You learnt how a section is formed, what the scout group does, the gun group does, the rifle group does, and how the section commander

25:00 combines all those and then you fit into a platoon. Because the building block of a battalion is a section, and once you get that formed then everything takes care after that. Your platoon, company, battalion and you learned all the functions of a section, platoon, company. By the time you marched into your regular unit which was a battalion, you were fairly - it took about

25:30 7 or 8 months from the time you went to Kapooka until the time you marched into a battalion. So by that time you had learned a fair bit and you could fit into a regular unit.

**Is that enough time to learn or was it too much time, what did you feel?**

It's always too long when you are doing the callisthenics and all that sort of stuff. No, they do it shorter now, but I think they get more training in the units now, so they

26:00 have transferred what you have done in your corps training, and when you get to your unit now they do more of the training than they used to. Because when we marched into a battalion we were supposed to be fully switched on as to what we had to do, whereas now I think they put them through the training a bit quicker and the units polish them off more.

**When you first joined up you said you liked the idea of the mateship as well, and the lifestyle I guess and what's that**

26:30 **like? Was there a point when you got into the regular army and you were sort of I guess it became more professional, that you started to think about that one day maybe you would need to go and fight for real for a war?**

My feeling was that I wanted to go overseas, I didn't say I wanted to go to a particular war, but I wanted to travel. Because at this time I knew there was a battalion in Malaya rotating in Malaya as part of the British Commonwealth forces in

27:00 Malaya, and when I joined up that was my ambition to get to Malaya there was no war as such, there was no Vietnam [war], there was no Borneo at that point in time. In Malaya the emergency was more or less winding down, but I wanted to get overseas to them yeah. So I was looking forward to that. As a matter of fact I was posted to the 1st Battalion, and I was there a short period of time and they were raising the 4th Battalion. And they said the 4th would be the next one to go to Malaya, so I

27:30 put in for a transfer to the 4th.

**What do you mean raising the 4th, what does that mean?**

There was no 4th Battalion, they started it from nothing, a new battalion.

**Is that a difficult thing to do?**

Yeah it is, because you start off with nothing, it's like a business, you start off, like yourself and you have got to expand it to 800 people. And have all that, your different levels once again and fuse them into one unit. It's a major undertaking.

28:00 It can take quite sometime. But we were raised 20 months and we went to Malaya.

**Can you talk me through some of the hiccups and when you gelled as a battalion, can you talk me through the experience of being part of that because that's quite amazing isn't it?**

Well, it was an old battalion it was an established battalion. And it was - when you got posted with it you might be 20 blokes at a time go into it, well you just

28:30 melted into the battalion so to speak. The 4th Battalion when it was raised like any battalion when it is first raised, you have got blokes coming from here there, 1 battalion or 2 battalion, or from training units and they have all got to come together, it's like any business where people have got to get to know each other, and it's not a matter of just issuing orders, you have got to be able to relate to a person and it takes time. You have got to get company commanders, platoon commanders,

29:00 section commanders, and it's all got to gel. And you start off again with your section, getting them to know each other, and work together and get your platoons working together, and your company and you have got to get your companies working together, you got to get your battalion and your CO [Commanding Officer] to understand all these people and everyone's different, that everyone is not of the same line of thought and action. Yeah.

**Let's go to getting the section together, what sort of exercises**

29:30 **did they get you to do, is it a subtle thing or how do you get men to gel together?**

Well, it's a bonding type thing, you have got to have faith in each other, that's one of the big things, and if you have got someone who doesn't fit in the boat and he rocks the boat [causes trouble], well it doesn't make for a good section. It's like any rowing a skulling, if you have got a bloke who doesn't pull his weight [do his bit] in skulling, it upsets the whole

30:00 crew. Well it's the same as the section, you are never going to get the perfect section, there's always going to be someone that's a bit - but that's basically what you have got to do, you have to believe in your section commander, and he's going to give you the right directions and he's going not be doing the right things by you. You are going to rely on your gunner but he knows how to work that weapon and apply it correctly, it's just a gelling thing and you learn your different tactics. But you should know your tactics it's

30:30 just getting that section to gell.

**Were there any people that just didn't fit in from your section or other sections that you know of?**

Yeah there were a few people, but you know you try to get them out somewhere, like platoon headquarters and get them as a batman or a signal. Some people might have been good as a sig [signaller], but they didn't they wouldn't let them - be told what to do or



31:00 things like that yeah. There was a few. And as I said not everyone was 100% right, but you have got to get the best you can.

**Did the men themselves do some of their own management with someone who is not quite gelling that you - some people might take on the role of...?**

Yeah, but not this fisticuff [physical fighting] business. I never had anything - you talk to them.

**That's what I mean?**

Yeah. Another dig [soldier] sees a bloke that is either not

31:30 pulling his weight or he's having a bit of trouble not through no fault of his own, well you generally pair him off if you are a section commander, you generally pair him off with someone who can take him under his wing and guide him along. But if you get someone who is just pure obstinate that's just difficult. But as I say you generally try and get them to an area that is - the section is the nuts and bolts of a battalion, if the sections aren't right, the rest is not right.

32:00 **What else can you tell me about getting the battalion right, what training did you do?**

We did a lot of training because a new battalion is just like any business, there is a lot of behind scenes work that goes on, and you have got to go bush a fair bit to get everyone working in the same direction, and we done a lot of time away from home

32:30 to get fit to go overseas. And when you go overseas it's even more important.

**When you say you went bush where did you go to train?**

The Humbug Forest and places like that in South Australia, that's where the battalion was raised at Woodside. And yeah we were always going bush and honing our skills and we were training for tropical warfare in countries that was a lot colder than this, it seems crazy but that's where we

33:00 were posted.

**I was going to say that, it must have been...?**

Well yeah, when we left Adelaide to go to Malaya we left in suits and you got off the plane in Singapore and you nearly melted. We had been used to the cold weather and we left in July/August or something.

**Did you know when you were going to Malaya, like did someone tell you?**

We knew we would be relieving 3RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] yes and we knew the approximate time was up for their posting.

33:30 **So given that the climate was all wrong for training you what were some other things that they did I guess if you can compensate for that, what - did they give you any kind of information that might be different. Obviously you are from Townsville so you have had some?**

We went through Canungra, we all went through Canungra and we all went through as company groups first, have you ever heard of Canungra? They went through as company groups first, and that was the main gelling point.

34:00 We had about 5 weeks there straight, and that was pretty full on. Then before we went to Malaya we went there again as a battalion. And a lot of the blokes senior NCO's [Non Commissioned Officers] and NCO's had been to Malaya before, so we got feedback from them and yeah.

**What did they tell you?**

About conditions in Malaya, about the local people. About what it's like operating in the jungle environment. Yeah

34:30 because a lot of them had been over there with the Malayan emergency with previous battalions.

**Do you recall any specific things to watch out for or be concerned about?**

Your water sterilisation tablets were very important when you were out in the scrub not to get leptospirosis [bacterial disease contracted from animals] and that sort of thing. And your general hygiene has got to be pretty switched on because if you get infections and things, they travel pretty

35:00 quick. Yeah, and if you are going to have a shower more than once a day, only use soap once a day. If you do use soap all the time you do tend to want to - if you can shower a fair bit particularly in the base area, because you are hot all the time. Don't use soap because it takes the oil out of your skin and get the skin rashes and dermatitis and that.

**Do you recall any specific things they told you about the local people?**

35:30 Not that I can repeat. Not really, you've got to bargain for most things, if you just walk in pay the price whatever they ask you are paying through the hoop sort of thing, you have to learn to bargain and get things down even for your normal

- 36:00 café stuff sort of thing. Not to drink their local alcohol products. Because some of it wasn't hygienically made. But other than that no, I can't recall any hard and fast rules. The brothels didn't worry me because I was married. But that was one of the things they talked about. But yeah. I can't recall any hard and fast
- 36:30 rules.
- Did they brief you just generally about what 3RAR had been doing and what your aim was to be going there, could you talk about that a bit?**
- Oh yes we were told we would be part of the 28th Commonwealth Brigade and the 28th Commonwealth Brigade consists of a Kiwi [New Zealand] battalion. The poly [Polynesian] battalion, plus associated artillery engineers and our task was to form the Far East
- 37:00 Strategic Reserve. So if anything happened in Malaya, Thailand we were the brigade that was there to bolster the forces. It was a 2 year posting and 3RAR went to Borneo in 1965 and we were told we would probably go to Borneo we were told we were going to Malaya.
- So you knew you were going for 2 years to Malaya, was there a concern about, was your wife worried about...?**
- 37:30 She went with us. Marrieds went there. They were in the Garrison just outside Malacca. Married people took their wives and children.
- How long had you been married at that time?**
- 3 years. When I first joined up as I said with Kapooka and Ingleburn, I left home here and never saw Gwen again for another 8 months.
- 38:00 It was a bit of a lap now and I come home and got her, I wasn't supposed to come home, I was on what they called standby company, A Company, and we were called sprinkler force, we were to go to Thailand in those days up to Ubon. If anything was to go leg up. But they must have took pity on me and let me come home for 10 days and pick up the wife and bring her back to Sydney. I dumped her off there after about a week and went to Puckapunyal for another
- 38:30 month, and I came back to Sydney and they said, "4RAR [Royal Australian Regiment]", and I went to 4RAR and left her in Sydney for about another 2 months until I got a married quarter, and she finally come over here and dumped her over here and went to Canungra. So she didn't have a good trot. So we didn't see much of each other for the first 2 years.
- Was she from a military family as well?**
- No.
- So it would have been all quite new and different for both of you really?**
- There were no married quarters in Sydney, I had to shop around until I could find a
- 39:00 1 bedroom flat. They had to inspect it and approve it and then they brought her down and said, "There you are" and I choofed [left] off again. Yeah. Wasn't fun.
- So how did the wives get to Malaya?**
- They flew with us.
- With you?**
- Yes. We were the first battalion to go by air, normally they went by sea. The families all went on a ship. We were the first battalion to change over by flying.
- 39:30 We had married quarters in Malacca. Had an Amah [housemaid] so she was looked after there.
- 39:50 End of tape

## Tape 3

- 00:39 **Barry I am wondering what your brothers ended up doing, did either of them go into the services?**
- No. As I said before one brother had done air cadets at high school, that was as far as - neither went into the services.
- What do you remember about the Korean War breaking out?**
- 01:00 I can remember seeing it on the movies, the news, that it had been declared. I was probably only about 7 at the time but yeah.

**Did you have much of an idea growing up about the Communist threat?**

Yeah. I did. I went along with what they were saying, the Domino Theory [theory that Communism was spreading throughout the world country by country], I thought it was a follow on from the Russian Cold War, as the Russians sort of thing. I used to read a fair bit

01:30 about – I used to like reading about that sort of thing.

**Do you think that idea was pretty wide spread throughout the community?**

In those days it was yeah. As I said previously the response for young fellas to be in the CMF in those days was far better than what it is now. I think people felt there was a need or a possible need further down the track to be prepared so to speak.

02:00 **And your career was it largely ignored by the public?**

Oh very quiet boy, if you didn't have someone over there or probably had no interest in it. And that's strange really because it was one of the first – it had a bit of TV coverage in America, not Australia, but it had a bit of TV coverage in America. It wasn't until Vietnam that we got real TV coverage.

**Do you think people were war weary at that point? I mean you were quite young but did you ever**

02:30 **sense the people were quite tired and exhausted from World War 11?**

I would say they wanted to put it behind them there, we have been there done that sort of thing, so let's move on. I would agree with that.

**So given there was this pending Communist threat, when you were looking to enlist did you have a sense that you may be facing conflict on a large scale or did you feel that you were in for a period of...?**

I thought more of the Malayan emergency type, situations. I didn't

03:00 foresee a major type thing, like the hooks that were in the Philippines, the CTs [Communist Terrorists] were in Malaya, I thought it would be more that type of thing. Indonesia was a bit of a melting pot. They like gone and taken at that time what we call Irianjaya now.

**It was Papua wasn't it? From the Dutch?**

Dutch New Guinea it was called,

03:30 Dutch New Guinea and the Indonesians went in 62 and just annexed it as part of their system. So I thought that might have repercussions further down the track.

**Did you take an interest in the political aspect?**

Not so much the political I suppose it's tied up with more of the military situation. I suppose they are close cousins political/military, but I was more inclined to see what the

04:00 military situation was, like the Berlin air lift and all that sort of thing. I read up on and yes.

**Was that mainly through newspapers or would you read books as well?**

Mainly newspapers yeah. You would get – no I didn't read many books in those, so mainly newspapers. I am an avid reader of books now but.

**You would have been well aware then of us sending the advisers over to Vietnam in 62.**

04:30 No I heard very little about that until I got – and that was also kept pretty low key, because they got on a plane here in civilian clothes. And they – it wasn't until after the plane left for Singapore that they changed into military uniform. That's how low key it was.

**I did not know that?**

They changed in flight, because they weren't supposed to go through Singapore. Same as when we went to Malaya, some had to fly right around the top of Sumatra

05:00 and come back that way, because you would be flying in Indonesian air space. If you went direct.

**The Australian Government was very concerned to be appearing to enter into conflict with our neighbours weren't they?**

It's a guns and butter war, you want to be fighting with this hand and be offering them sustenance on this hand. It's a bit of a political, that's when politics becomes a bit

05:30 airy fairy to me. You are either at war or you are at peace, I can't see how you can have one way or the other, but politicians are like that aren't they? They can see the bigger picture.

**Speaking of the bigger picture, I would like to ask you about your decision to get married, you**

**were only 19, and I think you had just finished your apprenticeship, was that a big decision?**

Well - well no not really.

06:00 Yeah.

**Was there any concern between your religions?**

Yeah, there was, I had to go to so many nights instruction and then I had to sign a form to say that any children born of the union would be brought up raised in the Catholic faith or otherwise we wouldn't be standing before the altar. And I had no great hang ups about - as I said I am

06:30 not religious but Gwen wanted the children raised Catholics, so well so be it sort of thing.

**And it was necessary for her to be married in a Catholic wedding?**

Yeah or no go. And she went to church every Sunday, and she was fairly religious and the family was so. And I had no great hang ups about it.

**Had you been going out for sometime?**

Couple of years.

07:00 When we were about 17 we started going out.

**How did you meet originally?**

Just down Flinders Street to be honest, I was talking to a friend of hers and Gwen come along, and she had just come back from the island and over there for the weekend or a day and I just got introduced to here and had a bit of a chat, as things do, and saw her again a bit later

07:30 and went out yeah. We didn't think at that stage it was going to be this long, but anyway.

**Were dances still popular?**

Yes, dances were still popular that was a big part of the thing that was the social thing of the week. There used to be a number of dance halls in Townsville and different nights you could go - you could probably go to 3 or 4 dances a week. But there was no alcohol, you weren't allowed in if you had any sign of

08:00 being inebriated sort of thing, and they were good clean dances. No swearing or anything like that. There were blokes keeping an eye on you, not security as they have today, but older people would be moving about keeping an eye on the young ladies to make sure they weren't being unduly harassed. They were good clean. And you got to meet people, you got to talk to people. Ask this one up for a dance but

08:30 now you go to a night club and you can't even hear yourself think can you? They were good fun.

**Who were the people who were overseeing?**

I would say like the wharfies they had a hall and they used to hire it out and a band would come in, and they would have a few of the committee working there, and they would move around and just make sure no one had a drink, hip flask or anything like that. Very seldom was there ever any trouble.

**Which you never did?**

09:00 No. No.

**Was the Toc H still operating at that time?**

The?

**The Toc H. The dance hall that was operating in Townsville in World War 11 in Townsville.**

I never heard of that one no. There was the flying squadron, there was one up on Denham Street, the wharfies hall, the railway canteen used to have one, but no I don't know of that one.

**And what was the style of music at that point?**

09:30 We used to have what they called mostly 60/40. The old Canadian two step or the 'Pride of Erin', and the 40 which used to be the jive. You used to have 60/40 make up of the night sort of thing. So those that wanted to do the old style could and later on the other style would cut in, the jive and all that sort of thing.

**What's the jive?**

Where's this bloke been?

10:00 The Jive, just the modern dance sort of thing.

**You didn't mind a bit of the jive?**

I am a bit of the old school, I preferred the Pride of Erin and Canadian two step and gypsy tap. The wife was more into the jiving side of it.

**When it came to signing away your children's salvation, did you see any comparison**

10:30 **between Dad and the army? Signing your soul away.**

As I said I had no great hang ups about it. That's what Gwen wanted, and as I said she used to go to church every Sunday, if I didn't have a pack for church on Sunday, if we went out somewhere. No she was - she still is.

**Definitely a big step**

11:00 **in terms of your commitment and settling down?**

Oh my word. Yeah. We didn't have too much between us at the time as far as finances go, and we didn't have a vehicle for the first 5 years of our marriage.

**And you knew at that stage that your lifestyle was going to be challenging in terms of you being away and...?**

No I wasn't in the regular army I got married first before I went into the army.

**You had those ambitions though?**

I had those ambitions, but I didn't know if they went further on the back burner or not once I got

11:30 married. But we had a talk about it and away we went.

**When you enlisted what was your return of service?**

6 years.

**Did you have to sign a contract to that effect?**

Yeah, you could either sign up for 3 years or 6 years. With the 3 years you were regular army supplement, and with the 6 years you were regular army. With the

12:00 3 years you didn't get what we call superannuation now, the 6 years you got superannuation, they used to call it DFRB. Defence Forces Retirement Benefit. The 3 year bloke didn't get it. The 6 year bloke did, so that was just an encouragement for you to sign up for 6 years, but not that I minded at the time. That was the encouragement to get you to sign 6.

**And does supplement have any significance. Be regular army supplement?**

I don't know how that really worked but they

12:30 weren't - they were regular army but they weren't regular - they were the 6 year blokes called a supplement to the regular army.

**The 6 years would be more likely to get overseas or...?**

I would say they would have a leg in more promotion opportunities, and jobs and that sort of thing yes.

**I just want to move to Kapooka again. Just talk a bit more about the physical training that you were put through?**

Oh,

13:00 it was pretty physical. You had to be - one of them was you had to pull yourself up on a beam and touch the beam with the instep of your foot. I think you had to do that 3 or 5 times. But that was just one of them, but there was 20 miles of march - go for 20 milers. 7 miles and you had to run every day and do push ups. I would say it was the fittest I have ever been when I finished recruit corps training.

13:30 **You would have had to have been pretty fit before you got started though surely?**

Oh yeah, there was a couple of blokes that if you didn't reach the standard you were back squadded. Say if you have done.

**You were what sorry?**

Back squadded. Say if you done 3 or 4 weeks, and you weren't keeping up with the rest of the team, you went back with the new platoon starting. So that added another length of time whatever you had done, they added that on to your recruit training.

14:00 And if you still failed you would probably be discharged. That's what they called back squadding, even for weapons handling, or physical fitness, if you didn't attain, the required standard they would put you back and start again.

**Is that squadding with a D or a T?**

Squadding. You go back to the next squad.

**I imagine there would have been a lot of injuries sustained as well given the high demands**

14:30 **of the physical activity?**

I can't recall – this is going back. I can't recall any undue, there might have been sprains, I can't recall anyway. I can't recall anything major. I am not saying it didn't happen, but I can't recall any.

**And you talked about the marches, you talked about the pulling yourself up, what were some of the other things, did you do obstacle courses?**

Oh yeah, you had to climb ropes and that sort of stuff yeah.

15:00 Climb up and touch the top and come down or go over the cargo nets and roll down the other side, or the obstacle course running. It was all part of it yeah. It was good fun really, because you were young and as you get on a bit you slow down. But you pit yourself against the other blokes. I don't think it done anyone any harm.

**And, had you been playing rugby up until you joined?**

Yes, but I had a game of rugby

15:30 union in the army, of course you couldn't in those days league wasn't allowed to be played in the army.

**Why was that?**

It was considered a professional sport and union was the – like the old school sport. No, I read the other day where some blokes played league. In my time in the army there was no league, you could only play league or AFL [Australian Rules Football].

**I can imagine the officer's playing union but not the troops.**

That's all you

16:00 could play, you couldn't play league they didn't have a league set up. I had a game of union and I got tackled hung on to the ball and getting up to play the ball, and of course you know what union, I said bugger this, I played hockey after that.

**So did sport play a big part?**

Sport plays a big part. Because it's a physical thing, particularly in battalion. Because it's all team work, you are playing as a team. Hockey, union, AFL and it's the physical thing and keeps you

16:30 fit. Plays a big part. Boxing, if you are a boxer in the battalion you got special rations and your meat was increased. All those sort of things because you were in the boxing team.

**What?**

Yeah, you didn't go bush. In Malaya we had blokes that hardly went bush because they were training and their rations were upgraded to give them the fitness.

**What is that about?**

It's all about

17:00 unit pride about winning – beating the other unit, I was never in boxing, but companies between companies and battalions.

**Is that a hang over from the British Army days, where boxing was...?**

Oh if you were – boxing was one of them, but if you were in the top union team too you got out of a lot of the work with training for the battalion team or

17:30 whatever. Sport played a big part. Jock straps [athletes] got away with a fair bit. They used to – blokes would be going bush and the jocks would be back there and they used to cause a bit of rift within the unit.

**I can imagine.**

The officers were 100% behind the jocks so, didn't go too far.

**And tell me what did you learn about officer/troop relationship while you were at Kapooka?**

At

18:00 Kapooka, it's very formal. Ingleburn slackens off a bit, and the battalion slackens off a bit more, but at Kapooka it's very – the corporal at Kapooka, he's up there, even a corporal but no officer's you just – they were another thing. And as I say a corporal, sergeant, you didn't even look sideways

18:30 so to speak. Not that way. No, NCO's were pretty special.

**Was it a respect that was there or?**

If they earned it but I still think they had to earn it, just because they had it on there it didn't come automatic. They could be firm but they had to be fair to get the blokes respect. If they were just - for want of a better word, fair bastards, well they

19:00 they might have got the job done, but they didn't get the respect.

**When you went into infantry was that even more pronounced, that need for earning respect?**

I think so but it was a bit more casual. You had more of a like we are talking you could talk a bit more loose, but at Kapooka you didn't we didn't sit here and talk to an officer. But the bloke he had to earn the respect

19:30 you done what you were told but you didn't do it in a manner that brought out the best of you.

**What was discipline like at Kapooka?**

Yeah, it was pretty - well that's what it's all about Kapooka, you give an order and I obey it, that's basically what Kapooka's about, teaching you about your basic soldiering and discipline is the

20:00 corner stone of that, foundation stone of that.

**Do you recall what was the punishment was like for the people who didn't fall into line?**

Well you got charged for different things. But I never fell foul. It wasn't like lashings or anything like that it wasn't physical. But you would be given extra duties, you might get more mess duties than you should sort of thing or things like that.

20:30 Or if you really went too far you got placed on a charge and fronted up and docked pay or - you couldn't get docked time out of the camp because we never got any. You could be docked pay and things like that.

**Do you recall anyone who didn't cope with that transition into army life?**

There's a few that had problems, but I don't recall anyone being discharged or

21:00 back squadded because of it, but there were those who took a while to come round so to speak. Some of them just weren't fully aware of what to expect. There was nothing drastic no. I think that most blokes that went there had a fair idea what they were in for.

**You mentioned before that you were cautious not seem like a big head or that you knew too much,**

21:30 **but did you feel that you naturally fell into a leadership role amongst the lads?**

Yeah I did, but I remember one night we were going to have like fixing bayonets next morning, it was one of our periods the next morning, and I was showing one of the blokes in the hut that night, and of course I was sprung, so that come up here, so I got a bit of stick about that. So I didn't do anything more. I found when I got to Ingleburn

22:00 I got more of a - because I knew things they could tell that I knew things. At Kapooka I kept it, after that particularly.

**You mentioned, we were talking about sport before. Were there any other ways of getting a release of having recreation while you were there?**

A release. From Kapooka.

**A breakaway from the actual army training?**

You couldn't go to the wet canteen

22:30 for 6 weeks. You used to have different coloured flashes on your epaulets, and that told the - any NCO's how long you had been there, and I just forget the colour but you couldn't go into the wet canteen until you had - might have been red or blue up on you. And I don't think we had a day out of camp until we had been there 8 weeks or 8 or 9 weeks or something like that.

**A solid introduction.**

23:00 It was, but that's what it is there for. If you don't get that you don't get the results sort of thing, I feel. What was the quality of your food like there. I can't recall any great - you got your feeds, and I am a pretty basic sort of a - you always get people that no matter what you put in front of them it is never good enough. It's

23:30 never. But I had no great dramas with it.

**Important part of your adaptation into army life.**

But I think as long as you are getting a fair feed and it's presented in a reasonable that's all you require, but I think some people are a bit hard to satisfy. They want top shelf [the very best] and they get a bit let down.

**They weren't still trying to get through these bully beef supplies?**

No.

24:00 The meals were pretty good yeah.

**What about the washing facilities out there, was it freezing cold?**

It was you done your own washing of course and sometimes the hot water didn't work in the showers too good. There was one bloke that didn't like the shower, and I remember we put him under the shower and give him a bit of scrub up because he was just, he just wasn't

24:30 showering and even though it was cold he was still a bit smelly.

**Leading to your infantry training at Ingleburn, I would like to go through specifically what you learnt about the various weapons that you issued with. Can you tell me about your 303 rifle?**

No. By then we had the 7.62 SLR. I had the 303 in the CMF, but when we went to the regular we got the 7.62 SLR.

**Can you talk me through that weapon?**

25:00 What?

**The specifications of it.**

It weighs about 10 lb it has a 20 round magazine, it's gas recoil operated, it's semi automatic, maintained it's a good weapon, it's a bit heavy but a good weapon. It can be fitted with a bayonet or a grenade launcher. It's robust but - made originally by

25:30 Belgium. FM 30 and Australia adopted it after the British Army adopted it.

**What does semi automatic mean?**

You have got to squeeze the trigger each time. An automatic you hold your finger on the trigger and it keeps firing. Semi automatic you haven't got to hand cock it or anything you just keep pulling the trigger, and as long as you have got rounds in the magazine it will keep firing.

**And what**

26:00 **were the main strengths as a weapon?**

A reliability, hard hitting, 7.62 round, it hit something that does a bit of damage, and as I said if it was well maintained as conditions allow, it's a reliable weapon.

**And did it have any major weaknesses?**

No

26:30 not major weaknesses no, but it was gas operated and sometimes you had to move the gas regulator to get a bit more gas. Increase the gas or decrease the gas, but other than that no, like any weapon, like any car, you will get defects. But by and large it was a good reliable weapon.

**In terms of regulating the gas how would you be judging that, is that just something...?**

You fired and it didn't fully eject the shell, you didn't push the

27:00 working parts into the breach block, well it mightn't be getting enough gas, so you would decrease the size of the gas because so much was allowed to come out and so much was allowed to come out on the piston. So if not enough was coming back on the piston you closed the hole up on the top to get more gas coming back on the piston.

**And you mentioned they could be fitted with a grenade launcher?**

You could fit a couple on them and you had a balustite cartridge you had a different cartridge your ball ammunition and it

27:30 just - it's got no solid head, it's just got the propulsion it fires the grenade launcher fits on and the grenade fits in the launcher and the balustite cartridge fires the grenade. We don't use them today.

**Why is that?**

You have got the grenade launchers that are specific grenade launchers.



**And were these standard issue**

28:00 **grenades that they used?**

No. They were an irga grenade, they were a different shape, a rocket shape grenade. The 303 rifle had a grenade discharger just the standard grenade and we used to put that in, but this was a purpose built grenade an irga grenade.

**And what sort of range would they be?**

About 150.

28:30 **So you spent quite a bit of time on the range learning them?**

Yes we did, we used to have what they called the mechanical range in those days, mechanical targets, and they were ones that if you hit them, they fell down. Which made more sense and gives you a better idea of your shooting ability rather than the target that just had the bulls eye and if you hit it - I don't know whether I hit it but anyway I have another go. But the mechanical range if you hit the target it would fall down. Come back up but it let you know you hit it. They were good,

29:00 gives you, your battle shooting gives you a better feeling than just hitting the bulls eye.

**And can you tell me how you would clean and maintain the SLR?**

Well you had to learn how to strip them, pull them apart, pull your breach block out, pull your piston out, clean all those parts up and lightly oil them, reassemble it. It just comes second nature.

29:30 **And you, I have been speaking to some of the guys from World War 11, they were pretty much trained that their rifle was a part of them, that they walked with it every?**

Once you went overseas you - everywhere you went you had your weapon with you.

**What were the major safety concerns on the range, or safety steps that you had to take, either carrying your rifle around or being...?**

Well you didn't load until you were on the mound. On the

30:00 mound facing the butts, and you didn't turn with that weapon once you - you only kept pointing that weapon up range. If you turned around you would get a fair old serve and rightly so.

**Would you only be served with ammunition on the range itself?**

Yes, and then all your equipment is inspected after the shoot to make sure you have got no

30:30 ammunition left over and they come along and inspect your weapon. My word yeah, that's and so they should.

**And obviously as well as your grenades and the bayonet, what were some of the other weapons you were exposed to at Ingleburn?**

At Ingleburn we had the machine gun, the L4 which was the heavy barrelled SLR, it had a tripod and a heavy barrel and 30 round magazine.

31:00 It was just a larger SLR, or the M60 machine gun we were getting into then. It was a belt vet American weapon.

**And could you explain maybe how were they tended to how would they be operated?**

One bloke could operate the M60 or the L4, not the L4 the L2. And but normally they had another bloke carrying ammo [ammunition], because one bloke couldn't carry

31:30 the gun nor all the ammo you would need. But normally operated by one man. You had a gun group, but they more or less assisted him and carried the ammo.

**Were they part of the rifle company?**

Oh yeah, they were part of the rifle company. The section was made up of in those days of 2 scouts. The second commander, the gun group, consisting of the gunner and the section 2IC [Second in Command] was the lance corporal, and 3 riflemen. There were 3 group

32:00 scout gun rifle group.

**Sorry, so the rifle you were carrying the SLRs and the gun group were carrying the machine guns?**

One.

**One machine gun. The ammunition**

Per section.

**The weapon itself, does the tripod remain attached?**

Bipod.

**Bipod.**

You fold it and you flick it down when you want to stand it on the bipod, but when you are carrying it it's up. And - but in like in Vietnam we might have carried 900,000 rounds for the M60

32:30 and you spread that through the section. Each bloke might have 50 or 100 rounds of link.

**And sorry the L2?**

The L2 was the heavy barrelled SLR.

**Could one person carry that?**

Yes. But we didn't use that over there, they let that go to like transport units and that sort of thing. We trained on it but we didn't have that overseas.

**And as an infantryman you were trained in the use of all those weapons?**

33:00 Oh yeah. 3.5 rocket launcher. Anti tank weapon. I ended up in the mortar platoon, so I was on mortars then. But I didn't do that at Ingleburn.

**You didn't use mortars?**

No once you get to a battalion then there's a specialist platoon within the battalion it's not a general knowledge weapon you know you specialise in mortars.

**And so at Ingleburn were you exposed to a range of**

33:30 **I guess a small exposure to a whole bunch of different specialities?**

No, we did gas training. We put in a building with gas dischargers and put on the mask and gas mask and that, but other than we were just basic with what happens in the section, with what weapons that are carried within the section.

34:00 When you get to a battalion you might go to pioneers or sigs or mortars but they are specialist platoons and they are generally come from within rifle companies, but older blokes that have been in the battalion for a while and then go to the support company.

**Your days would have mainly been focused on learning your weapons trying to become familiar with them, becoming proficient in their use...?**

Tactics and navigation, map reading and

34:30 aerial photography and study aerial photographs, and learning how to work out what the terrain is like and map reading, working out how to move around the country the best way to move by looking at the map.

**Was that largely theory or practical?**

No, you did theory and practical. You went to the room, the classroom and you learned how to read maps and compass' and slide projectors, not slide projectors, a protractor, and

35:00 then you went out and applied those lessons in the bush.

**And be able to find the best path...?**

Yeah, and they might say grid reference 456797 you got to finish up with grid reference, and you had to find your way to it yeah. Which is all good.

**And what were the major principles of navigation on land were they taking 3 point bearings...?**

Taken by your compass on a bearing and by your feet by paces.

35:30 Say if the going was fairly good I used to work on about 120 paces to 100 yards, so in a section you would get 1 or 2 blokes pacing, so every 120 paces approximately you travel 100 yards. And they would either have a length of string and tie a knot in it or every time they done 100 and say, we've come 700 yards. And you are going on the bearing and when you get to a certain point you say,

36:00 O.K. we will change to 3600 or 3500 and away you go again on a set distance by your pacing. But in the jungle it's a bit different again, you have got to work along with your compass in your hand because you can't see - like here we'll say we'll go to that hill over there and keep left of that tree but in the jungle you can only see that wall there.

**And obviously as well as**

36:30 **you using 3 point bearings on your map to be able to work out your position?**

Re section.

**Re section.**

You could do that yeah.

**Or take a visual off features around you...?**

That's to find out where you are. Oh my word that's all part of it yeah. You picked the right hill.

37:00 I used to like map reading it was good.

**And aerial photography were those images supplied by the air force were they?**

I would imagine they would, I couldn't say for sure but I imagine so. They were just to teach you the basics of relating that aerial photograph to the map. Although the map has only got kind of lines and symbols representing trees and that, if you have a look at the aerial photograph of the same area you can see exactly what's there and learn to

37:30 relate what's there, because all the map is a birds eye view of the earth's surface. So you relate the aerial photograph to the map and it gives you a better understanding of what you are looking at.

**Is aerial photography something that became more prevalent in terms of your operation as well?**

Not down at section level, but at company level, the diggers down at the section level didn't have a lot to do with it, it was just in your training to show you how maps are made and you

38:00 relate the type of country to the map. I suppose they used them at company level or battalion level in the intelligence level, but once we went overseas the diggers in the platoon didn't have much to do with them, they had maps.

**Who were your main instructors at Ingleburn?**

An officer by the name of Sutton, Reg Sutton platoon commander.

38:30 One of the battalion sergeant's was Clark, no. Too far back.

**So when you were operating generally in that platoon structure was your...?**

Yeah, each sergeant got a section and the platoon commander has got the 3 or 4 sections whatever it is at the time, and your main instructor is your section sergeant. And your platoon commander oversees

39:00 what they are doing.

**And your exposure to the larger battalion or the company was relatively rare?**

And you mainly stayed within your platoon because what you could learn in your platoon was relevant to your battalion so when you got to your battalion you knew where you fitted in, if every battalion worked like your platoon you knew what the rest of the platoons were doing.

**How often would you be brought together en masse, would there be large**

39:30 **parades?**

No it was more or less not in Ingleburn we didn't do much, but in Kapooka we did. Because that was all part of the training. But in Ingleburn that was more bush work more tactics weapons. Basic skills like that.

**Can you talk to me a little bit about the basic tactics that you were trained in?**

If you are moving in single file and you get someone who starts shooting at your front

40:00 what do you do? So you had to know if there was high ground to the right, the gun went to the right, if there was no high ground the gun still went to the right. In these that's the sort of drill that you learn. And as it turned out in Borneo we had a contact but the drill just worked brilliantly, that was our first contact. And the gun goes to the right the rifle group closes up the scout the section commander checks with the scout what is happening up there and he deducts from there what he is going to do.

40:30 It all sounds simple I know but. You have got to have that basic drill so that when the shit hits the fan everyone knows what is happening, to a point. And once they have all gone to that point then the orders are issued then the section commander or platoon commander issues orders. There's no good everyone saying, "What are you going to do, I don't know what are you going to do?" You have got to have a drill, whether it be contact front, ambush right

41:00 ambush left. Contact rear, there's a drill for all of them followed to a point where everyone knows what is going on. Then the section or platoon commander takes over.

41:15 End of tape

## Tape 4

00:32 **We were just talking about the tactical training you received at Ingleburn, was that a separate section of your training or was that something that was being constantly reinforced through your route marches and...?**

Tactics is infantry work all the way through, that's your bread and butter [main activity]. Infantry all they are there for is to take or hold ground. So

01:00 have got to learn to do either or both. It's an ongoing thing. Because engineers you might drive a bulldozer or a grader and that's what you do. And infantry your task is take and/or hold ground, and you have got to have the best tactics for it.

**And I guess you are not being trained to make tactical decisions per se are you are meant to respond tactics given...?**

01:30 At a section level the section commander is and the platoon level the platoon commander is yeah. A lot of jungle work comes down to section work. You are a company you are not a battalion you are just that little group that little unit.

**As an infantryman you are not there to I guess make decisions about the tactics to employ but rather to react given the situation?**

But as you get up in rank you are there to make the

02:00 decisions.

**And within your section you said that you had a sergeant?**

No. A lance corporal and 7 or 8 privates.

**How long would a corporal have been in the infantry on average?**

That can vary, when I first went in the length of time was anything up to 6 years, when I got out national servicemen were being corporals within their

02:30 national service time. So depending on circumstances. I was about 3.5 years when I got my corporal.

**What sort of methods or techniques would be used to - in terms of your training if you are out doing route marches to what's the word I am looking for, to**

03:00 **mock coming under fire?**

They would probably have one of the instructors that go ahead and get in the scrub somewhere and either fire blanks or you might get another section or platoon act as enemy, and they would also be doing their training and you would be doing your training but you have a clash and it's from there that you work out what each other is doing.

**What were the corps drills**

03:30 **that you needed to learn, there was the front on assault?**

Contact fronts.

**How would you respond to that?**

Return fire if they weren't already, they would go to ground and return fire your gun group would go to the right if there was no high ground, if there was high ground to the left they would go to the left. And everyone would know this because they could see the ground. So you knew where the gun had gone, and the rifle group would close up waiting for the section commander to assess. Once the

04:00 gun has gone to the right and is returning fire, the scout - the rifle group has moved up and the scout group down on the ground, the section commander talks to the scout group, "What's going on what have we got, can we handle it?" and then he says, "Righto rifle group we'll do this or do that". That's where the drill stops and then he stops.

**What does closing up mean, does that mean to be in line with the scouts?**

You are in line, and once the gun group has gone has gone to the right or to the left there's a gap

04:30 and the rifle group closes up. Behind the section commander ready to do whatever is required to do.

**So when walking as a section, you would have the scouts at the front and then the gun group?**

Scouts, section commander, then the gun group, rifle group. The second 2IC travels with the gun group.

**So you would have contact from the front?**

Yes.

05:00 **And did you say ambush from the left or the right?**

Yeah if you get ambushed from the right or you get ambushed from the left if you are moving along and you receive from the right or the left, or you can get, as it happened a couple of times you can get contact rears. You have got to virtually know what to do in those situations. The drill, there's an ambush it's fairly simple you have just got to go into the ambush.

**Go into the ambush?**

If you try and run through it you have got

05:30 more chance of being hit, you are better off going into the ambush and - anyone once fire is coming at them, is not as cool calm and collected as when they are sending it out. So if you can take the initiative off them who have initially got it through the ambush, if you can give it back to them and change their mode of thinking, you have got a better chance of getting out if you go to ground or go through

06:00 the ambush.

**Could you maybe walk us through that drill, if you have a contact on the right sorry if you have an ambush from the right?**

Those caught in the ambush go into the ambush, if it's a good ambush you are not going to get out of it anyway, to be honest. But if you go into the ambush you have got a better chance of getting out of it. If you start putting fire back at them, they're not as cool calm and collected as they are there just sending it your way. Anyone that has got it whistling around

06:30 changes their train of thought.

**There wasn't a set way in which the section would split up and face the ambush because it would depend on ...?**

It was whoever was caught in the ambush.

**And what would the others do on the other side?**

They would go to ground or if the - wait, that was the drill. Once that happened those in the ambush would - or those that's were left the

07:00 drill finishes and it becomes a tactical situation. Where the platoon commander, section commander has got to make decisions.

**If you have contact from the rear?**

You just reverse it. Those who are in the rear are the rifle group and then the gun group would go.

**Go for the high ground?**

Yeah, go left or right, always go to the right if there is no high ground, because everyone knows where it's gone. But it just reverses from the

07:30 moving forward. But you have got to have those drills otherwise it gets a bit of shemozzle [a mess].

**They are defensive drills or defensive tactics, were there offensive tactics you trained in as well?**

Yeah but they are not a drill, they are a laid down pre planned, how you are going to do it, it's not a drill sort of thing. The defensive ones are action drills, whereas if you are in

08:00 an offensive situation it's designated how you are going to do it, whether it be 2 up or 1 up, or how you are going to do it, it's done before, explained to you, not explained to you but you are told what's going to happen.

**So that would obviously be a part of your training...?**

Oh yeah you done that too yeah but it's not a drill I am saying.

**Yes, O.K. I know the distinction.**

08:30 **If it's a platoon attack you might generally have 2 sections up and one section back.**

**Moving to Woodside and the raising of 4th RAR, can you describe Woodside for me I haven't heard what it is like?**

It's an old World War 11 camp and during the national

09:00 service period or the early national service period, the national servicemen of South Australia were trained there. And we went there in February of 64. And it was still basically how it was in World War

11. They did put a new shower block in and hot water system, but other than that the buildings were the same as what was there in World War 11.

**Was it a slow trickle in terms of pulling the battalion together?**

Oh yeah, probably took

09:30 about 6 or 8 weeks or maybe a bit longer to really flesh it out. But it would have been 6 or 8 weeks before you could say you had a battalion on the ground. They come from 1RAR and 2RAR, and 3RAR was in Malaya and from training establishments.

**You came in from 1RAR?**

I come in from 1RAR yeah.

**Were there other guys you got to know in that short time that came across with you?**

Yeah. Well my platoon commander in 1RAR I ended up with him in

10:00 4RAR in Malaya. And a few other blokes that you come across, but I didn't get to know many of the 1RAR blokes, only the blokes that I had gone through recruiting corps training because I wasn't with 1 all that long, so I didn't get to know the 1RAR blokes outside the platoon.

**Was forming a sense of identity for the battalion an important thing?**

It's the whole crux of it, your section, your platoon, your company, you have to have that identity.

10:30 **Are you able to put into words what the identity of 4RAR would have been as opposed to perhaps 1RAR, you had the small amount of experience with?**

We were lucky in that we had in our founding CO, we had a good CO who's thoughts were primarily with the troops, he wanted to get that - he called it his family, and he wanted to get that battalion like a big family. And

11:00 he done his utmost to do that and to this day 4RAR has still got a good reunion, good, we had reunions every 5 years, now we've come to 3 because there's too many falling off the perch [dying]. It still has a strong following, it's just like a family. And that's what his aim was, David Thomson, and he pretty well succeeded. I remember I was up here on an exercise

11:30 and I was going down to the creek to wash in the creek and it was a bit of a slack time, and the CO was coming up the hill towards me, I knew him, and he went he when he went past me he said, "Hello Private Fairbrother". And I was absolutely astounded, I had never fronted him, never spoken to him, and he knew who I was. That's the sort of thing that, I don't know how he knew who I was but anyway to have the CO know the digger of a battalion, pretty good.

**It's a pretty**

12:00 **important priority for them in terms of trying to create a family, would be to look after the families of the men?**

Oh yes, he - if Gwen was here she would tell you they looked after the families very well. If they could keep them happy they kept you happy. The family weren't getting a good trot well you weren't happy at work because your mind was elsewhere. He did very well with the battalion. Battalion wives and children.

**Did that include creating a network**

12:30 **between the families?**

They had a ladies auxiliary and the CO's wife could be approached by any wife. She had any problems, and they had their sport, tennis and basketball, so yeah, it was - in that respect it was very good.

**Was another important part of 4RAR's identity the fact that it was the first battalion to be formed on Australian soil?**

Yeah that was made a lot of. We were the first battalion

13:00 formed, the other 3 had been formed in Malaya and Japan. We were the first one formed. But we couldn't get any gear for a while because the Australian Army was being pretty static virtually since World War 11, it only had the 3 battalions and equipment was a bit hard to come by and we froze down there because we only had these jumpers, that's all you

13:30 couldn't wear non issue gear, and we ended up getting the American combat jackets, we were the first battalion to get them in the Australian Army, and they were good, they kept us warm. I remember one day one man had left his jumper at home, so everyone had to take their jumpers off, and it was a cold day. He wasn't too popular.

**Those days**

14:00 **you love to hate teams.**

The battalion has got a good bond. I am not saying that everyone who served in it thinks that way, but by and large it had a good report.

**And sorry how long were you there was it a month or two?**

Woodside? 20 months.

**Oh sorry. How would you describe the morale of the battalion after 20 months?**

14:30 Good after 20, but not good at first, apparently a few blokes went AWOL [Absent Without Leave], because once again it was a new battalion and smaller start, like starting recruit training or corps training again, and everyone had to go through like when I went to 1RAR I was only like one bloke moving into the platoon, or twenty went into the battalion, but when it's a new battalion forming, once again you went through the

15:00 whole gelling process and you had to get all these different people, and attitudes and characters and personalities to blend in, different if you are reinforcing something, but if you are starting from scratch [the beginning] it's a big job.

**Was there any particular tactics employed by the CO and others to create that gelling other than just getting on with the job?**

He used to show his face

15:30 a fair bit down amongst the lines, and he tried to have sporting events as much as he could so people could come together on a non military type basis and met more and he made sure the married quarters were well looked after as well as could be done. Made sure the wives had as little problems as possible. He done a fair bit to get the battalion to be a happy little

16:00 battalion.

**Were you playing hockey at that point?**

Yeah I was playing hockey. The battalion hockey team. I used to play a bit of hockey as a young fella, so when I had a go at the union and I didn't like that because, I played hockey then.

**And you mentioned that you had a kid when you were down at Woodside?**

Yes, we had a daughter at Woodside. Where Woodside is, I don't know whether you know it, it's up in the hills near

16:30 Oak Park, and we lived in Adelaide itself which is 27 miles away.

**That's a big distance?**

Yeah, the camp's up there and the married quarters are - near the harbour in Adelaide, and getting to work and home on time wasn't easy, we didn't have a vehicle. So I had to rely on paying 2 bob to get a lift home on the leave truck. They had a

17:00 leave truck, one of the transport blokes would drive it. Pay him 2 bob to help cover the cost of the fuel you could get a lift down and that. Or, one of the older blokes would give you a lift down in a car. A lot of times you didn't get home because you didn't have the means of getting home and back. But yes we had a daughter born in Adelaide.

**Was that your first child?**

No, Kim was born here in Townsville before I went into the army.

**What was it like having 2 kids to**

17:30 **look after?**

I didn't have much of that problem, that was the wife's side of things. Yeah, we had the best married quarters down there, it was a new house. It was well set up, we borrowed off the army, you could get a loan off the army and we got a loan and bought some furniture and that was the first furniture we virtually owned.

18:00 No, but the quarters in Adelaide were alright, just they were a long way from - there were some married quarters up in Woodside, but they were mainly for the officers and that and the digs went down to Adelaide.

**Your wife was able to settle into that sort of lifestyle easily enough?**

She had her days, yeah when I first took her to Sydney she cried, she just wanted to go home, because she knew no one and as I

18:30 say I went to Puckapunyal within a few days of getting her there and she's in the big smoke [the city] and new no one 20 odd and a daughter, so yeah she had her days.

**How did she react to the news that you were off to Malaya?**

Oh she knew that from the word go that the battalion was the next one to go to Malaya, when I said I was going to 4RAR, I said they were the next battalion to go to Malaya,

19:00 she went along with that. It was a bit of an experience for her to go over there.

**She was looking forward to going overseas?**

I think so yeah, I believe she was. I mean you know we'd never been out of Queensland prior to that, and as I said there was no actual war like activities going on there at the time, so yeah she never really said I don't think but no she didn't really mind going.

**Can you describe for me what the base and quarters**

19:30 **were like in Malaya?**

Terendak Garrison itself was only built in 1960. Prior to that the Australian battalions were up around Eepo, up the north of Malaya, and the Malayan emergency wound down they moved the battalion down into a commonwealth brigade and they built Terendak Garrison just outside Malacca and it was all new,

20:00 so we got there in 65 so it was relatively new.

**Was there a period of transition between yourselves and 3 RAR?**

No we more or less we sent a company over and they sent a company home, we sent another company over and they sent another company home. You always had a leg on the ground so to speak if anything went wrong, you know you might have had two companies to 3RAR and 2 companies for 4RAR but there was still a battalion there and it's done by

20:30 companies.

**Was it literally day to day swapping, or was there a week handover between you and those you were replacing?**

No more or less as we flew over on the plane, they more or less - because they had to vacate the married quarters, because we were moving into the married quarters, they were getting on more or less the same plane and coming home.

**Could you describe the barracks in more detail, what sort of facilities were there?**

21:00 The barracks? They were tropical type barracks, they had a large overhang because they get a fair bit of rain, as you know in Malaya and there weren't fly screened, but they were all open, and there was 4 blokes to a room. They were pretty good barracks and they had mosquito nets for the mosquitoes, but they were open cool fans.

21:30 As I say they were only 5 years old when we got there.

**How far from the town of Malacca were you?**

Half an hour, something like that. We weren't right in Malacca yeah, we were on the beach at Toreda there. Malacca was I suppose half an hour.

**Can you describe the town for me?**

Malacca, it's an old style town.

22:00 It's where Francis Xavier [Saint] is buried, it's originally a Portuguese settlement until the British took over. So it's quite old in terms of early European settlement and in those days Malacca was a bit of a backwater, it wasn't like Singapore or Kuala Lumpur or Penang, it was just a smaller type town. Very

22:30 Malaysian. It didn't have too much European influence sort of thing.

**Do you know why it was chosen to host the brigade?**

No. I think I read one time where they said Malacca had - didn't have any industries. Malacca is a state also. There's the township of Malacca, and there's the state of Malacca. It's one of the backwaters of Malaya, so they put it there to try and

23:00 put some economy in the area.

**Was it a focal point in any way of the CTs operations?**

No, the CTs by this stage were pushed back up on to the Malay/Thai border. Earlier in the war in the emergency in that area, but that had long been cleared and pushed up to the border.

**And, in your experience what was the attitude of the local people to your**

23:30 **presence there?**



They were quite friendly, we used to play shuttle cock with them and play hockey. We never had any great dramas with them, they were pretty friendly sort of people.

**Do you think they differentiated between yourselves and the English?**

Yes they did on pricing. If you had a pommie [English] accent you were charged one rate if you had a Kiwi accent you were charged one rate and

24:00 if you had a Aussie accent you were charged the most. Because they knew there was different pay structures, and the Aussie was one of the highest paid, and the Pom was one of the lowest paid.

**Is that right?**

So the shrewd old dealer as soon as you started talking he would work out which one you were and charge you accordingly.

**What sort of things would you be bargaining over that the army wasn't providing you**

24:30 **with?**

Being married you had to buy all your own tucker [food] and, they just provided the house, you have to buy all your own – just like living here.

**Yeah right, I didn't know that.**

If you are in barracks single, yeah they supply the rations. But if you are married it's just like living here.

**So was that a challenge in terms of learning about...?**

No, because at the barracks in Terendak they had their like a shopping

25:00 centre, an English type shopping centre. Like if you wanted to shop there you shopped there, if you wanted to go buy locally you could local it's up to you. As you were there longer and you learnt more of the language, got more wiley to the ways sort of thing, you done more shopping outside, it was cheaper.

**Was it something you grew to enjoy?**

I didn't mind it yeah, I didn't mind seeing how the other half lives so to speak.

25:30 A lot of them, most of them could talk more English than we could talk Malay. We didn't have any trouble with the majority of them talking to them.

**Was there any part of that culture that was kind of disturbing or that upset you?**

Well we had an amah [a nanny or servant], she was an Indian amah, in the first house. She invited us home, I just forget for what it was, not a Chinese New Year, but some

26:00 Hindu festival. It was at her house, and of course the day I asked to use the toilet and they direct me to a room and there was the hole down there, and when the tide come in the tide come in and when the tide went out the tide went out and that was the toilet. But she was clean and everything was clean but that. So that was a bit of an eye opener.

26:30 And the amahs toilet in camp we had our ordinary toilet and we had a flush on the ground toilet, a different set up.

**Can you just explain the role the amahs were playing?**

Gwen could tell you better. Their duties were basically what the woman of the house directed. Some did cooking amah's and some had – the officers' generally get two amahs.

27:00 A cooking one and a house cleaning one. The other ranks generally had the house cleaning one. And they would sweep the house out, make the beds, do the washing.

**They were paid servants?**

Yeah. They got paid yeah. The army paid that though.

**Was that the give jobs to the locals?**

Probably was, I think they

27:30 had to as I said the reason why they went to Malacca. But also they reckoned the wives going over to the tropics, particularly English wives coming from Germany or England and the next thing they are in the tropics and they have got a few kids to look after and yeah. So I think it was a bit of 2 bob each way, to help the economy and to take the weight off the wives. They also provided gardeners who done the

28:00 gardening and kept the lawns down and that sort of stuff.

**How did you guys get on with the British?**

Yeah there were days. I think we had more trouble with the Kiwis than the British.

**Really?**

Yeah the New Zealanders and Australians have always had a bit of rivalry.

**In what way did that express itself?**

I never got involved much

28:30 but there are 3 bars outside the gates, at the Garrison, one was the Wellington Bar, one was the Sydney Bar and one was the London bar and neither should be entered by the other. They used to have a few blues [fights] there.

**Who had the best bar?**

I never went in them, I was married.

**You keep pulling that one out but I reckon that's bollocks.**

No I didn't do that much drinking

29:00 to be honest. We had a fairly good social life. We used to have dances and parties and that sort of thing.

**In terms of professionalism or in terms of work there was a good spirit of conversation between the various battalions?**

Oh yes. We used to play sport with the Kiwis and the Poms, I never had any hassles. There was some - it wouldn't matter who it was if it was another battalion of Australians next door there would have been

29:30 problems. We played sport against them and different days. Different days sporting events we would go over to them or they would come over to us. It was pretty good.

**What about your relationship with the local Malay Police. Any problems with the fellas...?**

I got pulled up once, and he reckoned I was speeding, and he asked me to go around the back and open the boot up, I didn't twig [realise] till later I was

30:00 supposed to give him a little sling [bribe] I think, and that would have been the end of the story, but as it was I had to go and pay a fine. I didn't pay a fine I had to go into the police station and they give me a bit of a lecture. But if I had slung him a few dollars I would have been right. That's the only thing I had with them. Yeah, they were pretty good. To be honest our Australian MPs [Military Police] were the

30:30 worst, they were real officious, they were worse than the Pommie red caps [English Military Police].

**Why do you think that was?**

I just think, they were our own. Poms would probably say their red caps were the worst, or the Kiwis would probably say - I think if you are an Australian with an Australian MP you got hit harder than if you were a Pom or a Kiwi, they might give you a bit of a talk and move you on, but when you are their own it is probably what it comes down to.

**So the Kiwi and Pommie MPs**

31:00 **had the right to take you guys in as well?**

Well they would probably take us in and hand us over, and throw us in and take us back to our unit and say this bloke's done such and such and hand us over.

**So you keep telling us you were married and you didn't get up to anything, but did you become more responsible and focused in those years by the time you got to Malaysia, being married and having kids?**

31:30 Yeah to be honest I think I missed out on a lot of - if you want to call it fun, I missed out on a lot of fun. I think a few married blokes would tell you the same thing. I was quite content to do my soldiering and come home and be a father and a husband.

**It was a pretty intense period of maturing then, before you joined the...?**

It was, it was, sometimes I think that I wasted a few years then, but I think back and to things that

32:00 happened and no - you can't have it both ways. I have been married so. There were a few marriages that didn't last, but it's up to yourself, or it's up to the 2 of you.

**How did you adapt to the conditions over there, did you adapt to the heat and humidity well enough?**

Well I think coming from North Queensland it helped us, but some of the people had never been to the tropics, from down

32:30 south, they found it hard. The Poms it used to knock them around. A lot of them come from Germany.

The battalion would have been in Germany before they come out here, or somewhere like that. They found it a bit different. But I didn't find it too bad, as I say coming from up here we had an idea what the heat was like.

**You did have 5 weeks in Canungra before coming across?**

Yeah, I had 3 goes at Canungra yeah.

**Three**

33:00 **goes?**

Yeah, before I went to Vietnam I had to go through again.

**I was just wondering on your way to Malaya, the whole battalion had gone up there?**

Company by company. Then when you get there you go through what they call the jungle warfare school over there it is Kodatingi, it's another Canungra but not as bad as Canungra.

**In Malaya?**

Yeah.

**Koda?**

Kodatingi. Koda is hill, tingi is hill.

33:30 **How long were you in Kodatingi for?**

Oh, probably only done 3 or 4 weeks there, just to acclimatise you get you into the run of things with the country and that. As a matter of fact we were there and heard this noise one day, and a mob of Yanks [Americans] coming down the road. This is getting away from the story. And they had come over they were going to Vietnam, this was in the early days. And they had the old flag up and you know what the 'ol Yanks do, runnin' and singin'.

34:00 We wanted what we come across.

**This was 65 was it?**

Yeah. They would have been trying to polish up a bit of their jungle skills before they went to Vietnam.

**What were the various aspects of jungle warfare that you had been trained up in?**

Before we went?

**And at Kodatingi what were...?**

Closed countries are a different kettle of fish [situation], you might only

34:30 see one other bloke or two other blokes in your whole section, because the country's that close, and it's harder for you to control your men and it's harder for them to react to you because the country is so close. And once you go down, it's even worse, because of the little shrubbery at the bottom, when you walk in you have got a bit of a - but when you go to ground it's pretty hard to see

35:00 anybody else.

**So there is specific training for closed country?**

It's much the same, those in the ambush go into the ambush and those that are left work out what they are going to do then, what's going to happen.

**What about booby trap training?**

Yeah we did booby trap training, different devices and things like that. 3RAR went before us, 3 of theirs were

35:30 killed were from mines.

**That had been a tactic employed by the...?**

Indonesians? No in Borneo we were against the Indonesians, that's what we were training for at the time, to go to Borneo.

**Is that right? You had landed in Malaya as part of your...?**

Part of the 28th Commonwealth Brigade, part of

**Part of your training?**

Yeah.

**But there was already an eye at that stage to the fact that the...?**

Oh yeah we were going

36:00 to Borneo because 3RAR had been and we were the next. A Kiwi battalion went, a Pommie battalion went and an Australian battalion went. They just rotated.

**Was anyone from the 28th Brigade sent up to patrol along the Thai border?**

They were doing exercises – still doing exercises but they weren't striking too much no. As a matter of fact the old – what's his name, he walked out in 89 didn't he?

36:30 Something Peng. He walked out with the remnants in 89, they never got him, but they were reduced to about 150/200 men by then, but they never got him.

**This is Chin Peng [Communist leader in Malaysia]?**

Chin Peng that's right. He came out – walked out in about 89.

**So, as fellas from 4RAR were actually up there doing exercises?**

We didn't go right up on the Malay/Thai border no, we went up as far as

37:00 Kuala Terengganu on the east coast, we went up that side. But we didn't go right up to the Malay/Thai border no. 3RAR did. They were earlier than us, they went up.

**So you guys considered your presence in Malaya to be largely almost peace keeping or...?**

Strategic reserve. In case anything happened plus Borneo.

**Borneo was?**

Confrontation was still in full swing at that stage.

37:30 That's what they called it. Indonesian confrontation that's what they called it, they had a Malay emergency. Then they had the Indonesian confrontation.

**Confrontation was again largely kept pretty quiet wasn't it?**

Yes, once again it was a political thing you know, like a couple or 3 of our blokes were wounded in an ambush, and when they were in Singapore they got interviewed and that, and one of them said, "Ah it's just like shooting ducks in a pond". And he got into a hell of a lot of strife for that. Because you could shoot them, but you couldn't say that.

38:00 But, that's politics.

**What did you understand the political situation to be?**

Soekarno [President] didn't want the formation of Malaysia which constituted, Malaya, Singapore, Brunei and Sabah. He didn't want that to take place, and that was what he was trying to prevent.

**And you were obviously aware of success they had in driving the Dutch out as you said before...?**

38:30 Well they more or less give it to him. In 49 after that, but Irianjaya and that and Borneo, they moved into Borneo and that's – see Sarawak only forms down this side, the whole island is known as Borneo, whereas Sabah, Brunei and Sarawak on the northern west coast.

**Were you aware of the history in World War 11 of Australia's involvement in Borneo?**

Yeah. Two

39:00 Australian Divisions, AIF [Australian Imperial Force] Divisions, yeah. But they were on the east coast. We were on the Sarawak side Kuching side.

**There's a bit of a history there?**

In Borneo?

**Tradition, Australian Army tradition.**

Yeah. I was aware of that.

**And what tactics were the Indonesians employing?**

Infiltrating mainly, to come over and stir up the local population and get them to rise and stand up against the

39:30 establishment, and assassinate and just generally cause a bit of mayhem.

**Were they uniformed troops or...?**

No. The ones we hit weren't no, they were in whatever, some had sandshoes on bits of webbing and

whatever they wanted to carry, the ones we encountered.

**It must have been strange coming up against an enemy in sandals.**

40:00 **With it being a professional...?**

In Vietnam some of them didn't have shoes. But they still had good weapons.

**From your head space at the time, being a young infantryman being trained in a professional army?**

Not confronting a uniformed enemy, yeah. We were told - we were aware they were guerrilla type force, they weren't coming over - in our time, they weren't coming over in formed units,

40:30 they were infiltrating and taking the back roads in and it was our job to stop them from getting over.

40:42 End of tape

## Tape 5

00:00 **I just want to talk to you about your social life in Malaya. Or, actually your family, your children, they went to school there did they, what was the school they went to?**

The eldest one did yes. She went to an English speaking school yes. When she came back to Australia, our relations asked if she was ours because she spoke with an

01:00 English accent, because she was educated in the English schools, and got more into their type of work. But she probably only done grade 1 and 2 over there.

**Did you children adjust easily to their new life?**

I think children just roll with the - wherever Mum and Dad are, they may have found it strange but we didn't find anything different in them.

01:30 Bit of a novelty seeing water buffalos and that sort of stuff going past the front door but.

**It would have been. What were some other unusual things they had outside their door they wouldn't have had in Australia?**

You could go not too far and see monkeys and that sort of thing, water buffalo, and just having like the Malaysian children running around. We first lived outside

02:00 the barracks. Married quarters outside the barracks, it was just like living in suburban Malacca. So we had all the locals interacting with us. So you weren't just in a European type suburb.

**Was it good to have that experience as well, not to just to be in the barracks?**

Yes, we were out there for a while, approximately

02:30 10 or 11 months I suppose and then we moved into the barracks for the rest of the time. I think it was good to be in the barracks, but it was good to also have the time outside in amongst the locals.

**What was the reason for you moving into the barracks?**

Travel, someone had moved out and come home. A married quarter had become available, it works on a priority system, your number of years number of children, how many points that you accrue.

03:00 Where you go. So I had enough points that time to go in and that saved me travelling in and out, so we elected to go into the barracks.

**What did Gwen prefer, did she like being in the barracks or outside?**

I think she liked outside, and she had become friendly with other women in that neighbourhood and when it did come time to move she wasn't really all that fussed. But I think once she moved she could see the benefits of being in the camp.

03:30 **Now, tell me about**

And to make it worse I was in Borneo when I made the decision, so someone else told her.

**She couldn't argue with you. You did that on purpose didn't you?**

No, that's the way the dice fell.

**Tell me about going on leave on the tea plantations?**

That was up in the Cameron Highlands, very picturesque place,

04:00 the English had been going there ever since the English had been in Malaysia, that is more or less their retreat, where it's cooler, and you go up there and you find houses and - like the old English style houses and estates, and it's a pleasant change from everything Asian sort of thing. When you go up there and it's a little bit of England. Or I imagine what England would look like.

**How much leave would you get, would you stay there for a few days?**

Yeah, a few days

04:30 up to a week. We had leave over there 5 weeks leave. But we mainly went up to Penang, Penang Island.

**So would a few close friends and family go or...?**

Yeah, we went up to Port Dixon that was another holiday resort. Up there with other friends and stay with them. Or go by ourselves and run into other people that are up there.

**Would you take your Amah or anything like that?**

05:00 No, just book in for a holiday. They used to have, I just forget what the official name was, like area set aside where Europeans could go, service people could go and spend their leave. But no that's when she had to work.

**I just wonder if you ever got sick of being around military people all that time or was it just**

05:30 **always like you were at work because you were always around the same people, I guess that's my question?**

But there was no great problem I don't think. There wasn't much interaction between the other ranks and officers much, but there was between - like up to sergeant level, like my best friend, he was a sergeant, but we had no great problems we used to knock around. No as you say it was all service people but you couldn't - you could knock off [leave work] so to speak, knock

06:00 off work and go home.

**Was there much interaction between Australians and locals, Malay girls were there any relationships that occurred?**

A few marriages occurred yes. I suppose two years is a long time. Yes, there was quite a few, not quite a few but a few. Married Malaysian girls, and there was already

06:30 blokes married to Malaysian girls that went back over with us. My original section commander was married to a Malay woman, she was Chinese actually.

**There weren't any rules of not mixing with the locals or anything like that?**

No. No. There was no non fraternisation rules or that sort of thing. As long as you didn't visit the houses of ill repute [brothels].

**So tell**

07:00 **me about when you went to Borneo?**

Ah, yeah we left Malaya on the Anzac Day, as a matter of fact, we had a dawn service and we got on the Orby from Port Dixon and sailed across to Kuching. From there we moved by TCV up to the border. Place called Bau.

07:30 **So you were near Bau you were saying?**

That's where the battalion headquarters were and the companies went up on to the company locations up on the border.

**Could you describe the headquarters?**

It was fairly substantial it had buildings, corrugated iron roof they were well established. Not unlike the company positions we lived underground in bunkers. But back at

08:00 Bau they had beds and buildings and.

**So the company positions, how big were they and can you describe the bunkers for me?**

The company consists with attachments, probably 120 people 130 people and each location was fully fortified. That had their own artillery, one artillery piece. Two mortars and the internal machine guns of the

08:30 company and they were all in bunkers and dug in, in fortified positions. And you lived underground.

**So can you describe where you lived, the bunkers that you lived in?**

The bunkers we lived in were section bunkers, we had a machine gun position elevated at one end and

about 8-10 beds in double bunks underground, and a line with firing ports

09:00 towards the perimeter.

**What's it like living underground like that?**

Dark when you are under the ground – no it's bit different at first but you adjust to it. But then again if anything breaks that's where you want to be.

**Was it hot or cooler there?**

No I wouldn't say there was any change, because there's not much of a breeze of a night anyway. So it was – your ate above ground and that sort of thing,

09:30 you had your showers and toilets and mess' above ground, it was only your sleeping quarters and the fighting quarters that were underground. So you weren't down there all day.

**Were the bunkers camouflaged or anything like that?**

No because it was a fortified position with barb wire all the way around. So there was no hiding us you could see we were there. But they were properly sandbagged. They weren't hidden.

10:00 **So talk me through, you get to your company location, just talk me through your first days and weeks, what you did?**

The first days and weeks you become familiar with your position itself you work within that scene so to speak and then you shorter patrols out, might only be a half day or day, get the feel of

10:30 the lay of the ground around the place, and gradually work out and go further and further. You might go on a 5 day patrol or a 10 day patrol. Platoon at the time. The two platoons in the location.

**Walk me through just a short patrol, who goes and what are your positions?**

Well if it's a platoon patrol going, most time in heavy vegetation country it's a single file patrol. And it usually consists of

11:00 3 sections for the platoon headquarters, and there would be a lead section platoon headquarters, middle section and a rear section. Platoon headquarters would be split between the platoon commander and sign and between the first and second section with the platoon sergeant running it between the second and third sections. So the command groups are not all in one group. If anything was to happen to one section the other one group could take over. And depending on the

11:30 country it would determine your pace. If it's thick country you would be slow going, you might only do 500 yards an hour, it might take you 4 hours to do 1000 yards. But if the going was good and you were on tracks the pace would be quicker.

**So were you mostly on tracks that were there already there patrolling or would you be going off making your own tracks?**

Tracks can be a two edge weapon. Normally you don't like to move on tracks. Because we like to ambush them.

12:00 So do they. So, if you can avoid moving on tracks do so. But sometimes the quickest way is to use the tracks if you want to get from A to B in a quicker time.

**So where would you be typically going on your patrols, like I mean who would decide where you would be going?**

You would be looking for signs, going through villages, talking to people or just cutting across,

12:30 because no matter where anybody goes, they have got to leave a sign, they have got to break vegetation leave footprints. For each platoon, I forgot to ad, each platoon had an Iban tracker. He's a local you can Dyaks [natives] in Borneo. But we had Ibans and bloke called Chindin and their sign at gathering knowledge is pretty good. And they would

13:00 be looking for sign and when they had been through and what they were wearing, and could they be locals or could they be Indonesians. Plus our own people would be also, but that's what you are looking for, you might not actually run into the people themselves but you might cut their path, cut their sign which indicates people have gone through there and how many.

**Can you tell how long it's been since they have been through?**

I can't but they can.

13:30 That's why we had the Iban scouts with each platoon.

**Was it difficult communicating with these Ibans and Dyaks?**

No they had a smattering of – if we didn't have interpreters, the only ones we could use were the ones

who had a smattering of English. They could be – they probably didn't have a long dialogue but if you could get the basics of what do you reckon and if he could give you a number of where are we going.

- 14:00 But yeah I wouldn't say they were great on the English language, but they could get through what they wanted.

**How valuable would they be, where in the patrol where would they be?**

They travelled with the platoon commander. And if any of our blokes found something he would be called up. Later I will bring him out.

**Did they ever get frightened or not want to participate?**

No, they were a pretty happy go lucky mob. They only used to be armed

- 14:30 with a shotgun. I used to give them SG [shot gun] rounds for shotguns that's all they carried. No they seemed to be at home – because that's their home, and they seemed to be at home in it and walking along yeah. One was killed with 3RAR not our battalion, but one was killed with 3RAR. By a mine, one of our blokes tripped a mine and he got killed and so did the scout.

- 15:00 **So how long had you been patrolling before you came across any enemy?**

Six weeks. Before we come across anything definite. And which is a bad thing because you start to switch off and you start to become blasé and which is a bad thing. For a while you are all psyched up and switched up and

- 15:30 then you think nothing here, and you start to get a bit slack. This particular day we had to go and do a patrol my section had to go and do a patrol we done the previous day. And we done that yesterday, what's the point in going again. Anyway away we went and we probably only gone 200 yards when we made contact. So we were a bit blasé that's for sure, but luckily

- 16:00 our scout Graham Norley who was later killed with 2RAR in Vietnam, he was switched on enough and he picked them up first and give us a sign and we just started – I just started to take the gun group to the right and Graham stood up again to see what was out there, and an Indonesian stood up to have a look, and so, it was on. So getting back to what I was saying before we went to the right to the higher ground

- 16:30 there. But we had gun on to another group of them and it just went on from there.

**What happened?**

Well the section commander and scout were pinned down. They couldn't get back. He couldn't do anything from where he was, he threw a smoke grenade from where he was to try and cover their withdrawal. Eventually Graham and Bill got back. Graham actually had his hat shot off his head. And I had the gun group

- 17:00 up on the high ground, we were exchanging fire from three different directions and eventually the Indonesians bugged out, we done the sweep, but the rest of the platoon had come up by this time, they had come up to us from 200 yards back. We done a sweep of the area, they had gone, we put Chindin out the front and he followed them til 4 o'clock that arvo [afternoon]. Where they run into another platoon of ours and suffered 5 killed.

- 17:30 **Sorry did Chindin follow them just quietly on his own?**

Yeah. We just put him – there were 2 different tracks, one went this way and one went that way. We said, "Platoon commander and all that said which is your best track to follow", and he said, "these", "good go". So that was from about 9.30 in the morning until about 4 in the arvo. And he was right, we were closing on them when they ran into

- 18:00 9 platoon.

**What did the abruptness of coming into contact, having gone on the same patrol the day before, was that a valuable lesson to you, that day?**

It was because – I don't say we were really slack but we weren't as good as we should have been and Graham was switched on enough. But getting back to the drill part.

- 18:30 We had done the drill and there were no problems. You knew what we had to do you knew what everyone else had to – it was only once you went to ground and the drill had ceased that you started to – once you were returning fire you were alright, when you weren't returning fire that's when you – it was a rude awakening.

**Can you describe what that's like when it's on, like you go from everything normal to...?**

It's alright while everything is going,

- 19:00 while everything is in progress, but while we were doing the follow up, yee har. Christ that was, you are thinking to yourself, how close things really were. And yeah, it's a bit of a – to be honest a few of us the



next day had the diarrhoea and we thought we must have picked up bad water, but it must have been just our gut reaction, I have heard the saying 'you get the - and it's true'.

19:30 **Absolutely it's just a normal thing...**

At the time we didn't appreciate what caused it, but it did happen.

**So how - what kind of weapons do you think they had in that contact, how many people were there firing at you?**

Approximately 13 and we followed a group of about 7 and the other group we had at least one wounded went to the right and we went to the left.

20:00 They were trying to get back over the border, they had been over, done whatever they had to do and were heading back over to Indonesia.

**Did you actually see any of them or was it the firing?**

Never saw them no. Every time they moved you could see moving vegetation, and you could see the vegetation move and that's where you would be aiming. And every time you moved they would be on to you the same way. But I never actually

20:30 saw. I couldn't say that I saw an Indonesian. I was 12 paces away. But my shell case and his shell case, the closest one was 12 paces. I never saw him.

**Is that spooky not seeing who you are firing at? Can you describe that?**

He was behind a large tree which I was not fully aware at the time. And my rounds were going into and the Bren gunner's rounds were going in to the tree, but we weren't getting him

21:00 and he was going around us but not getting us, and yet you can be in a contact and have one shot fired and have one killed. And yet that morning there was hundreds of rounds fired by both sides. I think we wounded one and they never got any of us.

**So what does that say, obviously it is difficult visibility, but also, when you are that pumped and got that much adrenalin going through you, how difficult is it to**

21:30 **hit a target, despite the great training you have had?**

That's a good point, but if you can't see it you are relying on the sound and firing by instinct. We were on to him. I had one go here over me shoulder and I thought I had been hit and I put me hand up and a little bit of blood and I thought oh, but what had happened there was a twig here, and it hit the twig and the wood

22:00 little bit of wood just pricked me face sort of thing. That got me.

**That's very scary?**

Was at that time too. But I am just saying, that's how close he was going. And now they were going round us, and we were right on to him but we never got him. I got one going that way, but the rest went that way.

**Does your mind operate - does it seem like it is going in slow motion when it is happening, I am**

22:30 **just wondering the effects of adrenalin, what does it sound like?**

I think you are that pumped at the time a contact is very noisy. You heard those choppers [helicopters], but you get a number of weapons firing in close country, it's very noisy. And you get the cordite smell and that. But while you are doing something it's better than just sitting alone there, because when you are doing something you have got

23:00 control over something, but when you are not you - that's when you start thinking that's when you...

**That's when you are vulnerable you mean?**

Yeah, because if you are engaging or moving or doing something, you are occupied, but it's when you are unoccupied so to speak, that's the worst part.

**And it is not quite so bad after you have made that contact and you are going after them, is that**

23:30 **still better than walking through the jungle and not have any sense of where they are?**

You are switched on because you have gone up there and dropped into an ambush position if they pick up that you are following them, so you have got to be thinking more, you have got to be switched on to look for them.

**So how much distance when you are following them would you want to keep?**

You are trying to catch them, so you have got to try and gain on them

24:00 to catch them, so you are trying to get up to them.

**But you don't want to get up so close that they ambush you, it's tricky?**

You have got to try and get on to them before they get on to you. They have got to think there is no one following us.

**When you are following them is that done like in single file in patrol as well?**

Yep. Because the country is that close if you try and spread out you, sense and direction and control is a lot

24:30 harder, but if you can move one behind the other you can move quicker and have more control.

**Was that the first major contact of the group?**

Yes. That was the first one for the 4th Battalion.

**So what did that mean to you as a battalion is that called blooding of the battalion or what do they call that?**

Oh yeah that was our initial contact. Battalion service. 9 platoon

25:00 actually ambushed them. Later in the arvo about 4.30, that's when they killed 5 of them.

**Do you have information about that that you can share with us?**

I wasn't in that contact.

**But just what you heard?**

Yeah, the ambush was facing that way, wanting them to come that way, and they actually come in behind them. They didn't know they were there, they actually came in behind them. And they had to more or less turn around

25:30 and gauge them from the rear. One of our blokes - or two of our blokes were wounded and 5 of theirs were killed. And we had to carry them down to a landing point, and that of a night time in jungle, with the possible enemy still around, it's a hard thing. Of course we are going down a hill with stretchers,

26:00 and as I said it was said it was in the dark we couldn't show much or make much noise. And we had to get them down to a landing point for the choppers to come in and get them out. One died two days later and one lived.

**So that was a very big day too for the battalion?**

It was too because we didn't have any rations. We thought we were only going out for a few hours.

**Is that true?**

Well we were only going out for a few hours we were going to a

26:30 patrol and come back to the platoon. We never got to the platoon position until later the next day. That's where our packs were. So all that day and all that night. Oh, we probably took something to eat for lunch with us, but after that we never had anything to eat until next afternoon. And when you are working all night carrying stretchers and that, you get a bit peckish [hungry].

**So after the injured had gone off in the choppers. Where do you**

27:00 **camp for the night, do you camp there or...?**

We just lay down there where we were. Because all our gear was back up on the Goongriaro that's 1000 metres away.

**How do you make sure the area is secure what do you do?**

Well you just post sentries, you be quiet and post sentries.

**How would the men...?**

Generally in a clock fashion. Generally it's done in an all round defence and say six section is going to be

27:30 from 10 o'clock to 2 o'clock, 5 section is going to be from 4 o'clock to 6 o'clock. Six section 6 o'clock to 10 o'clock. And you have a - put a gun at each of those, 2, 4, 10. 2, 6, 10. Put a sentry on that.

**Can you describe sleeping in the jungle at night like that, what's it like?**

You can't see that. That's usually pitch black.

28:00 You have just got to feel your way. The enemy are under the same difficulties. So really to get to you they have to either shine a torch, make a noise, stumble over you they can't just sneak up and cut your throat so to speak, they have got to make a bit of noise too. So it's not all bad.

**There wouldn't be much night fighting really?**

No I never encountered any. Normally you can't move at night. You can if you want to use a

28:30 torch, and make a lot of noise.

**What was going through your head that night? You had a big day, you thought you got them shot?**

No, it's a big day and you think of the blokes that had gone out, Eddy wasn't too bad but Vic wasn't too good. And Vic died. But yeah, when it's your first one, it's like your first parachute jump or anything. You always remember the first one.

29:00 **And so the next day you head back to camp?**

No, the next day we just kept patrolling. See if there was anymore around. Because you didn't know if that was the entire group, or if there was anymore or so it was just go back and pick up the packs because we left one group with the packs, one section with the pack. So we had to go back pick them up and continue on.

**So are you in communication with the group that were back with the pack, did you have any...?**

29:30 No not that time no. Because we only had the one wireless [radio] set per platoon, and that was with us. So those back with the pack were just sitting there waiting.

**So tell me about the next day when you get up to go or...?**

You stand too before first light. You always stand to about half an hour before first light, so you adjust from a night routine into a day routine. Plus

30:00 if anyone is going to hit you, same with the night. You stand to for half an hour before last light and half an hour after light, because if anyone is going to hit you that's probably the time they'll do it.

**What does stand to mean in terms of positioning?**

Well, instead of just sitting around having a smoke or a cup of coffee or your rations, everyone is sitting there with their webbing and their weapon on you are standing to, you are standing to arms is what it's cut down from.

**Are you in a circle facing out or...?**

Yes.

30:30 That's where the term comes from, 'standing to arms' back in the old English days.

**Now**

And you just have your breakfast or whatever and you get issues with what you are going to do for the day platoon commander says, "We are going to patrol here or we are going to do this or", and that's how the day goes on.

**But after the next morning you had no rations. Did you have water?**

31:00 You always carry water.

**Even when you think you are only going out for a couple of hours on patrol, do you still ration your water, in case something happens?**

Well you never go silly with your water, no just because you are in the jungle it doesn't mean to say there is a plentiful supply of water, because if you are up in the high country, down in the low country is alright, there is always a creek or something, but up in the high country there's not always running creek, running water. Your water can be, even in a jungle your water can be a big problem. People

31:30 tend to think because you are in the jungle there is no water problem, that's not quite right. We had these dehydration ration packs, they were light weight, we had quite a few of them, but you need a lot of water. Because you had the meat cubes are so big but you had to put water with them to build the up and you had dried apples and all this sort of stuff that had to have water to hydrate them.

32:00 If you didn't have the water, they were terrible rations. They were light to carry.

**How much water does each man carry?**

I used to carry 3 water bottles. So what would that be 3 litres or, were they litre bottles, yeah I suppose.

**So you could carry more bottles if you want to or you...?**

If you had more you could yeah. But if you had a resupply come in say a chopper come in, you

32:30 hand in what you had, what empty water bottles you have into a sandbag and they would bring in more in a sandbag, but you would only get what everyone else gets. No good saying I have got 6 water bottles here I want 6.

**So the next day you patrolled the area a bit more, and did you find anyone?**

No.

**So did you...**

After about I think it was another 3 or 4 days we went back to the

33:00 company base. Re rationed and resupplied and had a bit of a break, had a shower.

**After you have a contact, is there a debriefing, does everyone say what happened in terms of working out strategies or anything like that?**

If you have got something to report or you have seen or of intelligence value you pass it on, but no unless there was some glaring omission or

33:30 something. No unless the platoon commander seen something or someone didn't do something right. No just got on with the job.

**So after you have broken contact with the enemy and they have got they have gone do you spend sometime looking to see if anything has been left behind at all?**

Yes, when we were bringing Tinden up after that first, had a bit of a look around, and that's why I worked out the 12 paces because I went from my shell case to

34:00 his closest one shell case and we had a bit of a look to see to try and get an estimate of a number involved. Because as I say we never actually saw anyone, just the movement, you could tell the movement going that way and the movement around to your right.

**So I guess that's fairly important in determining...?**

Oh yeah in what you are actually chasing, going after. If you have got 50 blokes chasing 50, it's a bit of a - but the other

34:30 platoons had been dropped in by chopper in between us and the border, and that's when they run into 9 platoon, or a section of 9 platoon.

**Now this patrolling that you are doing, was that sort of part of the secret work or...?**

No, that was acknowledged anything on the Sarawak side of the border that was acknowledged, well my platoon commander he had already been over with 3RAR, and

35:00 and he won the Military Cross for the ambush of 3RAR, it was over the border, but you won't find his citation as saying it was over the border.

**So how much patrolling did you do just general patrolling before you - if you had to go over the border?**

We had to be in Sarawak for a determined time say 4 weeks or something, before they would acknowledge that we were

35:30 proficient enough to go over the border.

**How did they determine you are, what,,,?**

By the commanding officer, he would put reports in and say how we had gone. And if we were suitable enough to send, they just didn't send anyone, you had to have attained a level of what they considered, for want of a better word, good soldiering, they just wouldn't send any unit over.

36:00 **So how many men would be chosen from the battalion?**

Approximately a platoon at a time.

**That's about 30 isn't it?**

Yeah, 25 or 30 blokes yeah.

**That was something you were keen to put your hand up for [volunteer for] or?**

I didn't really, that was just another patrol sort of thing. If they said that's where you were going, that's where you were going.

**I guess the reason I ask is because**

- 36:30 **can you just explain about not being able to take your dog tags and all that sort of thing, what was involved in patrolling across the border?**
- Because it was political. They didn't want to leave any bodies or anything, or if they have got a rifle or if they have got a pack it could come from anywhere. But a body is a different thing, but if they can't identify that body they could say, Australia could say you got that from Bali, or you got that from wherever, but if they could get
- 37:00 a set of ID [identification] discs and say this is Billy Bloggs, that's a different story.
- So were you given specific rules of engagement or specific things you could and couldn't do if you crossed the border?**
- Mostly we weren't to engage, we were to find, look, find report back. There were a few given targets of opportunity, but by and large we were mainly recognisance and
- 37:30 force, just to look then they could work on whatever information you brought back, they could work from that as to what they wanted to do.
- What was a target of opportunity, give me an example?**
- Well say if you are in a position and 10 blokes could come along and you had a good set up and you could take those ten blokes, well that would be a target of opportunity. But you wouldn't go looking for it, you wouldn't attack
- 38:00 one of their positions or something like that, it's only if you could get a good hit and get out. They didn't want you to engage in toe to toe battle sort of thing. Where you could lose people.
- How far were you actually moving across the border?**
- It varied, they had different lengths, but the maximum was 10,000 yards.
- 38:30 But you might only go over 2000, you might only go 3000. But the maximum was 10,000. Because then you are out of artillery range. And that was the only support you had. If you had any wounded you had to carry them out. You couldn't get choppers to come in and get because if the chopper crashed or was shot down, well that's a positive.
- 39:00 Positive thing. I was never involved in carrying any out. But we come across where the Gurkhas [regiment of Nepalese fighting under the British Army], they'd also been there and we come across a track where they had casualties, and they just cleared a path, just you could see where they carried them out. Because they - before we got there it was hotter, the action was hotter than when we were there.
- 39:30 **It sounds like the stakes were already pretty high, but they got a little bit higher given...?**
- Well when we were going over towards the end, peace talks were well - I only know now, we well going on but and that's why you will find we got some patrol reports we can't get them after a certain date.
- Just for you on a personal level, you know you can't take your dog tags you can't call in for help,**
- 40:00 **I mean that must have...?**
- I suppose when you are young, and you volunteered anyway. I think that's just the way it goes.
- 40:21 End of tape

## Tape 6

- 00:36 **You aware that Claret [Operation 'Claret'] existed before you got down to Borneo, that they were actually?**
- We had heard the name, 3RAR had already gone across.
- And that was well known...?**
- Within the battalion yeah. It wasn't well known outside.
- 01:00 **So when you went down to Borneo you knew that would be part of your service?**
- Possibly a part of it yeah. 3RAR, they saw more of it than we did. 3RAR was more into meat of it, 4RAR come along towards the end of it.
- And you mentioned you had your work up period for about 4 weeks or so before you were at a standard where they could assess you...?**

We as you know, were still a fairly new battalion. So yeah.

01:30 **Was there some sort of call out then, to ask for volunteers?**

Just 8 platoon or 10 platoon, just by platoon.

**So you did stay within your groups?**

Yeah, just whatever platoon was going was the platoon that went, who was in the platoon went.

**So was yours the first platoon to go out?**

No we were initially the reserve company, Charlie Company. Delta, Alpha and

02:00 Bravo were up on the border, and we didn't go over until we relieved Delta at Bocca and Delta Company had come back to Bau, then we went over, so we would have been - there would have been a few before us.

**What period of time was that you were waiting in Bau?**

We probably done 3 or 4 weeks in Bau. We patrolled from Bau as a reserve company, but you always had a reserve in case

02:30 one of the others got into a bit of strife, there always had to be a reserve.

**And your patrols out of Bau would have been within reach of Bau?**

Only one platoon at a time would go out, and you might go out for 2 or 3 days. And come back and another platoon would go out for 2 or 3 days. So you always had the bulk of your company on your ground.

**Was that a real challenge to keep the men's attention and focus during that time?**

Initially it wasn't and after a while as I said,

03:00 nothing was happening, a few tracks, a bit of sign, but nothing untoward. It's hard to maintain the drive, the keenness. But after there had been a contact or two the levels definitely increase.

**Were there quite a few villages near Bau?**

Oh, kampongs [native houses] yeah, there are kampongs dotted all through the

03:30 place yes.

**What's a kampong?**

A kampong might be 10, 15, 20 houses, just scattered around and they might be growing pepper or just living off the gardens and hunting and that yeah. Kampongs are mainly family group, and 4 or 5 different families of the same clan so to speak.

04:00 In the kampong.

**And what are the houses made of?**

Mostly bamboo and thatch. They had corrugated iron rooves, but the walls are all like woven thin slatted woven bamboo, and the floors were in some cases bamboo and in some cases they were hardwood planks they had got from Bau somewhere. But mostly, I can show you later, but mostly native style buildings.

04:30 They all live above ground. They all have a step cut into a log, and when they go in of a night they pull that log up behind them. That stops any wild animals or anything getting into the sleeping quarters.

**Do they have any domesticated animals that you came across?**

Not the Ibans, they might have had a few WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and things like that, but dogs but other than

05:00 that. Oh pigs, they just wander, they don't fence them or anything. They just wander around and live among the houses or anything.

**You could swap notes with some of the pig farmers?**

They are big fellas over there I can tell you, they just keep feeding them and feeding them until they are ready to chew them I suppose.

**Your relationship with the local Iban tribes or**

05:30 **was an important part of...?**

Well it's hearts and minds, if you get them on side well that's the less you got against you. If you upset them and the old Indon [Indonesian] comes and says, "Well what do you think about them Australians?"

"Oh yeah, what do you want?" But if you keep them on side medically and look after them and treat them well, they are going to tell Indon to go home. So anyone you can get on your side, that's one less you have got against you.

**You mentioned medically,**

06:00 **that's one of the ways that you could...?**

We used to take the medics with us when we went to a kampong, and anyone got any problems, anyone got any rashes, anyone got any sores, anyone got a headache, come and see the medic and put a bit of stuff and keep them happy or give them a headache pill or something. Malaria and that was - they had malaria, you know, you are doin' something for them. Hearts and minds we used to

06:30 call it.

**What else might you be able to do?**

Pardon?

**What else might you do in terms of winning the hearts and minds?**

Oh, being respectful of them, don't rob their gardens or anything like that, abuse their stock, or generally play up and just generally respect them. If you do that 9 times out 10 you will get it back.

**And what was your**

07:00 **experience of how the Indonesians had been treating them?**

Well I didn't hear of anything bad, but I also think they were slick, they were also trying to get them on side, but I didn't hear of anything personally bad. There were a few assassinations in the bigger cities, but not out in the kampongs. They would be silly to get them off side because they have got to come through there themselves.

**It's funny some of the**

07:30 **people I have been speaking to just in terms of the Japanese, coming through the South Pacific it was obvious the way the locals would help the Australians, given the way the Japanese had treated them, but in confrontation it wasn't so clear cut I guess?**

Both sides were trying to keep them on side, because if you have got somebody with you, he's not again. But no in our area we just tried to do the right thing by them, and hopefully they would do the right thing by us.

08:00 We did get a bit of feedback information apparently, I wasn't aware at the time, but apparently we did. Positive feedback.

**And what would be your form of communication with them, is it just like the Iban trackers had a bit of smattered English?**

Sometimes we'd have an interpreter with us, but when we went to a village to do a particular job, they send a Malay like serviceman with us,

08:30 like interpreter, but they didn't normally work with us, like in the field, but kampong type situation you had them sometimes.

**When you say go to a kampong to do a job would it be specifically to...?**

Hearts and minds.

**Hearts and minds. And in terms of gathering intelligence from them you'd rely on the Malay serviceman interpreter?**

Yeah, they could do all the Malay, they used to have like a field police, and they would come with you and they would have a look around and talk while you were there

09:00 and get any information they could get sort of thing.

**Field police they were called were they?**

Yeah they weren't like the ordinary police on the traffic duty, they were field police left over from the Malay emergency days. When they used to have police that went out in like platoon strength and things like that.

**During the Malay emergency, one of the tactics they were using was actually closing off the kampongs wasn't it?**

Yeah, cutting off the source of food and yep.

09:30 They tried that in Vietnam but it didn't work because it was too much of a border, but see in Malaya it was a different story.

**Was there still evidence of having tried to shut off the communities?**

In Malaya?

**Yeah.**

No not while we were there no. They were virtually over the emergency by about 5 hours, the official emergency, it was still up on the border but they declared the rest of it open and life went on then.

**And from**

10:00 **speaking to other people were you aware of how they cut off the kampongs were they using barb wire and that sort of thing to separate them?**

From what I could gather they used a bit of that, but they used to ambush around the outside, they had a curfew all had to be inside by a figure, 6 o'clock. And no one went out again until 6 the next morning. Anyone moving around outside that area between those hours

10:30 had to have a pretty good reason.

**Was there any contact with kampongs across the border?**

No you avoided them. No you didn't advertise that you were there. Even the locals just moving along, no.

**Really it was the same as before, look, find and report back?**

Finding and find out they are concentrating here or they are moving supplies up there,

11:00 or they are digging in here, that's the sort of information they were after. Our scheme was to keep them back from the border, rather than wait for them to come to the border and then our scheme was to keep them back from the border. So we had like a zone, 10,000 yard zone we could control or try and control.

**And did your**

11:30 **skills of identification get better, could you really tell the Indonesians from the locals?**

No, if you put a local in an Indonesian uniform or an Indonesian in local - it's pretty hard to tell to me. They virtually talk the same language. If you can talk Malay you can talk Indonesian, if you can talk to a Malay. Their languages are pretty similar and their features were pretty similar.

12:00 **But when you were over the border, the Indonesians were actually uniformed were they?**

Yeah, they were uniformed, it was only when they crossed the border.

**O.K.**

They went into some of their position where they had been, they were pretty well constructed. They weren't in them when we were there, but they had dug and constructed good positions, so they weren't rag tag [disorganised].

**Do you know where the Indonesian military had received its**

12:30 **training and arms, what was the source of...?**

Ah, we run into AK47s and M16s and the American and Russians supplied. I don't say they were supplied for that particular task, but their source of weapons had come from Russia and America. Some of them had American style helmets, but they had been getting that from the 50s. So it wasn't just for confrontation.

13:00 **In terms of their defences and their tactics and the sort of bunkers they were using was it sort of evidence of particular militaries having done the training?**

No I couldn't ascertain that from what we saw, no I couldn't say that. They were well constructed whoever taught them to construct like that I couldn't say.

**Given**

13:30 **that you were seeking to avoid contact rather than finding people like you had been up in Malaya. Is there a difference in the way the section conducts their patrols?**

Very quietly. You might go for days without speaking or other than a whisper it's all signals. It's only when you get on the ground at a night the section platoon commander might come around and just talk individually to each bloke and just tell him and that's about it.

14:00 You might have a little whisper to the bloke beside you but everything is very low key.

**So that was even more extreme or more pronounced than the current operations up in Malaya?**



Yeah of course, you were really trying to avoid contact and the other side, if you have got a contact, that's the way it went, but on the claret ops you were trying to avoid them, just to observe get the information get back over. Without leaving anything behind.

14:30 **It must have been a strange experience to go for such long periods without talking, to spend so much time up in your head?**

Well you do you wander a fair bit, but if you didn't I think that's where you would lose it. But you are looking and observing you have got to be able to switch of and put yourself somewhere else so to speak. You can't be 100% 24 hours a day. Otherwise you would

15:00 finish up a wreck. You have got to have that relax sort of thing.

**Did you take any time as a scout?**

No. I was an NCO by the time I went to Borneo.

**Lance Corporal?**

Lance Corporal, I was Section 2IC in Borneo. I got my Sec [section] when I came back from Borneo.

**What were the circumstances of your first promotion?**

Well I was, as I say,

15:30 I had done 3 years with the CMF before I went into the regular army, and that's all on my record. The only thing I was worried about I couldn't remember the date. I give my date of birth in the CMF. If they ever looked up the date of birth for 129300 and the date of birth for 17988 there would be 2 different dates of birth. Anyway I had done the 3 years. I was in support company in mortars and they wanted an NCO in Charlie Company

16:00 and they had gone through the records I suppose, and they asked me if I wanted to go to Charlie Company. So I went to Charlie Company and got my first promotion.

**How long was that before you went to Borneo?**

Probably 6 months.

**So this is a good decent period of time for you to gel and become part of the team?**

Yeah. And they were a good section. I knew the section commander he had been to Malaya before. He

16:30 he had a good bit of experience and it was just a good bunch of blokes. I just happen to be lucky to land on.

**What sort of increased responsibilities do you have as a lance corporal?**

Well you are the under study of the section commander, so if anything happens to him for one reason or another, you take over the section. Plus you are the administrative person in the section, you are the one that organises the rations, ammo resupply, any clothing that needs replacing,

17:00 webbing, all that sort of thing. And you are the one that looks after the sentry roster does the picket list.

**And in terms of being an understudy to the section commander, does that mean observing him very closely or is it something more formal in terms of his...?**

You do a cadre course, that that's for your promotion, and when you have finished that cadre course you should be qualified to become a corporal. Lance Corporal first, so really

17:30 you have done the ground work to be a section commander, but then you have got to learn a little bit more and as you say, observe the section commander, observe the platoon commander, observe anyone that will put you upon the ladder, a bit more knowledge.

**And did you have an eye to that was that something that was an important part of your career?**

Yeah. I was never behind in any of my groupings or promotion, I pushed for them.

18:00 When I say I pushed, I done me best to get there. Because if you are going to - it's better to lead than to be led.

**Is that your experience?**

I think if you are in there you are in there and go as high as you can and do the best you can. There are some blokes there that had been there 6 or 7 years, wouldn't take promotion.

18:30 Well if that's what they want to do that's fine, but that wasn't my idea.

**We spoke to a lot of those guys, from World War 11 especially.**

I had blokes there 6 or 7 years still a private. But there's no good coming back later and saying, "I have been here 6 or 7 years and you have only been here 3 years and tell me you are the 2IC". You could have one if you want one, but if you don't want one that's your problem.

19:00 But there were blokes like that that didn't want to take the responsibility they wanted to have all the say, well you have got to sort that out.

**The relationship between the troops and NCOs and officer's is that different in a combat, conflict situation do you think than in peace time?**

I think so, because I think people get more on edge, if you pass off in a non operational type situation.

19:30 In an operational situation it gets a little bit more intense and people do react differently. I think you have got to be careful when you are in an operational area because everyone is armed, everyone's capable of doing things. But you still have got a job to do.

**Were accidents common?**

Accidents? Do you mean

20:00 like weapons being discharged, someone getting hurt?

**Exactly I guess just given that heightened tension and...?**

Well I could put the reverse on it in my platoon contact, a few of the grenades didn't go off, a couple of the grenades didn't go off. And when they looked after the contact, the blokes would tape the handles down so they wouldn't have an accident. They would pull the pin and throw the grenade and the grenade didn't go off because the lever was

20:30 still taped down. Hyped up and without realising they hadn't taken the tape off.

**I guess that would be another important role of lance corporal to have the thumb on the pulse of where the men are at. To know the men in terms of...?**

The biggest thing is to get to know your men. You will know some you can crack a joke with. Others

21:00 not crack a joke with. One bloke you can say this to, another bloke you can't say the same thing to. You work that out, and there's blokes that won't pull their weight as much as the next bloke so you won't flog the willing horse [punish the hard worker], you make the other bloke do his bit as well. So getting to know your people is very important.

**Noticing any significant changes in their behaviour or their state of being?**

I think everyone changes. Not only the bloke underneath,

21:30 you change, everyone changes a bit. You can't be doing that sort of thing day in day out for months and not have a change. Everyone - you mightn't realise it at the time, but you do, everyone changes.

**How were you changing in that time, how did you change?**

Oh, I think I become a bit more blasé about things. Some things you wouldn't have battered an eye lash [worried] about

22:00 once, you did then and vice versa. I can remember in Vietnam I buried this bloke and we were supposed to bury them deep, anyway we were in a hurry. And we were inside a company position and I buried him there and I was sleeping here and the next morning it rained and his hand was coming up through the dirt. So I just got me trenching tool and put some more dirt on top of him. You wouldn't do that normally you just

22:30 change. He wasn't one of ours. I know that's not a good thing but just how you change.

**And were you noticing that already in your time in Borneo?**

Yeah I think so you become a bit more, when you see people like that. When we carried them down, one Indonesian was fairly well shot up head and this was next day, and in the

23:00 tropics bodies don't carry too well. And a bloke called, I won't say his name, but a bloke, he was at the bottom of the pole, and this Indonesian's stuff come all over his back. Well he ponged [smelt] for days. Everyone was having a bit of shiak [joke] with him. You know, it's not real you wouldn't do it know, but you did then. It's just the nature of the beast.

**How important was humour in those heightened situations?**

I think it was very important.

23:30 I think if you let your attitude go down, you go down. You haven't got to be cracking jokes every 5 minutes, but I think you have to remain with a positive attitude and have a bit of fun every now and again.

**Can you tell me about being briefed for your first patrol across the border?**

24:00 I can't even recall what the briefing was.

**Do you remember the preparations?**

The preparations were basically what you would do for any patrol. But maps and that sort of thing were not marked. Normally you could mark your maps and so you knew different places. But when you took a map over there you didn't mark it. Little things like that were different.

**What do you mean, what**

24:30 **wouldn't you mark?**

Well you might have an artillery position, not a position but it's DFs marked in and you might have crossing points, LPs on your map, so if you are on the good side so to speak, you could look at it quickly and identify it, but when you went over you kept your map blank so if you lost it or became a casualty, they

25:00 couldn't pick it up and say, so and so.

**Did you commit those positions to memory?**

Yeah. Same with note books you didn't apply a lot to notebooks.

**Were the kampongs over the border identified on the map, did you know where...?**

Yeah, the major ones yeah, they were identified, but that doesn't give anything away. The

25:30 Indonesians knew they were there so you are giving nothing away by having them on it.

**Could you notice a shift within the men as you went into that first patrol across the border?**

Oh there may have been - I didn't notice anything untoward looking back now. I think it was just another, by that time we were all regulars.

26:00 I am not saying Nashos [National Servicemen], but at that time every one who was there, was a volunteer, was a regular, so it was just part of the deal.

**I was reading that there were some national servicemen who...?**

They come in later. But not in the early stages, I can't recall any of them going over, not because there was - I am saying I can't recall, but whether they did or not, I don't know. But I can't recall.

26:30 Of course it got to a point when we had to stop because the peace talks had already gone on. If anything was to happen then after they had more or less signed the peace talks, it would have been embarrassing.

**Were you getting information that specific?**

Not at the time no. I am not saying those up there weren't but I wasn't.

27:00 **Can you tell me the details of your first patrol across the border?**

We were going for about 6 days, we were going on that one. We were choppered up to the border and went on foot from there. And when we come back we - we come back to the border we didn't get choppered

27:30 out, we come back down further before we got picked up.

**What was the country like up near the border?**

Mountainous, because the mountain range defines the border, where we were anyway. Very steep, very rugged.

**How did the chopper get you in there?**

They just, the engineers had already just

28:00 gone into a few places, they had levelled out enough for a chopper. Well I give you an example. One time we were going to do a platoon move, from Bocca to the Goonongriah and there was going to be 3 choppers come they were whirlwind choppers. The British Whirlwind. And you have only got access to one side, the sides not like the Hughies and Blackhawks. Anyway we were supposed to have 3 choppers that would be fifteen men, 5 per chopper go in so that's half a platoon.

28:30 One chopper turned up, so O.K., we said, "Five", they said, "No, we've got a full load of fuel". So myself and the bren gunner and gunner 2IC, and away we went, three of us and it was supposed to be a fifteen man assault only three of us go. We get up there and as I said, it was open this side with one bren gun, nothing on this side, the hill slopes like so.

29:00 And the pilot positions his aircraft so the gun is out here and nothing here, and he says, "Mines, not landing", kicks out a rope. So never had any sling on the weapon, because we didn't carry slings on the weapon. So had to get sweat rag tie me rifle around me neck and go down the rope. You don't know whether the Indonesians are there, you don't know whether you are going to put your foot on a mine, because he won't land there.

29:30 Anyway we got down, and two blokes come down behind me, and away went the chopper, until he got back and got another 3 and brought them back. That's a good feeling. You don't know whether - he won't land because he suspects - they did use the mines because they were there all the time, the Indonesians in the early days they used to come over and plant mines near the LP. Yeah.

**How was that feeling?**

30:00 Very lonely. Three blokes we couldn't clear, check for mines plus clear the land around. So we more or less just done a quick little sweep and just sat down and watched our little area and waited until the next lot come.

**What do you do in a situation like that, do you go high?**

Go above the LP. So you have got a bit of elevation. And the next one comes out. After about the third lift he brought 5 because his

30:30 fuel had gone down enough to carry more and gradually built up.

**Of course there's not much more a clearer signal than a chopper overhead. To let people know you are around?**

Another time a bloke was sitting there with his feet like that having his smoko [cigarette break] and he just happened to look between his feet and there was a mine. Of course the pigs and animals had been rooting up and they were these plastic mines, you can't pick them up because they have a glass

31:00 file in them with a neck and the lid comes down on them if you stand on them and break the neck and the air into the chemicals sets off the charge. He was sitting there and the mine was between his legs, so you don't know.

**Within the platoon would you have specialist disposal?**

No. Not unless you have got engineers or pioneers to come with you no.

**So mines were avoided rather than cleared?**

31:30 Most of 3RAR's deaths were from mines. There was one they put on a track, there was a puddle of water there and they put the mine on that because you are not going to walk in the puddle are you. A little bit of ledge around there so they put the mine there. That's how they got them. Pretty cunning.

**What other sort of booby traps were used?**

Not in Borneo we didn't come in contact with booby traps as such no. They

32:00 wouldn't have had time. The mines they did. But no I didn't come across any booby traps.

**You said that your first patrol went for about 6 days, walk me through some of the details of the more interesting aspects of that patrol?**

Really, they can be quite boring, you know because all you are doing, we never had any contact or anything. We never even saw much untoward

32:30 sign which is a slow progress, quiet slow checking. Just went on for - we didn't go for 3 days forward and 3 days back. We just swanned around a bit. There was nothing untoward about it, you were just over, patrolled and back. Didn't see anything or...

**Was it physically demanding?**

33:00 Once you went over there the country was reasonably flat. Once you went down off the mountain range. The only high climb is when you came back up again. Small hills but a lot of waterways.

**The border itself goes along the middle of the...?**

At that particular area yeah. The mountain range more or less forms the border in that area.

**What's the countryside like down below?**

33:30 Fairly thick. Visibility at times as I said is at that wall, you wouldn't see much more than that. You had monkeys swinging in the trees which everything would be nice and quiet, they would be up the trees and the next thing they would realise you were there and away they would go and of course your awareness level jumps up but it is only monkeys going through the trees. They can give you a bit of a stir.

34:00 **What other sort of animals would you come across?**

Up there we saw a large black cat type thing I don't know what it was but that's - no I don't know what it was, but other than that not a great deal. Small deer type things. Not a lot of animals no.

**Snakes a problem up there?**

I only ever saw one. That was in Borneo, we were in ambush position,

34:30 and he was coming towards us - indicated to the bloke beside me and he was looking up the track and the next thing the snake must have got wind of [seen] us and he just had a bit of a look and away he went. I was looking for him.

**What was it like to come back over and cross back to...?**

Oh good you can sit back and have a smoke, and have a bit of a yak [chat]

35:00 you are still in funny territory but psychological you were back over, you come back to normal type soldiering.

**Did it take a while to wind down from that sort of adrenalin?**

You don't notice so much at the time, it's probably happening. All depends on what you do when you come back over, if you can get back to Bocca more or less in a reasonably short time and have a shower drop off all your dirty gear, and get a new issue of gear

35:30 it's good. You might even get a beer or two. That really lets the steam off. But if you come back and keep on patrolling, it's like just another day at the office.

**You showed us some pictures of contacts you obviously did make and casualties that you took, could you walk us through maybe your first contact on the Indonesian side of the border?**

We didn't have a contact on the

36:00 Indonesian side of the border.

**Sorry those pictures were from...?**

That's the one I was talking about before. They are the ones we were following. They walked into the back of 9 Platoon. I was never involved in a contact over the border.

**How many patrols did you make across the border?**

Probably

36:30 3 or 4. I am not sure.

**And they were spaced out over a period of months?**

Yeah, they get you, you don't go regularly sort of thing, you like say 8 Platoon today, and another platoon later in the week, and another platoon next week and spread them around, it's not the same people all the time. It depended on what information they wanted and how much they want to look at.

**We were talking about**

37:00 **4RAR being a basically brand new battalion. Did those operations forge it as an entity?**

I think so. It's like a doctor or a surgeon until he does his first op [operation] he can train at the unit do whatever he likes, but until he does that first he hasn't really been there or done that. I think that once we come home from Borneo we were a different

37:30 battalion.

**And as individuals was it for you and the other guys the fulfilment of your...?**

I think so, because you don't want to go to war and really, but if you are a soldier and you volunteer to be one that's more or less the nuts and bolts of your deal isn't it?

**Was it like that for you in the sense that you had done what you set out to do?**

I was pleased I went yeah. I am not a...

38:00 Was I scared? My bloody oath I was scared. But that's why I went and that's what I was there for.

**Was there any sort of contact between headquarters in Borneo and back over to Malaya with the families?**

Oh yeah, but as I say I was in Borneo when word come over that the married had become available in Terendak and I had to go and see the adjutant and he told me about it and I said, "Yep

38:30 I'll take it", and he said, "Your wife doesn't want to move". I said, "I am paying the board I'll take it". Anyway, yeah. Yes there was but not as individuals we couldn't talk we could write, write letters but we

had no mobile phones or anything like that or other contact other than letters no.

**There was mail contact going back and forth with your families?**

Oh yeah, there was definitely mail contact, they wouldn't send you over there without it.

39:00 **And the odd beer or two for the hearts and minds of the troops?**

Yeah, if you weren't on duty you might have got two.

**Was that at Bau?**

And Bocca. But wasn't all the time, because a lot of our stuff had to be dropped in by chute [parachute]. But yeah if you weren't on duty you could have two.

39:30 **Would that ever form part of your patrols to locate supply drops?**

We never had air drops in the field. We only had them at the bases. Rather than bringing a convoy up by road, which could prove a bit dangerous, they used to drop them - one of the highlights was one of the crates come over - we had Gurkhas with us,

40:00 A Gurkha engineer unit. Have you ever seen a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK trying to fly from a few hundred feet? They make some squawks. Or ever seen a pumpkin when a chute didn't open on a vegetable drop. They hit the ground, luckily none of the beer went though.

**The WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK was someone's idea of a joke was it?**

No, no he got out of the crate. They had fresh rations the Gurkhas, had fresh WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and

40:30 do their own killing and that sort of stuff. They used to drop them in crates of chickens so the Gurkhas could do their own killing, and this fella must have got out of the crate coming down. Quite funny seeing a Gurkha flying through the scrub, not through the scrub, but out through the grass trying to catch this WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK .

40:56 End of tape

## Tape 7

00:31 **I just wondering how long it took to pack everything up and bring the family back to Australia, was that a long process or...?**

No. Because all the furniture and everything over there was supplied. We had only virtually to bring what we bought while we were over there, like a camphorwood chest and that upstairs, but other than that all the furniture was

01:00 we didn't take any furniture with us, it went into storage in Adelaide when we went to Malaya, and you got that back when you come back to Australia.

**How many kids did you have at that point?**

I come home about 3 months after the battalion because Gwen was pregnant with Joanne, and Qantas wouldn't fly us in those days that close to the pregnancy, so I transferred to 8RAR, who relieved us and come home a few days before Christmas 67.

01:30 **So she had the baby there?**

Had the baby there, we had to get her naturalised to bring her home, otherwise she would be a Malaysian citizen, and that would be alright, but later on if she was in Australia and wanted to get a job in the public service or something like that, well in those days anyway, well it would be better off if she was Australian.

**So what was Christmas Day like, was it good to be home for Christmas?**

Yeah, we hadn't

02:00 seen - we had been in Adelaide and that, and we hadn't seen much of our people for nearly 3 years. So yeah, it was good to come home. I was only home because I was in Canungra then by early January. I had 6 or 7 weeks leave and they give me 2 weeks I think. Because I was down at Canungra to get ready for Vietnam.

**So, that Christmas did you spent that, like did you see your parents?**

We stayed with Gwen's parents

02:30 and of course she was also here. But we lived with Gwen's parents at that period of time.

**Did you talk to your Dad about your service at all?**

Yeah. I did later on but no he wouldn't - he just didn't want me to go.

**Did he still have those reservations even though you had obviously...?**

He wasn't a volunteer he was what do you call, part of the conscription.

03:00 He had 3 children at the time, no 2 children he had and he didn't want, well for whatever reason he didn't want to go and he was conscripted and went. So I suppose he was a bit hung up over that.

**But did he ask you about the work you were doing, did he show an interest, or was it because you were in the army he didn't really know?**

He didn't really no. Didn't want to - he might talk about it a little bit but not a great deal no.

03:30 **Did that bother you at all?**

No I made my decision to go and I was happy with that.

**Did the rest of your family support you?**

I think so. Mum did, brothers. They weren't indifferent or anything.

**What did you know that was happening in Vietnam, did you know before you came back that it might be a likely...?**

We knew before we come back that we were going to Vietnam yeah. We knew we were relieving

04:00 2RAR and we knew that before we come home.

**So were you getting briefings on Vietnam before you came back?**

Sort of we had our officers were going up to Vietnam from Malaya, unofficially. And they were looking around for a couple of weeks to get familiarised with it and then coming back to Malaya and then another couple would go up. But that was all - there wasn't too much publicity about that. But yeah we never got - I suppose we weren't as much up to speed as people in Australia at the time.

04:30 Because the only TV and that you got over there was Malaysian TV and they weren't too much into it.

**When you got back to Australia was it reported on the news what was happening?**

I think so yeah, you could pick up the paper and it could tell you what was going on. The start of the protest movement and all that sort of stuff.

05:00 But the unit really was you know, kept up to speed with what was going on. I was happy with what we were told anyway, and we went to lectures and they told us about the Vietnamese culture and how it all started and the Viet Minh after World War 11 and the French and we had all that explained to us and, yeah.

**So it made sense what you were going there go do?**

I believed in the domino theory yes, if Vietnam

05:30 fell and Thailand fell, there was a good chance that Malaya would fall and well they had already had a go at Malaya, Soekarno was - he could go left or right and the hooks had been in the Philippines for years and yeah. I was happy with it.

**Looking back do you think it was a likely thing?**

Well, if there was another type situation I would like to see that you go to win it, or you don't go. And if

06:00 you are not going to try and win it, stay home. Because you can't try to win with one hand tied behind your back. And that's what happened in Vietnam.

**So talk me through, obviously as a battalion you were really well gelled by now, but did you have any extra training period before going to Vietnam?**

Yes, we went through Canungra again, because we had lost a fair few of our troops, because we sent a fair few home when we were in Malaya,

06:30 to go with 2RAR because they were looking for senior privates and lance corporals, and that's when we got our first intake of nashos. And then we come home and we then had to bring them up to speed, so we was going through Canungra, Shoalwater Bay, Tin Can Bay, all those areas again, and we were gone by May.

**Tell me about the national serviceman coming in, was that an easy adjustment or were there**

07:00 **problems?**

Yeah, I found the national servicemen they were pretty good bunch because they weren't just anyone they had to pass their test the same as we did to get in, they just weren't taken at all levels, and I was pretty -you got the odd bloke, but then you got the odd regular too. I found the national serviceman to be for the time they were in, to be pretty good. I made some good friendships with them and some of them turned out to be quite good soldiers. Some of them would have stayed in the army for 10 years or more.

07:30 **Was there any sort of animosity from the regulars?**

Not that I am aware of. You know there is always jokes and that, you would say something to a nasho and he would say, "Well I didn't have to join the army to get a job". So it went both ways but there was no big animosity or anything no.

**And how did the protest movement impact on you at the time?**

08:00 The battalion was going to march through Brisbane before it went, it wasn't allowed to march through Brisbane because of the protest movement. I thought that was pretty poor. But as far as up here we didn't have much to do with it up here, in the bigger cities they did, but up here it was pretty quiet. But I say again not being able to march through Brisbane before we went was pretty poor.

**There must have been other things that happened for them to decide**

08:30 **that you shouldn't march through?**

I think it was just the protest movement they would disrupt the march and make a political point out of it and rather than do that we got on trucks at Enoggera and got off at Hamilton Wharf and got on the [HMAS] Sydney.

**So you went to Vietnam on the Sydney?**

Yes.

**Can you tell me about the trip over?**

09:00 Uneventful, we played sports, we done rifle firing off the stern, didn't like the way the navy did things, but that is a different story. No.

**Was that your first encounter on a big ship?**

On a big ship yeah. The one we went the Orbie is a pretty strobe ship but only a small one, the one we went from Malaya to Sarawak. Yeah the Sydney was

09:30 big ship.

**Did you receive briefings on board the ship about Vietnam or the enemy or anything like that were you given more information aboard?**

No I think because we had most of that before we went. We might have had, I can't recall, but we might have got more on board but as it come up - when we were going over, support base Corowa was on and that's all we were going - we got information

10:00 about that.

**Sorry what was that, the...?**

Battle of Coral, the big battle in 68 with 1RAR. It was going on when we were going over. And we were getting information about that because it was a fairly big battle.

**So, how long did it take you to get to Vietnam?**

10:30 About 10 days I think. We went up past New Guinea, past Manus Island, up between the Philippines Borneo, up to Vung Tau. We went from the landing craft on to the beach at Vung Tau. And by TCB up to Nui Dat.

**First impressions when you got to Vung Tau?**

Not much different to other Asian countries. No there was more of a military sense,

11:00 Americans everywhere, there was more like war material around.

**What sort of material?**

Like Conex's and trucks, and aircraft, Vung Tau was a busy air port there was fighters coming and going, just more than we had been used to in any situation. Like in Malaysia you might get the odd plane flying in or - but when you got to

11:30 Vietnam the scale was different, the scale of activity.



**Was it an impressive thing?**

You know, to an Australian it probably was. To see so much hardware is – as I said I done one chopper assault in Borneo, to say that in Vietnam they'd look at you, what's wrong. The equipment and hardware was far more elaborate.

12:00 **So from Vung Tau you went to?**

By vehicle, trucks, up to Nui Dat. That was just a normal road convoy. When we got off the landing barges 2RAR was waiting to go on, they took a magazine off their rifle, you give him an empty one and that's what we went up to. Nui Dat with, 1 magazine, 20 rounds.

12:30 **So they were going back home were they?**

Yep. They were getting on the landing barge, getting on the Sydney going home. We were getting off, going up and taking over.

**Did you talk much to them as you went past?**

I spoke to a couple of them I knew them. Franga Francis, I knew him, he ended up being RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] of the army, he was coming off he give me the magazine out his M16 and I give him my empty one and we had a bit of a chat.

**Is that not normal that you are not issued with ammunition until you are in-country or?**

Well

13:00 they didn't expect much to happen between there and Nui Dat. When we went to Kuching to Bau, they gave us 5 rounds.

**So was Nui Dat where you were based?**

Yes.

**Can you describe the base?**

Nui Dat was a large base, what Nui Dat is it means small hill in Vietnamese and it's marked on the map, Nui Dat.

13:30 Just one little pimple type feature, it's only a small hill. It's surrounded by rubber plantations, and if you didn't need to cut down a rubber tree, you weren't allowed to touch it because they would have to pay compensation to the land owner or the Vietnamese Government for damaging the rubber tree. Thee had been a few removed. The lines were pretty well laid out. We were in tents, 4 man tents,

14:00 sandbags a metre and a bit high around the tent for shrapnel. We had showers by bucket, drop toilets. We had a mess, so we were pretty well set up, as compared to the original 6RAR and 5RAR had to go down and establish it, we walked into a fairly well set up camp.

14:30 **Tell me about the food?**

In camp or in the field?

**Let's start with in camp.**

In camp no complaints, if we had been out for a while and come back they'd put on a barbecue type thing, you would get a steak and other than that the meals were alright. They weren't 5 star hotel accommodation, but they were alright the cooks done a reasonable job with what they had.

**And what kind of rat [ration]**

15:00 **packs did you have when you were going out?**

We had Australian and American. I would say if you were going out for 5 days they would give you 3 Australian and 2 American or something like that. American rations were good, they had plenty of variety, but they were too big, you couldn't carry 5 days rations up. The Australian pack was smaller, probably not as tasty but you got everything out of that you wanted.

15:30 American rations they had cream biscuits in a tin, but as I said, too bulky.

**Tell me what else was in the American rat pack?**

Pork, sliced pork, apples, diced apples in tins, cream biscuits, ham and lima beans yuk, they had meats, but they weren't as well set up in their brew gear,

16:00 you know Americans drink a lot of coffee, but their coffee, well we get the ration packs and we had to put in twice the amount to get the taste. And their sugar was that real fine sugar which, if at any time we could get extra Australian ration packs we get the brew gear out of them. To make up for the American one. But yeah their rations were good, but you didn't have too many of them.

**So when you said they had variety does that mean that there would**

- 16:30 **be, like in one rat pack there would be the full day's but then there would be 5 different types or?**
- No you got a meal, a meal per box and you get 3 boxes for a day. They are just too bulky. You might have turkey in a tin, pork in a tin, apple sauce, cranberry sauce, all this sort of stuff, they were good to eat but just too bulky. And their hexamine or their
- 17:00 burning wasn't as good as ours, they never had a stove, a hexamine stove.
- So how did they cook anything?**
- They just put a couple of stones or a couple of sticks I don't know how they did it, we had our stoves.
- So talk me through an Australian rat pack?**
- Australian ration pack yes they were so long, so thick, compact, toilet paper, chewing gum, can opener
- 17:30 your brew gear, sugar, tea coffee, milk, your meats, biscuits, yeah they were alright.
- Meats, was that bully beef or?**
- No, you might get ham and eggs, camp pie, steak and onions things like that.
- Any kind of vegetables or?**
- No not unless they were in the
- 18:00 tin, meat and vegetables. In the bigger packs what they called the 10 man compo pack you got tinned vegetables, peas beans tomatoes but not in the individual 24 hour ration pack.
- A ten man pack, would that be spread out amongst a few men?**
- Well now let's see, either 1 man for 10 days or 10 men for 1 day.
- Would one person carry that or would it be spread out?**
- No, they normally like in an artillery position or engineers or someone who is in a static position.
- 18:30 instead of giving them the 24 hour ration packs they would give them these compo packs. Where they could cook it up and handle it better than the bloke walking in the field.
- What about water was the climate fairly similar to what you had been used to?**
- Water was a problem over there, in the dry season it's a very dry place Phuoc Tuy Province. Further north there's good rain but not in Phuoc Tuy. When it's raining
- 19:00 it's very wet, but when it's dry it's like a dust bowl. We were carrying anything up to 7 bottles.
- So when you got to Nui Dat and you were in your camp, how long did you stay there to get used to things before you started patrolling, what sort of things did you do before your first patrol?**
- We done our first patrol, we got there late May, we done our first major operation on the 15th June.
- 19:30 And in between that we did a few day ones. To get the feel of the country and settle in. So probably, 2 or 3 weeks we went on our first major operation.
- So those first small patrols getting used to the country did you notice anything different than what you had been used to like patrolling in Borneo or was there anything...?**
- It was a more open country Phuoc Tuy Province more open, more rubber plantations, not
- 20:00 as much jungle as Borneo/Malaya. Not where we were anyway.
- Did that mean you patrolled in any different kind of way?**
- More open, more spaced out, more spread out, and you could use your arrowhead formations rather than single file. You had free fire zones, so there was nobody in that zone if they were in that zone, you could freely engage them.
- 20:30 **Sorry what does that mean?**
- Well locals you'd say, "Righto don't go into this block". It's not a block but it's an area, and that's a free fire zone, because anyone in that area is classified as enemy, because the locals shouldn't be there. In other areas you had to be engaged first, you could see someone but unless they done something hostile towards you, you couldn't do anything.
- 21:00 And they were - the rules of engagement applied there. But fire zones anyone in that area, you could engage them.

**How difficult is it to stick to those rules when you are really stressed and you are being, I mean it's got to be hard sometimes, because I have to wait for him to shoot at me before I?**

Well one bloke I think it was in 7 Platoon, he saw a person in a free fire zone, and he believed

21:30 him to be armed and he shot him. He was actually carrying like a reaping hook, he shouldn't have been in the area, and the bloke could see that he was carrying what he thought was a weapon, but it wasn't a weapon it was just like a cutting rice and that sort of thing.

**How crappy do you feel when something like that happens?**

Well you know it's a - not much you can do about it. He was probably just doin',

22:00 whatever he was doin'. He shouldn't have been there, but then again what do you do? I could have engaged and killed two women one day, they were in a free fire zone, and we heard this movement coming, I put my section to immediate ambush, and two women walked in, they had been pinching [stealing] or getting bananas from the banana crop. They were in a free fire zone. They were in black, they were carrying something, they could have been

22:30 standard rule unless we were sprung and I didn't spring the ambush no one else fired. We didn't fire. But if had've we would have been within our rights.

**Do you think the locals really understood the rules of engagement?**

I think the locals over there had been at war at one stage or another for donkeys years [a long time] it's just a way of life for them at that point in time.

23:00 See they had been relocated a lot of them, they had relocated them from villages to another villages to reduce the number of outlying villages, for this food source. They were trying to do something like what they had done in Malaya. And a lot of them were going back to their native banana patches or wherever they had crops growing and getting them, but they had been told not to go, but you know.

23:30 **They know there's food there?**

They know there's food there they know where it is, they had probably done it umpteen times and got away with it. On this occasion, if we had engaged them.

**So talk me through your first proper patrol going out?**

Well we - that would have been Kosciuszko, we went out for about 7 days on that one.

24:00 And we flew in, there were large paddy field and patrolled up into the mountains. Yeah we didn't find a great deal. We found a crashed plane from a previous war, it wasn't from our current war. We found a few other things, we didn't have a con..., ah yes we did, we did have a contact.

24:30 7 Platoon had a contact yeah. They killed two and missed two.

**So when you came across that plane, was that something that you really had to carefully look at for potential booby trap or?**

No, vegetation was growing through it so we knew it was there for a while and I would say it would be from the French war.

25:00 **Can you talk me through your first contact that you had?**

In Vietnam?

**Yeah.**

It was a contact rear. Moving along and the rear broke. I wasn't actually directly involved in it, when you are in a platoon, it might only be a section involved initially,

25:30 and the bloke at the rear just happened to see him come behind him, that's his job. So it was a classic contact rear and I was in the middle section. The rear section more or less handled it. We were there but....

**So you would have heard the firing?**

They are going around because, they just don't stop like when you fire at say Simon and it misses him it

26:00 goes over the top, it was your back in that direction, you are still getting the spent fires.

**So in terms of tactics where do you go with the rear, like I mean would you be coming to back them up or how does that work?**

Oh yeah they go down like and form a firm base, once the initial contact, and then the platoon commander decides what he is going to do. And we just done I think it was a left, a left

26:30 and swept through but they had gone, except for the two dead.

**So when there was two enemy dead is that correct - what's the process of searching?**

You ascertain they are dead and remove the weapons from them, so there's no chance of anything and see what they have got on them, anything of intelligence value. Plus you remove their weapons and any ammunition they got, so it doesn't fall into enemy hands.

27:00 **Did you find anything on these people?**

I can't think of anything other than their weapons. Not everyone carries a wealth of information sort of thing.

**When you are going out on patrols is it hard every day or does it get easier?**

It all depends on what you have been doing, if you are a bit tired and getting a bit cranky

27:30 you don't think you should be going on this, it's someone else's turn, or yeah when you get down a bit tired, you do get a bit put out.

**Do you know of any experiences - did any guys get a bit superstitious or, feel like that they don't want to go today, they have got a bad feeling, or anything like that?**

Yeah, different things, but nothing that ever worked out

28:00 that I know of.

**Have you ever felt just going on patrol, that something is just not quite right, how much is your instincts of value to you?**

Well your instincts tell you that if you are going through an area, like in one particular case and you can see timbers been cut only a few inches off the ground. Well your awareness heightens because they probably cut that timber to make bunkers

28:30 you know overhead protection, so as soon as you see them, your instincts tell you that there's something pretty close.

**What did those bunkers look like that the Vietnamese had?**

They wouldn't be much higher than that first to second step, they built them very low to the ground, generally earthed over, a bit of vegetation, depends on how long they had been in them. How long they have had to prepare them, but if they have had the

29:00 time to prepare them they are well sighted and they are hard to pick. As I said, once you go down your observation distance is greatly reduced and it's pretty bloody hard to stick your head up to have a good look.

**So obviously, well not obviously, but is it more dangerous when you come across a series of bunkers, how do you attack that compared to just**

29:30 **coming across and having a contact on the track?**

Well it all depends on how many you think are there, how big a system you think it is. A section wouldn't handle them and sometimes a platoon is hard pushed to handle it. So generally unless it's a very small one they pull back and put artillery in and go back and have a look.

**Can you talk me through one that you had an experience with?**

30:00 There was one was occupied, luckily it wasn't occupied, it was only occupied by a caretaker force of about 7 blokes we reckon, but it was a system that could handle about 150. But they weren't home, only what we called a caretaker force was there they just care for the bunkers and if it's raining and getting water in them or and they generally leave a few sick or something behind, something to look after

30:30 and what we first found was their water point. As soon as we found a water point we started looking around.

**What does a water point look like?**

Oh where they get their water from. At a creek, you can see someone has been to the water, where they fill up their water or water containers, just a creek. That's the point that the track goes down to the water point. So once we found that we knew to be so well used there's got to be

31:00 something around, something of substantial size. So we kept going and we found the bunkers first which isn't normal because they usually pick you up before you get into them and as we got into them more they were engaged, and once again it was only by the caretaker force. We were out advancing, receiving fire,

31:30 this bloke popped up, I won't say the bloke's name, nailed him. He went down we said, "That's good, that's the only fire we are receiving at this point". But when we got up to the bunker or in the trench, he

was there but there was no weapon. So oh, where is he, there's more around. So yeah, anyway we kept searching

32:00 we got another one, and the rest must have gone. So we stayed there that night because it was a fairly substantial complex and the gear they got out of that complex was unreal it was an artillery position, and artillery to them is rockets, they don't have an artillery gun. And the information we got out of that bunker system was unreal as far as there was

32:30 maps, charts of American installations down to toilets, gun pits and that because the Americans let the Vietnamese go in and clean their boots and do their house work and the only place that wasn't on there that we couldn't find was Nui Dat. No Vietnamese were

33:00 allowed in Nui Dat. So yeah, we started getting all the cache, their ammunitions, their rockets.

**Did they have a fair bit of ammunition?**

Not small arms but they had 80 mortars and 107 rockets and that sort of stuff. The sort of stuff they didn't want to carry around with them. There was like toothbrushes and

33:30 water bottles, things they didn't need for wherever they had gone.

**Was there a chance they would come back?**

That night one came back, but we thought he was - at least one come back. We think he was one of the caretaker force and we were at standing to, and the next thing there was this Vietnamese voice yelling out, got the awareness pumping again, any he

34:00 approached 8 Platoon, the bloke reckoned he had him but all we found was footprints about 8 feet apart. We missed him. But I would say he was from the caretaker force and he probably thought we had been and gone and he come back to see what was going on.

**What do you do to those bunkers before you leave?**

Engineers, if we have got engineers with us at company level what they call a splinter team of engineers and they generally blow them.

34:30 Or try and make them as unusable as they can. You haven't accomplished much but at least you are not letting them walk back in to them.

**So whatever ammunition you would carry that out yourself or what would you do with the ammunition?**

Blow that too. If they get enough, make a heap put a charge in and when we go, a delayed charge and blow it.

**Did you have to when you were searching the bunkers, did you have to be aware of booby traps or anything**

35:00 **like that?**

Oh yes, you keep your eyes well and truly open for them.

**What do you look for?**

Normally if they are in there, they normally haven't got them booby trapped.

**What were you trained to look for?**

Any wires, or like fishing line or wires, any like mines actually in the ground. But if a booby trap is put up properly, it takes a good person to find them. Usually only find them after someone has tripped on them.

35:30 Unless you are a specialist in that field and got the time to look. But normally the infantry, they have got a lot on the go, and they probably shouldn't - they should look a bit better than they do I suppose. But time dictates the...

**What sort of food did you find there at the bunkers that they were eating?**

Rice was their main one. We found one place in a

36:00 creek. They had a little kind of hoochie [makeshift shelter] built in a creek that's because it was cooler and they had bags of rice in the creek. So all we done with them was cut them open and put it in the water, so the rice would be spoiled. Tinned fish that sort of thing. But no great rations. Not what we would be used to living on.

**Were you surprised at what they could live on?**

Yeah.

36:30 Because they didn't take much at all, even some of them what they were carrying you wouldn't reckon they could survive, they might only have a hammock and a bit of plastic and that was their sleeping arrangement. And food, they could travel very light with food and the clothes, they more or less didn't have a great deal of clothing. Their ammunition was generally of a lighter scale than what we were carrying.

**Did you respect them as an enemy, did you feel they were...?**

37:00 If you came across the NVA [North Vietnamese Army] unit, you gave them more respect yeah. The local fella, he was game but he wasn't in the same class.

**Could you tell who you were fighting?**

The NVA generally wore NVA uniforms. They had the pith helmet and generally

37:30 had the uniform on. They didn't always have it but they generally had it, whereas the locals had whatever he could put on.

**Did you take many prisoners at all?**

No. Not that we didn't want to, just that no we didn't. Not that I saw anyway. Not that we took some and didn't take them prisoner. No. We just didn't have the opportunity. We took suspects on searches,

38:00 that's a different thing. Now this bunker complex I have just explained to you, we were in there for 2 or 3 days, cleaning it out, and we got word that they were going to put a - the US [United States] Air Force was going to put a strike on another complex, at 11,000 metres away from us. Yeah,

38:30 we identified our location to the bird dog, that's the spotter plane. He said, "Yes, got you". At the time we dug shell scrapes. A shell scrape is large enough for you to lay in, if a grenade explodes beside you, it goes over you, and that's what they call a shell scrape or artillery - and we were told to get into these shell scrapes because they were going to put this strike in.

39:00 And we did, and every now and again you could hear a bit of shrapnel from the bombs going through the trees, not a lot, just every now and again. So I said, "Bugger this", so I got out of my shell scrape and I got behind a tree, which put the tree between me and the bombing. And then a large bit of shrapnel about the size of me palm of me hand fell down and I picked it up, and I was just looking at it, it was still warm, and there was a loud explosion on 7 Platoon's

39:30 perimeter, and I thought they had been probed by claymore mines - they had fired a claymore mine, and I saw the smoke and then I heard the bird dog climbing. He had marked us. And before I could even get up the first draft come in.

39:59 End of tape

## Tape 8

00:32 Yeah, smoke went off, bird dog was climbing away, and the first strafe come in, and of course we had to get back from company to battalion, battalion to task force, task force to liaison and liaison to the aircraft, and they got about I don't know, I really can't remember about 3 or strafes before we got on to them.

**By strafing do you**

01:00 **mean sweeping through?**

No 20 mm cannon shells. The gattling gun, brrrrr strafing. They were HE [High Explosive] shells and when they hit they explode give shrapnel effect because they are anti personnel rather than a - if you are going to shoot other aircraft down you would use solid shot. But if you want to shoot inflict infantry damage, you would use anti personnel which is

01:30 shrapnel.

**And that was actually coming from the chopper itself?**

No. From 2 F100 super sabres. Not from choppers. Fighter aircraft, they are the ones that done the bombing. They dropped bombs on the other complex, and then they had a go at. We were Charlie alright, Charlie Company 4RAR. If I had have been in my shell - I didn't see it at the time, because when this started happening, we weren't

02:00 anywhere near organised to have stuff coming from the sky because the enemy didn't have an air force. So I took off to the bunker and I was the last one to get in and I couldn't get in it was bloody chockers [full], all the other blokes had got in first. It was only then that I realised that I had blood running down me arm and down me face and I had been hit by the shrapnel and I didn't even feel it. Anyway they put stuff on me and that. I went

- 02:30 over to where my shell scrape was one line had gone through it by the cannon shell, if I had've stayed in me shell scrape just pure luck. But if I had've stayed in the shell scrape instead of behind the tree. Anyway they got 14 of us, wounded 14 one was pretty crook [sick], an American, this is the way the war was, an American chopper was going through it had nothing to do with us, nothing to do with the aircraft, he happened to be going through pretty close, he heard the thing, he just come in
- 03:00 dropped the winch, picked up the badly hit bloke, if he hadn't have got him out he was dead and took him straight to an American establishment called Black Horse, and they had him on the operating table in about 20 minutes after he was hit. Just luck. Anyway he lived and come back home. But of the 14 that were hit I think maybe 6 or 7 returned to Australia and the others were light duties and back to the unit, or hospital then light duties.
- 03:30 So yeah, of the official reports you read just about they say we were struck by falling cannon shells.
- Falling?**
- Falling cannon shells that means half the guns fired the shells. Just thought I would mention that.
- A pretty brutal wake up call to the sort of fire power that was being used by the Americans?**
- 04:00 The last thing you expect to be attacked from the air because we are fighting a guerrilla army so to speak and you might get mortars or you might get a few rockets, it's not expecting to get air attack, aerial attack.
- You guys were almost fighting a guerrilla campaign yourselves. The Australians were very much...?**
- We were very much along the lines of their outfit. The Yanks were a bit more noisy than us and a bit more gung ho [quick to take action] sort of thing. Nothing against the Yanks they are a pretty
- 04:30 brave lot the way they go, the casualties they sustained, but I wouldn't like to work with them.
- Pretty brutal wake up call as to the sort of intensity of the weapons they were using as well, the?**
- Oh yeah, they had good weapons, this is the VC [Viet Cong]?
- The Americans in terms of the exploding bullets and the fire power on their mission?**
- 05:00 The old gattling gun just spews them out. Anyway they got about 14 of us and yeah the old CO came down to the hospital a day or two later, and apologised for the accident. We had an Australian matron at the time, and she said, "When he comes in you lay there and you look as sick as you can make him feel real...". Accidents happen, but if I could have got him at the time I would have been.
- He would have been used to it wouldn't he?**
- 05:30 I think he might have been. Anyway I know accidents happen, Australians have killed their own. Shouldn't happen but it does. But as I say, if I could have got him at the time or the pilot at the time, I would have stuck me M16 somewhere.
- Was that a problem in Vietnam accidentally firing their weapons, people being killed?**
- Yeah there were a few accidents.
- 06:00 We killed one of our own in Borneo through a stuff up [mistake] in sentry posting.
- Must be even harder to take when it's come from your own?**
- I think it would, particularly for the bloke, the bloke that's dead too, but the bloke that pulled the trigger is the cause of a simple stuff up. You have got to live with it. Yeah, the Yanks do it,
- 06:30 but I think they do it more because there are more of them. I think we might do it a bit less, but there's less of us too.
- I just wanted to go back and cover a few of the points we covered at the beginning of the Vietnam experience. You talked about being back in Brisbane and talking about going to the wharves to catch the Sydney across. It made me think about the wharfies and the unions, what ?**
- 07:00 **had their...?**
- Never saw any problems, no one came near us on that day.
- Had they been slowing up supplies in 68 to...?**
- I heard they had, on a ship called the [HMAS Jeparit. From Sydney they wouldn't load stores on it.
- Wollop[hit] a wharfie campaign gone round?**
- Yeah. Punch a postie [postmen], wollop a wharfie.

07:30 Coming from up here, I come back we come back up here, and we never had it on any scale like Sydney and Melbourne. The people up here were pretty, you might have got the odd one or two, but there was no big protest movement.

**And you said you didn't like the way they ran their show, what was it that...?**

Well, they're different to us and they used to have an inspection at 9 o'clock at night. You couldn't set

08:00 up your gear to go to bed until they had been around and done their inspection. You would think you would have your inspection in the morning wouldn't ya? Just a navy thing.

**Wwew relations between the army and the navy pretty good?**

Yeah, but there would be blokes wanting to set up their hammocks and all this sort of thing, everything had to be in inspection order until 9 o'clock at night, 2100. Just a navy thing. No it was alright.

08:30 **You were now carrying an M16, is that right?**

Yeah.

**Was that just a when you went to Vietnam?**

Forward Scout and the section commander carry M16s. The rest carried SLRs and the M60. Just the weapons distribution in the section.

**And you said earlier you had been promoted to corporal after Borneo. So you were now a section commander?**

09:00 Yeah.

**What was your section, which section were you commander of?**

I had 6 Section, 8 Platoon, Charlie Company.

**And did you fall into that position quite naturally?**

That was the same section I had been in since I first went to Charlie Company. I was a digger, then a section 2IC, then a section commander, yeah I had no troubles with it.

**Had your section gone off to**

09:30 **2RAR?**

He had been promoted to sergeant. He was in another company within 4RAR, he was promoted to sergeant.

**You just told us about you being the receiving end of the American strafing, was that something you had to employ into your war fare, was there a greater use of artillery and air strikes?**

Compared to Borneo?

10:00 Far greater, far greater, far greater reliance of artillery air strikes than Borneo. We had one gun per company in Borneo. The scale was just entirely - the same with aerial support there was no comparison.

**How would you call in air support and what sort of circumstances would you have to do that?**

Well as a section commander I wouldn't call in air support. I couldn't call in air strike that would be

10:30 platoon or company level. They were all radio contact. You always had artillery observation officers with you. At company level, they would 9 times out 10 call in the artillery, except if they got out of the platoon and you didn't have one. Generally left it to the people who were trained in that job. Same with mortars you normally had a mortar fire control at each company and he would call in the mortars if you

11:00 at platoon level once again if you didn't have one you could do that.

**Obviously coming across bunkers is a pretty good example of where you might have an air strike called in?**

Air strike or artillery yeah but you had a danger close situation I think it was 800 metres for the 175s and 400 metres for the 105s. You called them in any less than that,

11:30 the artillery, you had to accept you may have friendly casualties, so you either got back past the 400 metre zone or you accepted danger close.

**What might be some other circumstances, is it locating an enemy camp?**

It might be if you spring an ambush, and they nick off in a different direction, you might call artillery in say 500 metres that way,



12:00 estimate they might be that around about by the time or give them something to think about or change their direction or, yeah. Artillery is used fairly often. Because there was no shortage of ammo with the Yanks. Australia paid for its ammo but there was no shortage.

**And what were some of the other new weapons you observed during your time there?**

12:30 Not compared to Borneo, no we had the M79, or the M72, that was a one shot rocket launcher extended out, they still got it today, the M72. That was a new one, you only fired the one and threw the case away. The launcher away. The M79 we had in Borneo, the claymore mine we had.

**Could you explain the claymore mine?**

13:00 It's a command detonated mine, it's not victim detonated. It's shaped like so and you say that's the area you want to inflict the damage to, well you point it in that direction, it's got a detonator, put the detonator in run a cable back to a firing device and then it's got a little dynamite in it and when you fire that it runs a charge through the det [detonator], blows the det and blows the

13:30 it's got about 720 ball bearings in it that go like that. So it's not a mine as such you stand on it, it's a command - you trigger it. They are a good defensive type thing for an ambush.

**720 ball bearings?**

They go on an arc like that.

**So ambush again was a pretty important of your war fare tactics?**

14:00 When we get there that was the mainstay of our operations. Ambushing. Patrolling and then finding suitable ambush locations.

**Did you have set ambush patterns or as section commander would you determine according to...?**

Very seldom a section would ambush by itself until it's at least a platoon. The only time I really

14:30 we used to call like tail patrols, they are tactical area of responsibility and around Nui Dat they used to have like a tail patrol area and people from Nui Dat would go out and patrol within that area to stop enemy infiltration. Normally only about 5 blokes, and really you are just a listening post, you are just out there to - as an early warning system. And we were out there this night afternoon and we found this bit of a track

15:00 so we backed into the scrub so we could observe the track, and during the night you generally lay side by side and all you do when your time is up you touch the bloke beside you and then it's his turn and he touches the bloke - and that way there's minimum movement minimum noise. And sometime around midnight or thereabouts we had movement behind us, and we estimate 7 to 10

15:30 went behind us but you could tell if anymore we coming and we couldn't turn around, because as soon as you started to move, you were gone. So we had to lay there and listen to them. They were moving very good, you could tell they were moving very tactically. So in the morning we had a look and there was another little track ran about 3 metres behind us. We were watching this one but they went down that one. And that's pretty hard because you know

16:00 they are there and that no one snaps a twig or moves or your are gone, because the time you turn around it's you would be in a bit of strife.

**Like a bad dream.**

And you didn't know if any more were coming behind. It was good to see the sunlight.

**So you referred to them as tails?**

Tactical Area Responsibility.

**They would be section**

16:30 **size patrols?**

5 blokes, yeah. What you were was more or less an early warning system.

**They were from Nui Dat?**

Yeah.

**How far out would they be?**

This one was around about 1000.

**So well within?**

Oh yeah, but 5 little blokes sitting out whether it be 100 yards out or 1000 yards out, you are on your Pat Malone [own].

**In terms of you would be deployed overnight?**

Over night. You would go

17:00 out 2 or 3 o'clock in the arvo, they would send you to a given area, find a sight there, come back in the morning. It's as I say just an early warning system.

**Would you be in radio communication?**

Yeah, oh yeah, carry a radio yeah. Otherwise you can't tell them. You are supposed to if there's a mob coming or something you would ring up, you don't ring up, you radio in. And let them know and

17:30 it's taken from there.

**What were some of the common illnesses and health issues you experienced in Vietnam?**

I had malaria, I had this strain of malaria. And when I got mine I had been up at fire support base Flinders which is a notorious malaria area. We had been taking our Paludrine [anti malarial drug] and so forth but I still got it,

18:00 and I was about the 204th in the battalion to go down because I just remember that number. The Australian system was full, so I went through the American system.

**Was this a good thing or a bad thing?**

Bad thing. Don't believe everything you see in ER [American television show about Emergency Rooms in hospitals], I found the American system not as good as the Australian system. When I was wounded and I went through the Australian system it was good, they might be a bit more regimented, you have got to lay there and not talk and all that sort of stuff.

18:30 And lights go out at a given time in the Australian one, but the American one it's pretty slap dash. People just walk around doin' whatever they want to do, lights on and off whenever they want to do it. If you want the doctor, you have got to ask to see a doctor. In the Australian the doctor comes to see you at least every day. But anyway they packed me in ice and that in the American system.

**Was that a common treatment?**

I don't know.

19:00 But they were trying to get me temperature down they don't actually put ice up against you, they put like a rubber pad around you and pack the ice and try to keep you cool. But me temperature wouldn't come down and they said I had PUO malaria and I put up with this for a couple of days and I said, "What's PUO?" He said, "Peroxin of unknown origin". I said, "What's that?" he said, "We don't know but you got something but we don't know what you got". I started to get a bit ...

19:30 anyway they put me in intensive care, that's an air conditioned room, ward. And that's when the old alarm bells started ringing [started to panic]. Anyway, I come good. So they discharged me.

**Alarm bells started going?**

In here. When they put you in intensive care, 'I am thinking how bad am I?' Because some blokes died.

20:00 **Can you describe what it was like to experience malaria, what were the symptoms, what did you feel like?**

I come back from fire support base Flinders I got off the chopper went back to me lines me tent on me company lines and I was getting undressed to have a shower and the next thing I and I sat down, and the company clerk just happened to be walking past, and he said, "What's wrong with you" and I said, "Buggered if I know", he said, "You've got malaria".

20:30 **Is it an intense fever?**

Oh yeah, your lips all crack and hot and sweaty and...

**Physical pain?**

Your spleen and that gets all swollen and it gives you a bit of larry do. Anyway they discharged me from the American one and said I am right, but they said before I could go back to my unit I had to go through the Australian medical system. They put me in for another 10 days, I still had it.

21:00 **How were the Americans treating you once they identified it?**

Just with - I don't know they give me some medication, I couldn't tell you what the medication was. But they were giving me something.

**Were you on an IV [Intravenous] drip as well?**

No I wasn't on a drip. But I was kept cool and they couldn't get me down and they put me in the air conditioning and it was fairly cool and following something, but don't ask me what I was taking. But

they ended up doing blood tests

21:30 and all that and saying yeah you are alright. And when I went back through the Australian system they done blood tests and put me in the Australian system for 10 days. Then after that I went back to the unit.

**Were there any distinctions that stood out in the way they were treating the malaria between the Americans and the Australians?**

I thought the Australians were more professional.

**The manner rather than what they actually did?**

Oh, they would do anything for you, but you had to ask them like the wards weren't

22:00 there might be 36 beds in their ward and just one NCO looking after 36 blokes. You can't really get good quality service when you are looking after that many blokes. So I was quite happy to go with the Australian system.

**Malaria often comes back, you can't?**

For years I have had every 12

22:30 months 2 years I get this real bad fever, but they reckon it's not malaria, but they can't tell me what it is. So I don't know what it is, it just flattens me for about 3 days. And you just ache and shake.

**Is it seasonal?**

Yeah, probably every 18 months or so. Not as much now as it used to be.

23:00 But sometimes it just bowls you over. Now I get to the stage I don't even bother going to the doctor about it. I know what it's going to do for 2 or 3 days, and let it go at that.

**You were talking about riding around**

23:30 **in choppers a lot, of being setting off the patrols in choppers, what were the major types of helicopters you were?**

Hughies and Chinooks mainly Hughies. You done a few in Chinooks but mainly Hughies.

**Were they generally Australian Army?**

No we only had 9 there I think. Sometimes they were mostly American, if we were going to do a major move they would bring in a platoon or a company of American choppers and get moved by them.

24:00 They are very gung ho.

**They rock'n'roll?**

Yeah. One day we were doing an assault, and B Company were going out in APCs [Armoured Personnel Carrier], and secure the ground and the rest of the battalion was going to fly in. We were sitting and waiting and waiting and I suppose the higher echelons knew what was going on but the digs didn't. They said, "O.K. saddle up we're off". So, o.k.

24:30 we're off, we think B Company has got the ground and we are just going to go in and land and get off. And we are going in and the door gunner's and the door opens up and we think that's bloody B Company down there what are they doing? B Company had got bogged at a river crossing back there, and the ground was unsecured but no one told us, and here's these Yanks blazing away at the side of the - there was no incoming fire. But just the Yanks doin' their clearing.

25:00 And everyone, you can't hear anything, you can't talk there's bloody chopper's goin' and the guns are goin and you think Christ what's goin' on? Any rate we got off and there was no incoming fire just the Yanks doing their clearing by fire.

**And that was just their theory?**

Just brass up the place.

**Send anyone running if they are around. Hope that you send people running?**

Like when we were up in Bien Hoa, we come

25:30 in you always unload and you clear your breach, put a full magazine back on and make sure the breach is clear, anyway we got the Yanks to eventually do that, they just come in and eject their shell, land it on the ground, don't pick it up and leave a pile of live shells on the ground. We used to pick them up and put them back in the magazine. Just one of those things.

**Relations were pretty good though between the 2 armies?**

Oh yes. They would do anything for you,

26:00 they are bit slap dash but they were a pretty good bunch of blokes really. I wouldn't like to be serving with them. But what we run into was, yeah they were pretty good.

**You mentioned the APCs can you describe them for me?**

They are the same ones that rattle past here now. I probably rode on them 40 years ago. That's when I first rode in one, 64. APCs alright

26:30 back here in Australia only ride beats a war. But over there I couldn't get out of them quick enough.

**Why is that?**

Mines.

**They are not protected from mines?**

We used to - they increased it with a couple of layers of sandbags on the floor. To improve the blast - decrease the blast, and they also increased - they put more belly armour under them after a while.

27:00 To try and reduce the blast effect, but mainly they went on roads and that, tracks. Good tracks and the VC knew where they travelled, so the amount of mines they encountered was a bit more usual than the foot soldier. And when you are inside them there's nothing you can do if it hits a mine. Nothing you can do inside them, I would rather be out walking.

**Could you just describe what the APCs are they 6 wheeled**

27:30 **vehicles?**

Tracked, they are track vehicles. Aluminium holds, carry 10 men 2 crew, mounted with machine guns. They are mainly a troop carrier that's what they are armoured personnel carrier.

**Are they accessed by a door at the back?**

Yeah, a door drops down at the back. Or a single door opens, but generally a ramp comes down.

**The men sit alongside?**

28:00 Alongside either side with the crew commander in the middle and his hatch and the driver over on the left hand track.

**And the crew commander is on the machine gun is he?**

Yep.

**And they were used quite commonly around Nui Dat?**

They were a pretty popular means of travel. But I didn't like them.

**And they would accompany supply company convoys and that sort of thing?**

Oh yeah, they would bring stuff up and that yeah. Choppers

28:30 would bring most of it, but any heavy stuff would come up by APC.

**What sort of trucks were they using?**

They were Mark IIIs. They are not around now, but Mark IIIs they were called.

**And they would also be doing runs up from Vung Tau?**

They did the main ones, the main carriage of gear from Vung Tau to Nui Dat yeah. They used to come up by convoy.

29:00 **Tell me about getting mail and staying in contact with Australia while you were in Vietnam, was mail regular?**

I found mail was regular yeah, but it depended on how many times someone wanted to write. But yeah. If you wrote enough you got enough. We couldn't write all that often, because sometimes we would be out for 3, 4 or 5 weeks.

**That must have been difficult**

29:30 **with the 3 kids at home, and being so far away?**

Ah, yeah, Gwen was living with her parents so she had that, she had her parents with her, she wasn't living by herself. So she had - back in Townsville, so she had that strength sort of thing. But no mail we were pretty right with mail. I know there was a bunch of postie's and all that, but I couldn't complain.

30:00 **You said earlier that you personally weren't too religiously inclined but did the - was religion?**

The experience change me? No not really.

**I was just going to ask how important having chaplains and religious services were for other guys there within the camp?**

Oh yea, I think they had their church services and that, but yeah I didn't attend. And I had nothing

30:30 against anyone who attended either. I think they had their church services and that, they could have them. The old Salvo [Salvation Army] was the best bloke to have around.

**Can you tell us any experiences you had with him?**

The Salvo? Yeah, he's always there with a cup of tea and a biscuit and always turned up in unexpected places. And they don't try and push anything on you they are just there to have a chat. They are well worth their salt [worthy people].

31:00 **Who would you seek counsel from if you were tired, or stressed, or in need of a chat with someone, or to let some steam off, who would you go to?**

On a religious basis? I would probably talk to a mate, I would probably talk to him first. Whoever and if needed to go higher I would go up the chain, but no I would just have a talk to someone. A few blokes had a talk to me at different times,

31:30 who had problems.

**As a corporal you are slightly removed from the troops?**

No, you are with the diggies all the time. The sergeant's slightly removed but the corporal lives with the blokes and eats with them and everything yeah.

**Did you need to stay away emotionally in any way from them rather than giving too much of your confiding of yourself I guess?**

I tried to be as open with them as I could

32:00 and when they were scared I was bloody scared too and when they were having a good time I was having a good time too. I tried to be as open with them as I could and tell them how it was and how it should be and I tried to be fair and firm, but you gotta be fair as well. I only ever charged one bloke.

**What was that for?**

He wanted to shoot me.

32:30 **That's a good reason?**

He wasn't in my section either he was in another section. And he was a bit of a - bit different. Anyhow we were going over on the Sydney and we had the two coloured meal tickets, in the mess, and instead of fronting up at the mess at the same time, blue comes at 4.30 and red comes at 5.30 or whatever,

33:00 And this bloke fronts up and he hasn't got a ticket. So I said, "Where's your ticket, and what colour are you?" "I don't know". I said, "Where's your ticket", he said, "It's in me shirt" he said, "I don't know". This went on anyway I said, "You are not getting a meal until you go and find your shirt". It's back in the cabin there somewhere. He said, "As soon as I get there, you are dead I'll get you". There were other blokes that heard it so I had no option

33:30 but to do it, because if you let that sort of thing get away, where do you draw the line. So that's the only bloke I - and all he got was 7 days CB [Confined to Barracks] or something in Vietnam, where was he going to go anyway. Yeah.

**Were there many men who couldn't cope with the stress?**

There was one bloke, before we went over

34:00 and on the way over he was going to, the rest of us could go home, he was going to fix up everyone, win the war all by himself. And the first major op we went on he got diarrhoea and he got it bad. He never went outside the wire again until - it's all talk, once he got down to the nitty gritty [the harsh reality] of being out there,

34:30 he just couldn't cope with it. So he finished up in transport somewhere cleaning land rovers for the rest of the tour.

**Was that something that you saw quite a bit of it's (a) pretty much of an environment, but (b) war can be pretty emasculating can't it?**

It can but I think if people wanted to get out of it, they got out of it. They put

35:00 in for such and such a job. Everyone had to be a volunteer for Vietnam be it nasho or regular. So everyone that went had agreed to go they weren't dragged there, but having got there, a lot of them, not a lot of them, a few of them found it a bit different to what they thought it was going to be. A few of them had problems but, I can't remember any great - they moved them to somewhere else.

35:30 But I got nothing against a bloke that's – admits he's scared or doesn't want to be there. They are right.

**Did you ever come across self inflicted wounds?**

No.

**Desertion?**

One bloke didn't come back, went home to Australia

36:00 on R&R [Rest and Recreation] and didn't come back.

**What about acts of heroism in Vietnam, did you see any...?**

Yeah, but how do you quantify heroism?

**For you, something that really meant - blew you away?**

No see there's lots of things you see that if you had your time over again the bloke probably wouldn't do it, but just at the time, you do it because that's

36:30 what you do at the time. Some people get caught up in an act and get caught up in it without fully realising what could have happened.

**Did you surprise yourself with anything like that? Did you find yourself if you had given it a little more thought you wouldn't have?**

Yeah, no I can't really, no

37:00 you done what you had to do, there was one time we come under friendly fire from the ARVIN that's the Army of Friendly Fire of Vietnam, and our blokes wanted to return fire, and I said, "No if you return fire you will stir the pot" [antagonise the situation]. And this bloke really went, so I went over, he was a gunner, so I went over and kicked the gun over. And of course once you have started firing and he got real hostile. But no,

37:30 that was a bit of a punt [gamble]. He could have got a bit toey [edgy]. No, other than that just done.

**Did you have much contact with the ARVIN?**

Not a lot. One time there we were on a feature called The Horse Shoe, and there's an ARVIN post down on the check point of Dat Do and they would fire

38:00 at anything in the night if they heard a noise they – and we were getting a few of them up our way. And, one day we loaded up the 50 kel at about 50 traces, just all traces. Locked it in with sandbags just in front of their bunker, and that night when they had their little pot shots we just let go with the 50 kel. No more. We had asked them previously. But those poor buggers they were

38:30 just like village people and put a rifle in their hands and say, "Right, you are on the fence tonight". They just wanted to grow their crops or graze their pigs or, not everyone wanted to be out on the front line so to speak.

**But that had been one of Australia's principal contributions hadn't it?**

We had blokes from different battalions go to different ARVIN units.

39:00 We had one of our corporals killed with an ARVIN unit.

**Could you compare from your experience the ARVIN vs [versus] the North Vietnamese Army in terms of skill?**

Well it all depends, where we were Phuoc Tuy Province, there as no major ARVIN unit they were mostly regional forced or popular force and that's like the militia or the CMF as compared to the regular army. So we didn't really see

39:30 any top line ARVIN units.

**So you didn't have any first hand...?**

Not with ARVIN units no they were mainly up north of us what we had in Phuoc Tuy Province was more or less their second or third strength, their regional force and their popular force. The popular force

40:00 was just locals for village defence. Regional forces might work in Phuoc Tuy Province but not go outside it. The regular army could go anywhere but they were a different kettle of fish [a different situation].

**And were those local forces armed with American...?**

They started off with ADM1 and the World War [11] stuff. As time went on and more weapons became available their weaponry was upgraded, but normally no they only had the World War 11 stuff.

40:30 **And your experience with the local people distinguished between the Australians and the Americans?**

We really didn't have a lot to do with the locals. We as I say we didn't have any in our lines as the Americans did. Any time I ever saw them really was when I went to Vung Tau once for two days R&R other than that I - except out on the field I never had anything to do with them.

41:01 End of tape

## Tape 9

00:33 **I was just wondering if there were any other patrols or operations that you would like to talk about for the Archive or any interesting things that happened that might be a bit different that you encountered?**

A lot of your time was just spent in patrolling and ambushing, you went having contacts every day of the week and sometimes you might go 3 or 4 weeks and not see hide nor hair [not see anything of the enemy].

01:00 Basically what we have covered is a representative sample of most of them. The same thing but a bit different each time.

**We haven't really talked about R&R did you?**

I had R&R, I came home to Australia. To Gwen yeah.

**What was that like, did you fly home?**

Yes.

**What was it...?**

Darwin down to Sydney up to Brisbane up to Townsville and Darwin's just over there.

01:30 Yeah, I come home on a plane full of Americans, they were coming home on R&R at the time and they used to allocate a few seats to Australians. I came home with them, got off at Sydney, caught another plane to Brisbane, Brisbane to Townsville, had about 4 days at home and then reversed the cycle back to Vietnam.

**How did you get to have R&R?**

It's a time thing, every one supposedly got a turn and

02:00 it's just a matter of when your turn come up. I had been there about - I come home between Christmas and New Year. I had been there over 7 months.

**Would it be like a section at a time would go?**

No, just individuals because otherwise you would delete that section. I don't know whether they took it on a points basis or an alphabetical basis, I am not sure. Just when your number comes up.

**Was it a bit of a culture shock,**

02:30 **one minute being in Vietnam and the next being at home?**

No, but the biggest culture shock was being in the reverse, because when I went down to Sydney to catch the plane I had to stay overnight in Sydney, up to Kings Cross to see the lights of Sydney having a few beers on the plane back to Saigon, Saigon to Nui Dat. Fill the magazines, charge the magazines, back on the wire that night. That's a culture shock. Just

03:00 come from all the big lights, in a city that's enjoying itself to sitting on the wire in Nui Dat, all in one day, 24 hours.

**Was it something that impacted on you immediately or was it something that creeps up on you?**

It's there at the time, but you get a bit - that's what you signed up for, that's what you volunteered for, so you have got to take the good with the bad.

03:30 **4 days doesn't seem like much to?**

No, but 5 days they give you but you have to do a bit of travelling to do. It's not much but I don't think they want too far along the way, because you get too accustomed to it. It's just enough to give you a break and recharge the batteries [regain some energy] a bit and come back.

**So there would have been things you were wanting to do while you were away, how did you spend those 4 days?**

04:00 Mainly just with the wife and children. I saw my mother and father of course, and yeah, the brothers but mainly just with them, and spending time with them and having a few beers and a few home cooked meals yeah and just, what do they say now, chilling out.

**Did Gwen have some favourite meals for you?**

Steak, eggs and chips. I asked for that one time on R&R in

04:30 Vung Tau, and I didn't get me chips, I only got the steak and eggs. I asked the waiter, "Why didn't I get me chips?", she said, "What chips?", I said "See look on the plate, chips" she said, "No, that's French fries". Being a boy from North Queensland they were chips to me, none of this French fries business. Yeah if I got me steak, eggs and chips I was right.

**So did you go on picnics or family outings or what did you do?**

We weren't up to Blue Water a couple of times

05:00 that's up towards Ingham, went for a swim in the creek and took the kids swimming, other than that no, it was just a family type get together. Of course we were going back again so.

**You obviously know what it's like in country, and how dangerous it is and then to come back to home, were you savouring every minute thinking you never know what's going to happen?**

That's why I stayed with Gwen and the kids and enjoyed it.

05:30 I had come home from Borneo and my second daughter wouldn't come near me. Because she had forgotten me, she was only 2 or 2 and a half or something at the time. She had forgotten me by the time I had come home from Borneo in 4 months. So I was quite happy to come home. Even Joanne our youngest daughter at that time was only a few months old. She was more than that, she was 13 months old or something.

**That's got to be heartbreaking?**

Yeah, you miss a fair bit of their lives.

06:00 But you know, that's the way it goes.

**So when you come back from R&R how do you mentally switch into coming home and how do you mentally switch off again and go right now I am a soldier again I have got to be...?**

I think coming home was the hardest because you have gotta, you are being, you didn't

06:30 really realise but you have been a bit tense for a while. The next thing you come home and all the lights and people are there and it's a different world, it's a - where's Vietnam? It's a different kettle of fish, and I think that's harder than when you went back because when you went back you knew what you were going for and what it was like. But to leave that and come home to an open free moving world it's entirely different.

**Did you find you were bombarded with questions, or did people leave you alone?**

07:00 No, they probably said, "Hey G'day how are ya? How's it been?" No. I didn't go out a lot so it was only the immediate family and me brothers and their wives, I more or less spoke to. I seen a few odd people, but no there was no big debate about it.

**Was there a part of you if you had a choice wouldn't want to go back?**

Oh, yeah of course, when you see the kids and that, it's hard.

07:30 But yeah, what do you do. As I say, one bloke came home to Melbourne and he didn't go back. But I can understand, I knew I had to go back, so no dramas.

**So what makes you go back?**

Your pride, respect, you signed the dotted line. You believe in what you are doing over there. Why wouldn't you go back?

**Is it also about not letting your mates down?**

08:00 Pride and respect, yeah respect to the blokes. How would you be, you wouldn't face them again if you didn't go back. You would run into them somewhere in Australia later.

**When you go back to the guys who haven't had R&R, did they ask you questions, live vicariously for you?**

Yes, same as you asked other blokes that had been before, see a lot of the other blokes didn't come home, they went to Hong Kong or Bangkok, or the

08:30 Philippines or those sort of places. Only a few actually come back to Australia. Some went to Singapore.



They were out for a good time that way, only a few of us actually come home to Australia.

**I guess even just a small amount of news from what was going on in Australia?**

Oh yeah oh right, in that respect. I can't say, they probably did, but I can't specifically

09:00 recall any incident but you more or less just got back and after 12 or 24 hours it was just had I been away.

**Did you ever feel jealous when it was someone's turn to go away?**

Not unduly no. Good luck to them, it's their turn. My turn will come or my turn's been.

**Now just talk me through the winding down**

09:30 **of your operation in Vietnam and how you came to be coming home?**

I come to be coming home a bit early because me time was up. My six year enlistment. I was offered me third to sign on but I told Gwen when I was home on R&R that I was coming home so I came home.

**What do you mean you were offered your third?**

Third stripe.

10:00 If I signed on it was there. I said, "I told Gwen I am coming home so that's what I am doing".

**Was that a big decision the two of you made or?**

Gwen wouldn't be too surprised - she was surprised when I got out. Because she knew how much I liked the army but she did a bit of a travelling around period and I thought that was getting a bit excessive and the kids were getting to an age where they were schooling and I thought

10:30 I either get out now or if I don't get out now I am in for 20 years, and the kids will have to be moved around accordingly. So yeah I got out.

**So it was more of a lifestyle decision for your family that drove it?**

Yeah. I went back twice to the recruiting office after I got out.

**Why did that come about?**

Because I was going to go back in.

**Was that because you found it hard to settle or?**

I just missed

11:00 it. Missed the friendship and the mates and yeah it's a lifestyle that I enjoyed. But then again the other side of the coin is - I was married and I think they deserved to have their sort of life as well. So in the 6 years I had done pretty well what I wanted to do, and it wouldn't have kept me

11:30 any better than that. The recruiting sergeant talked me out of it one time, and I even went back out to the battalion and the CO of the battalion said, "Yes" I could come back in with me rank. I had just started to build this and didn't go through with it.

**So when you went out to sort of test the waters again, the two times had you and Gwen talked about you going back in was that?**

She said that was a decision I could make.

12:00 But the first one the recruiting sergeant said, "What do you want to do?" and I said, "Go back to infantry", he said, "You don't want to go back there, go away and think about it". Anyway so I went and I run into the brigadier, he was the brigadier at the time and used to be a former CO of the battalion and we were down in the newsagency in Buderim Gardens one day and he asked me what I was doing and told him. I said I had been into the

12:30 recruiting office and he said, "Oh yes, why aren't you in?" "The recruiting sergeant told me to go away and think about it". He said, "Did he?". He was posted out.

**He obviously had your best interests in mind do you think?**

Oh he probably did, but for a recruiting sergeant you are supposed to be getting them in, it's not your job to get them out.

**And the second time when you went?**

I went out to the battalion

13:00 to see the CO out there of 4RAR. And he offered me to come back in with two and take it from there. And as I just said, we had just started building this place and I come home and talked to Gwen about it

and anyway I didn't go back.

**How long does it - so you come back from Vietnam, are you discharged straight away or?**

Virtually yeah, they had to pay me 8 weeks leave

13:30 I had 8 weeks leave build up.

**How long did it take you to settle down to civilian life?**

Quite some time, but I didn't fully realise it at the time that I was having trouble. I just thought it was the way of life, but I was having a bit of trouble settling down yeah.

**You were suddenly cut off from all your friends?**

14:00 Yes, they are all still down in Brisbane, all over Australia sort of thing. And I had more or less got away from people in Townsville because I had been away and they had grown up in the meantime or nor grown up but become married themselves and moved on and yeah it was a bit of a different world.

**It's a common story, there's that wonderful mateship in the services, and then**

14:30 **when you leave it just seems like it's a lonely period where you have to?**

You couldn't talk to people outside the army about Vietnam or, not that they were anti Vietnam, they just didn't understand. They just talked to you, "Oh yeah did that happen to you?" They didn't know or really didn't - I think half of them really didn't care. They just oh yeah o.k. so what. But you could talk to the blokes and you could talk on the same level

15:00 and they understood where you were coming from and you understood where they were coming from. I think unless you have experienced it, it is a bit hard to comprehend it. It's as I say there's no flags flying or bugles blowing or drums beating but it's something there that bonds you and you are scared at times my word you are, but at the end of the day you are there, and that's life.

**It must be and maybe you**

15:30 **have gotten opinions from your mates, it must be hard on the wives too - for you to come home and try and readjust, you have got to I guess re-establish that relationship of a normal kind of family?**

To be honest with you we had quite a rough patch for quite sometime, and I didn't realise at the time what the bottom line was, but yeah, we went through a bit of a rough patch and

16:00 didn't quite understand why. And that was it, I couldn't settle in to one job and didn't like the job because I didn't really want to be there, and just went on from there.

**So when you left the army did you have any idea what you would do, like whether you would go back to your trade?**

No well I had only been in Australia for 5 months in about 3.5 years and I was out of touch with things.

16:30 No I didn't have a clue what I was going to do. I had nothing lined up because I had been in Malaya and Borneo for 27 months and I had been over there and I only had about 5 months in Australia in between, so I didn't - I had no idea what I was going to do.

**It must have been quite a stressful time, you were building your house, you had just left your job of 6 years, you come home, you can't really talk about what you have been doing?**

Yeah, it was a rough patch, but yeah.

17:00 **So where did you find your strength your support how did you get through it?**

Well an understanding wife was the main thing, a lot of others would have said, move on Jack and rightfully so at times. But no, she was good, real good. And just over time, well you are out now and you have just got to accept it. And get on with it

17:30 but it took a while.

**Is it hard living without that constant daily discipline is that something that you have to - or I have heard people say that they had expectations of discipline for their families and the civilians around them and they would get frustrated because it wasn't a military...?**

Well you should be talking to Gwen about this, she would tell you what you are saying, she reckoned I was too hard on the children, make them sit there and be quiet and all this sort of

18:00 stuff and don't do this, and 'Where's your manners?', and really she reckons I was too hard on them, and it is probably where it stems from. But yeah Gwen would tell you more about that.

**Was it something that you were conscious of at the time?**

No I wasn't I just thought I was a normal father, a normal parent. But I think there was something

chewing me inside and I didn't really fully

18:30 comprehend what was going on, a conflict of interest within myself.

**Do you know what that conflict was now?**

I think I missed the service life and I think in a round about way held it against Gwen that I got out. Although she never ever asked me to get out, but in my own mind I put her and the children before

19:00 the service and I think in a round about way in my subconscious I twisted it around to make it their fault, that I was now a civilian and not a serviceman. I know that sounds a bit round the bend [crazy] but I think that's what happened.

**No, that doesn't sound round the bend at all.**

So we had a rough patch for a few years.

**Did you have anger about**

19:30 **what you had just been through, how did you feel about coming back and no one wanting to know what you had done?**

No, my biggest anger come in 75 when Vietnam fell and I thought then it was a waste that's when I thought - when they pulled the last battalion out which was 4RAR, it wasn't too bad but when it was actually proved to be all for nothing, I got my nose out

20:00 of joint [got upset] then I think, not that I could do anything about it.

**Tell me how it affected you, were you watching the news and you saw it or?**

Yeah I was watching the news and I saw the old tank drive through the gate at Saigon there and they took over the Presidential Palace and I thought what did all that time and effort and people what was it all for. If you go to a war you want to win it don't you?

20:30 You don't want to go and spend so much on it and it's like buying a car and spending so much on it and giving it to someone else. Either you own it or you don't make any payments on it. I feel that's the same as Vietnam you either go there to win or you don't go. And we didn't go to win did we?

**So was it at that point that you questioned what you had been fighting for?**

I did because as I say it was all for nothing, what some of the blokes had put up with,

21:00 and some of them had done 2 tours. And for what purpose. Let down by politicians really. If they are not fair dinkum [genuine] don't send you in the first place. Confrontation I could go along with, we done alright, we stopped that, that's what we were there for, but Vietnam wasn't a happy ending. Sound silly.

**No it doesn't sound silly.**

21:30 **I mean you are a professional soldier though at that point, so does it?**

No not at that point, I had been.

**Yeah when you were in Vietnam. So, could you console yourself with the fact that you were a professional and you handled yourself professionally, you could take pride in what you had done still so you still good about the work you had done, not just the outcome is that what you are saying?**

Yeah that's right, we were never beaten, and to a dig that's

22:00 lost people, but we were never actually beaten. But to lose the war and it was a war, people can say what they like.

**Is it unrealistic to say that we can win all wars though?**

I hope we can. Because what's going to happen to us if we don't?

**Are some conflicts that we get into just more complicated than we realise?**

I think they are becoming more politicised

22:30 than they ever were. I think with the TV coverage there's nothing sacred. O.K. they had censorship in World War One, World War 11 things happened that the public didn't know about. You can argue they were right or wrong but they didn't have the back lash that they have now, if something happens now it's in the lounge room that night, debated and chewed over.

23:00 With the censorship - I don't think you should have total censorship but I think there should be some.

**Do you think that makes the ordinary digger's job more complicated, the politicisation of conflicts?**

Oh my word it does. My word, you take Timor recently where they were going to have that soldier up for assaulting a Timorese body was it or,

23:30 that should never even come into to it. But it's all in the media and everyone has their two bob's worth on it, but things like that should never come out of it. Be like the jail in Iraq, I don't mean that, but I think that one in Timor publicity doesn't do you any good, and it's a political thing. In the end.

24:00 Wrong?

**No. No. Because I guess in that situation, I guess you saw similar things when you were fighting no one can understand unless they were there the stress of being in that situation and things happen don't they? Looking back you might not think it was right but it happens?**

I never seen anything illegal and

24:30 probably some things were a bit improper, but I never seen anything that you could classify as illegal.

**So can you just tell me about when you did start to look for work, what were some of the jobs you did do, you had a few jobs?**

Oh yeah,

25:00 I did have a go at panel beating again, that didn't last too long. Because I just couldn't get into it. I then went to an engineering firm and done odd jobs. And yeah mucked around with that for a while, but no, couldn't get into that either. Went out to the copper refinery got a start out there that should have been a good job, but that was shift work and unionised and I couldn't handle that so I left that.

25:30 I was with the van delivery job with QUF [Queensland United Foods], that lasted a few years but it mainly took me away to, out of town. At that time things weren't a happy little household so it suited me to be out of town. Then I left there and went to the sugar terminal and finished out me time there.

26:00 They asked for early redundancies, they wanted two and I put me hand up.

**What do you think about the civilian work structure that you didn't kind of feel like you could gel with or that you felt like you had to keep moving?**

The camaraderie and the efficiency. Like I loved the army for the fact that it was efficient, it was

26:30 you knew what you were doing and the discipline was there. In the work force, there's people out there that wouldn't have a clue, they have had it easy, and they wouldn't have a clue what it's like. That's my opinion.

**I have heard a lot of people talk about how wonderful the mateship is in the services, and how they don't get the same kind of thing in their - this**

27:00 **mythology around mateship is something that can only happen in the services, it's intensified or?**

I think there are some football teams that are establish this and they go on and they are mates for years down the track, it all depends on how much effort you put into a group. How much respect you have got for the others, how much you rely on them, whether it be a football or an army platoon. You just you

27:30 have shared things and for years, not just a month or two, for years. When I went to 4RAR, I was with the same group for 5 years, and in that time we had been to Malaya, Borneo, Vietnam, Australia and just developed a deep sense of friendship.

**Is it also that discipline though that creates a space for that mateship in a different way?**

I

28:00 think respect has got a lot to do with it. You respect what other fellas can do, and you come to rely on that respect, when I say respect I like get down on your knees, like respect your ability and if you got into a bit of a jam they would be there to help you. Whereas out in civvy street [civilian life] everyone knocks off work and goes their different ways, in the army even when you knock off

28:30 work you are more or less still in that community and you at it more than the average John Citizen is. It develops from there.

**So I was just wondering throughout the years when you were working if you came across other Vietnam veterans who were experiencing similar things?**

Yeah because anytime you run into one,

29:00 you could talk and relate and they would tell you the same, not all of them, not all of them, they just can't adjust to the civilian way of thinking or doing things, and they don't really know what it's all about, but it might be us just being a bit cliquey.

**That must have been a bit comforting to know that you weren't alone?**

As I say when you ran into them you felt good.

29:30 **So have been able to keep up with - are you a member of the association or kept up friendships?**

No I only started a few years ago, before that I was out in the wilderness for a fair while.

**So when you say that you ran into vets [veterans], that's only been in the last few years has it?**

Around Townsville there's - a lot of people got out, didn't come from around Townsville, but got out here because they were posted to Laverack and established community

30:00 here and got out, and I have run into them over the years. But I never really got into the organisation until the last few years.

**Did something happen that made you want to get involved?**

No. To make me get involved?

**No that made you wanted to be involved?**

I just think I had mellowed, would that be right? I just think

30:30 time has gone, a lot of water has gone under the bridge [a lot of time has passed], let it go.

**So what would it be about what those associations represent that would not make you want to sort of be involved before now?**

Because I never had anything to do with them, I wasn't aware of what they had going for them and you can go - I can go to them now and talk and come away quite happy sort of thing.

31:00 I never joined the RSL [Returned and Services League]. Never went to any functions like that. I think I marched one Anzac Day. Other than that I didn't really get too involved. But since I have been involved, it's good.

**You marched once for Anzac Day what was that like and why didn't you march again?**

Marched in 75 I think it was when Gough Whitlam [Prime Minister of Australia] was givin' me the

31:30 stirks. So I thought, that was it.

**Did it feel good to march?**

Oh yeah, I met a few blokes there and that, but that was the one. I kept away from that for a while.

**When you look back over your army career what's the best thing that you got out of it?**

Pride,

32:00 that I done the job that I feel to the best of my ability, I enjoyed my army service, not the least bit sorry I went in or went overseas except for the final outcome of Vietnam, but up until that point I was happy with my service.

**How much influence did those six years have on your personality and your**

32:30 **character compared to say your years growing up with your family?**

I don't think I would be as far down the track as a person as I am now if I hadn't gone to Vietnam if I had just stayed in Townsville and done the mundane employment and just went on I don't think I would have as wide a scope of life as I have got. I think

33:00 you have got to see how other people live and see what they put up with and realise that in Australia just well we have got it.

**And what are some of the things, the negatives associated with that time or the consequences of that time?**

Negatives would be the time away from family. That would be the biggest negative.

33:30 Other than that no.

**Pretty good. If any of your children wanted to join any of the services would you be pleased about that I mean as a - would you be like your Dad, or would you be more sympathetic?**

I thought Todd was - he went to the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] and he looked like going in and when he was about 18 or 19 and he changed his mind for some reason or other and I just said O.K. But if he

34:00 wanted to go I would have said, "Yep. O.K. you go". I had a look around and think it does young fellas a lot of good to see how the rest of the world lives.

**Do you reckon it would be harder watching your kids go overseas to fight?**

I suppose it is it's like you don't mind what happens to yourself but you would hate it if anything happening - when I say you don't mind what happens to yourself, you can accept what happens to yourself but you would hate to see anything happen to your children.

34:30 Because aren't the parents supposed to go first?

**That's what they say they all want to have happen of course.**

Of course you would be worried, but if he made the decision that's his decision.

**Do you think there are any lessons to be learnt either from a person point of view or just generally about Vietnam the conflict and how it was fought?**

35:00 Oh yeah, I go back to if you go to war you go to win it, if you are not going to win stay home. What was spent over there in lives and dollars and agony away from your family and that, for what purpose? Go in there go to win or stay home.

**Have you ever been back to Vietnam since?**

No. I have been back to Singapore, but I haven't been back to Vietnam, what would I go to see in Vietnam?

35:30 The rubber tree I lived near? We were in the bush all the time, except for about 2 days in Vung Tau on R&R. And in the hospital. I saw nothing of Vietnam except the jungle

**I guess I do ask because some people?**

Yeah some people do I don't know what they go back to see whether it's to get rid of the demons or whatever I don't know. I have got no desire to go there, but if someone shouted me [paid for] a trip

36:00 I would go. I have got nothing against going there but I have got no great desire for me to go there, because there's nothing for me to go and see really.

**Why is it important for you to speak to us today, what's the value of this Archive to you?**

Well I didn't know what it was about, I thought it would be about an hour long talk. But no if it can give something to others, I don't know if you will make anything out of today, but if it can help others or give pleasure or

36:30 whatever to someone else that's fine.

**Is it important to get the eye witness, man on the ground's account of history as well, and not by the historians?**

Because generally when you read a book on Vietnam or the Battle of Alamein, or whatever, you are getting it from a higher level, you are not getting it from the bloke that's actually in the lower deck or the infantry on the ground and he's got an entirely different perspective than someone who is talking about a

37:00 battle or a bigger action. Because down there on the ground I couldn't tell you what Billy Bloggs done over there 20 yards away. Or that side. You only talk later and say did you do that or what happened there. But the bloke on the ground he can see what's going on to his immediate front and relates to that. He's not moving regiments or battalions or flotillas or squadrons or...

**Is it also**

37:30 **important to share the impacts of war on the people to go to serve for our country too, do you think that's of value to talk about how your war experience impacts on your later life. There would be a lot of guys who would feel like they are alone who have been through stuff?**

Yeah, but I think everyone's got their own make up, everyone's a little bit different. I don't think you can put a stamp on and say, this is how people will

38:00 react I think there are varying degrees, some people handle it better than others.

**But it's good to talk about it isn't it?**

I think so because I found for a long time I didn't talk about it. Gwen would even tell you now in the last few years I have said things that she didn't even know in 30 years sort of thing. I just come home and

38:30 shut up shop [close down] and...

**Do you feel lighter for talking about it?**

I do, I think as long as people can understand what I am saying. As long as it makes someone feel good it's alright, I just don't want to ramble on for the sake of rambling on or not explaining myself or something.

**I have asked a number of**

39:00 **people what the uniform meant to them, what did the uniform mean to you?**

It meant a lot. I liked being in the uniform. I think the Australian has got a lot to be thankful for, for what his armed services have done for him, all armed services. And I think to have worn the uniform is really good.

**Did wearing the uniform make you think of the men that had come before you as well?**

39:30 Well you realised that you weren't the first to have worn it and that other people to get you to the stage you are at. If they previous hadn't have worn it, we wouldn't be here to wear it now.

**What about the flag there has been debates in recent years to change the flag?**

I like it the way it is.

**I mean it is a flag that Australians have fought under too.**

Why change it we know it as the Australian flag you change it to whatever and in 10 years time they will want to change it again.

40:00 A flag is a flag and if we have had it for this long. I realise it has got an English flag there, but that's where we come from basically isn't it? Not all of us but they founded Australia. Yeah, I have no problem with it.

**What would your advice be to the infantryman today?**

40:30 Listen to all he can, learn all he can because the more knowledge he has the better his chances of coming through. If he ever gets involved in a combat situation. You can be unlucky. You can be unlucky driving down Ross River Road. But the more knowledge you have got the better able you are to conduct yourself the better chance you have got of coming through.

**Thanks very much Barry.**

Thank you I hope you got something out of it.

41:04 End of tape