

Australians at War Film Archive

Darcy Tilbrook - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:40 **We'll start if we can with your life summary?**

I was born on 22nd December 1923 and was born in the Macleay District Hospital

01:00 in Kempsey in New South Wales. I went to school at the St Joseph's Convent School and St Philomena's High School and was taught by the nuns in Kempsey. When I left school I went to work for the railways, New South Wales Government Railways.

01:30 I worked with them for nearly twelve years. When the war broke I was in the railways and I was Manpowered and we had a very strict old Pommy was the Manpower officer and doesn't how much you wanted to join you couldn't join.

02:00 I was on the railways and I got married in 1954, no 1950 I'm sorry, I got married in 1950 and I went to work for the Dorf

02:30 Electrical Radio Company and I was with them for two years and during that time, I married a nursing sister, Yvonne Webb and during that time I played football for West Kempsey, rugby league and I was a member of the Kempsey Crescent

03:00 Head Surf Life Saving Club where I got my bronze medallion when I was about seventeen, I think it was. They were the main sports I played football in the winter time and surfing in the summer time. At that stage I was married and then I joined the CMF [Citizens' Military Force].

03:30 I joined the CMF and I was with the Byron Scottish Regiment in Kempsey, they had a company there and then the Byron Scottish Regiment changed and they put the 13th Battalion in there and I was a member of the 13th Battalion. I served with them for three years. I was a

04:00 staff sergeant and got the rank the of staff sergeant and I was the CSM of Support Company and I sat for my officer's first examination to become a one pipper, which I passed. When I passed it I decided I'd join the regular army. I liked the army, but I didn't want to transfer as an officer,

04:30 I wanted to go into the regular army and start off from scratch to make sure everything was right although I'd had good training in the CMF. I joined the regular army in 1954, I think it was, and I went to Kapooka and I done my basic training in Kapooka and went right through again and

05:00 was posted to infantry and I went to the Holding Battalion 4 RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] , they were at Holsworthy, Ingleburn I'm sorry at Ingleburn the Holding Battalion was. I waited there we were supposed to be going to Korea, but at that stage the Korean War was just about finished

05:30 and they decided they were going to send troops to Malaysia to fight the terrorists there, the Malayan emergency. Next thing we were posted from 4 RAR Training Battalion, Holding Battalion I was posted to 2 RAR at Enoggera and I went to Enoggera. And

06:00 by this stage I had three sons, well two sons and we went through, we were the first battalion to go through jungle training centre at Canungra, first one since they'd reopened the training centre after the war. We went through Canungra and we received the

06:30 colours, 2 RAR received their colours from General William Slim. Then we boarded the motor vessel Georgic and sailed for Malaya. We went to Malaya and landed at Penang and we were in Minden Barracks in Penang, we weren't allowed to go to the mainland at that stage

07:00 the Australian Government hadn't released us, we were there as a holding battalion on peace-time mission type of thing. We done training at Penang and eventually we got released to go to the mainland and fight the terrorist and we wen there new year's day we got the clearance I think just before new year and we were to cross to the mainland on new year's day

07:30 and went into the jungle. I was with Charlie Company with 2 RAR at that stage. The whole battalion went into the jungle, we were dropped off at night time in the trucks and went to different places up in the Kedda in Malaya and we chased the terrorist around the place for about a week or so.

08:00 Then they brought us out and we went into company positions on the edge of the jungle, made company bases for the different companies. Charlie Company, we went to Sungei Siput, battalion headquarters at Kuala Kangsar and we were at Sungei Siput and that was where the emergency first started in Malaya.

08:30 From there our company went to Lin Tang and that's where I finished. At different times the company was rotated and would go...for a couple of months we'd go to Kuala Kangsar with battalion headquarters and another month or six weeks we'd go back to Penang Island to the main Minden Barracks.

09:00 After that we'd done some different courses here and there and I was unlucky I got amoebic dysentery and I had to go to Taiping Hospital, they fixed me up. I spent a time up in the Cameron Highlands about a weeks up there and came back

09:30 and I was posted to Lin Tang, not to Lin Tang to Lassa that was an outpost or base camp and it was a base camp for the people remaining behind to go with 3 RAR, 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, and it was commanded by Captain Mickey Minnett MC.

10:00 I was taken out there with all the trackers, the Iban trackers that were attached to 2 Battalion for retraining for 3 Battalion. I was a corporal at the time and I was their platoon commander. We had two, Lieutenant J.P.A. Deighton and Lieutenant Barney Gosman, they had a platoon each there

10:30 and the tracker platoon. From there I came home to Australia I didn't come home with the main battalion I come home after them. My wife and I we came home on a cargo passenger ship, a big Swedish motor vessel Forstrad; it was quite a nice trip

11:00 in the way you came down through...we were supposed to get on the ship at Penang, but it had difficulty through insurance and had to go to Singapore to get checked, so my wife and I and the kids we had to get on the train and go to Singapore and we had to spend a week waiting to get on this ship. Once you got on it, it was quite good. Cargo passenger ships

11:30 while they're only as...there was my wife, myself and our three kids and a major and his wife and two kids and a corporal and his wife, two young people just married as a matter of fact. We came from Singapore, we went to Borneo; we went up this river in Borneo, the ship had to pick up logs right up in the rough country, good trip

12:00 it was. Then we came down and we had to call into Jakarta and pick up a load of tea and we were supposed to get water there fresh water, the ship was a bit low on water. The night before we got there they had the revolution, where the Indonesians revolted against the Dutch and they took over the country. Well we couldn't land,

12:30 we went into the harbour and they brought the tea out in like sampans and loaded and all time we were in the harbour and the Indonesians, there were a couple of gun boats, circled us around because they knew that there were some Australian soldiers on it. They weren't happy. They were blowing things up we couldn't get water, they blew the reservoirs up the night before we got there

13:00 so we had to load the tea, we got there at six o'clock in the morning and we left about six in the afternoon and we couldn't go ashore although the captain of the ship said if we wanted to he'd give us a hand gun and we decided we'd play it lucky after being in Malaya being shot at for two years we weren't going go in and play with these fellows.

13:30 We left there and came down the west coast of Australia and it was a really fine trip until we hit the Great Australian Bight and we came across there and the captain said it was the roughest trip he'd ever had. As a matter of fact they, the company, changed the route the next time and came down around through the Barrier Reef.

14:00 We landed in Melbourne and then we went up to Sydney and rejoined the battalion; they were at that stage at Holsworthy and I went on some leave and went home to Kempsey. Came back with the battalion and did normal training again. Then we went from, we went up to Singleton

14:30 and we done different courses and mainland Australia training for a few more years. Then we were going back to Malaya again, so this time we went on the, we sailed on the HMAS Kanimbla, the Kanimbla the family sailed with us this time and we went

15:00 over on the Kanimbla and we landed at Singapore and we flew up to Malacca and we were there training in Malacca and we went to, during the period we were there, we went up to the Thailand border,

15:30 up there were still terrorists up on the Thailand border, they used to duck over into Thailand but they still come over and into Malaya and there were smugglers up there and they had, the battalion went up there and we done a lot of exercises up around there. We went up on operations and we had

- 16:00 at that stage I was sergeant in the mortar platoon and I was a mortar sergeant and the mortars and they went in, they made them a rifle platoon and I was the platoon commander and the platoon sergeant and the other sergeant in the platoon they were all ill. So I was the only sergeant left so I had to take the mortar platoon in as their platoon commander.
- 16:30 I done six weeks with Charlie Company and six weeks with Bravo Company, that's three months as platoon commander, acting platoon commander, up on the border chasing these people. After that we came back then to, 2 Battalion, came back to
- 17:00 **Darcy if I can just interrupt you for a second, just at this stage with this summary we don't need to go in to so much detail because you were there for another four years in Malaya. We were looking for a brief summary of your war experience and your life experiences. Then we'll go back into those details.**
- 17:30 The second time in Malaya we came back from Malaya and
- 18:00 they raised 4 RAR in Woodside and they took mainly senior NCOs from 1,2,3 Battalion to make up 4 Battalion, that was the first battalion raised. I was posted there and promoted to staff sergeant of mortars. Then we trained, we went back to Malaya and during the time we were in Malaya
- 18:30 we went to Borneo for the concentrations and we came back from Malaya and then we prepared to go to Vietnam. We came back to Enoggera and we prepared to go to Vietnam. 4 RAR; we went to Vietnam and relieved 2 RAR.
- 19:00 We came back from Vietnam and we were training and we came back to Townsville. We were training; we came back to Enoggera and then came to Townsville and training to go back to Vietnam again, a second tour. I was going back but I got promoted to warrant officer class 1 and I was posted then to 31 RQR [Royal Queensland Regiment]
- 19:30 at Jezzine Barracks. I was there roughly twelve months and I was then posted to PNGVR [Papua New Guinea Volunteer Regiment], Papua New Guinea, I was there for two years with them and they closed PNGVR down. Then as RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] to the Combined Services College, they raised it, I helped raise it and I was there for exactly twelve months.
- 20:00 I was posted back to Australia to 31 RQR again and I was with 31 RQR and I was posted then out to Taskforce Headquarters at Lavarack Barracks and I was mainly on investigations and
- 20:30 I retired there in 1978. When I got out of the army I done one job with Weston Biscuits, there was no jobs anywhere for people of our age then and then I took a position in the District
- 21:00 and Supreme Courts in Townsville as bailiff. I was there for seventeen years. Owing to my health I had a bit of a heart problem and I retired after seventeen years, I worked until I was seventy three and there I had to go and have heart bypasses, I had six of
- 21:30 them. Since then I've just been a tourist.
- That's great Darcy. I'd like to take you back now to your childhood and growing up in Kempsey. Can you tell us about what it was like to grow up there during the Depression and the war years?**
- I can remember back to when I was a young fellow
- 22:00 not very much about it then, I enjoyed myself at school we used to have great fun at the St Joseph's Convent school, we used to walk to school in all those days. The only thing we used to do was play around as kids when we were kids because there was no bitumen roads in those days
- 22:30 there was one bitumen road down the main street in Kempsey I think, the rest of places were all just gravel. There were not many shops; it was a real old country town and a lovely old place. Everyone knew everyone else, a real country town.
- 23:00 Later on as I got a bit older I started to play foot ball and the main thing every Saturday we used to go to the Saturday afternoon pictures. We used to get sixpence to spend in those days, sixpence to go in and sixpence to spend. We used to go there and though the Depression it was a sad time in lots of ways. There were a terrible lot people, people who worked and they used to have gangs
- 23:30 on the roads and they had bank tellers, school teachers, shop assistants all types of people were out working digging on the roads. It was like a work for the dole, they were out on the roads and very highly educated people they just couldn't get any work.
- 24:00 The dole people, people used to get their dole and they used to pay them in money and then some people they used to be supplied with food. My father he was a carrier, what they call a carrier they used to have a
- 24:30 horse and flat top truck and he used to carry for the north coast companies the big shipping firm on the north coast boats used to come up from Sydney up to Kempsey and the Macleay River and they used to

go to Byron Bay and up to Nambucca Heads and all those places. He used to do all the carrying for the Macleay Dairy Company and

- 25:00 he was never out of work, he had his own business. My uncle, how I remember the Depression, he had one of the first motor wagons in Kempsey and he had the contract with Aboriginal Settlement outside Kempsey to supply them with the food rations for the dole. This is how I remember I used to go for a ride sometimes my father used to help them
- 25:30 when they used to take out a weekly ration. In those days they used to have butter boxes, you wouldn't remember them; they used to be made of very fine wood that they used to get butter in, about a foot square. They used to put each families ration they'd pack them they used to get flour, tea, sugar, salt and all the necessary,
- 26:00 then the butcher he'd bring the meat ration up and they'd go in the boxes and they'd take it out in the truck and my Dad used to go out and help them on the truck sometimes. I had a couple of trips to have a look around; I used to be a young fella of seven or eight it was great fun. I used to go out and play with the Aboriginal kids while they were dishing all this stuff out; we used to have great fun.
- 26:30 That was around that age and we really enjoyed ourselves and we made our own fun. Every afternoon we play sport after school and I know because I'd just been bought a brand new pair of shoes and socks, my schools shoes and socks, and of course on the way home from school we'd have a football, we'd take them off and someone pinched mine the first day I had them.
- 27:00 I had a devil of a row over that, I'll never forget that. We used to take our shoes and socks off and play in bare feet. That was one of the things. I joined the surf club, I told you I went to school, I went to high school at St Philomena's school
- 27:30 and left school to work on the railways.

What was school life like?

Oh great. We had a tremendous teachers. They were the old nuns and used to have the big black veils the Sisters of St Joseph's they were.

- 28:00 They were wonderful teachers. They could swing a good cane I can tell you that. I copped a few by god. I wasn't saint.

What did you cop the cane for ?

Talking in class, mucking about, throwing things at other kids, not doing your homework all the things that you should get it for. It made

- 28:30 better kids out of us anyway.

What was your family life like?

Tremendous. I had two elder brothers and three sisters; I was the baby of the family. They're all dead now. We had a wonderful life. We used to go to the beach, my Tilbrook family was around

- 29:00 some of them were around, we used to go to Crescent Head, had a beach house and used to go there and spend the school holidays there and it was tremendous. The same people would go to the beach every year and we'd just spend all over Christmas, we'd spend Christmas there and everything. The women would be making Christmas cakes and puddings and they'd be making them for months beforehand in the old days
- 29:30 and they'd be making these Christmas cakes, not going to the shop and buying them and they'd do big puddings up in bags and have them hanging up. I remember we used to get, they had big tin hampers and they'd pack these things in the tin hampers and on the cars they'd go, the trucks they had then, and out to the beach house. Us kids we just lived on the beach
- 30:00 all day. It was a beautiful beach, still is a beautiful beach, one of the best in Australia. What else did we used to do? As we growing up at school we used to have, we used to go on hikes up around, as we were getting older up about fourteen, fifteen,
- 30:30 about from twelve up we used to go, boys and girls go off and hike or sometimes of a Sunday or a public holiday, take Billy and boil the Billy and do a bit of fishing on the river. It was great fun, tremendous. Of course we swam in the river. We only lived just along from the river in Kempsey.
- 31:00 I learnt to swim there, I was told don't you go near the river because, you know, people get drowned. My mother and father didn't know that I could swim for about two years because we used to sneak down to a place they called Hackey and there'd be big beautiful willow trees over this swimming hole. My Dad used to work at the mill
- 31:30 and this Hackey's was just along from the mill so we used to sneak around, say we were going somewhere, but we'd be down at Hackey's. We used to race each other across the river, a pretty wide river the Macleay River. We'd get to sand spit out in the middle of the river and we'd get in there and

had a weed fights and then race back again. I was racing back this day and I don't want to blow my own trumpet I was a good swimmer and

32:00 I won and I just hit this log we used to go up and I looked up and who should be there, but my mother and father they'd gone for a walk down along the river bank to have a look and see they often went fishing. I was right after that. We used to swim there across the river and swim in the flood, when it was flooded too unbeknown to anyone. That was dangerous though.

32:30 We had fun, really good fun there. Well no TV, we were out all the time and you had to be home if was Sunday or a holiday you had to be home for twelve o'clock for your lunch or you'd get the strap and you had to be home by six o'clock for your evening meal. There was none of this, "I'm not going to be there?"

33:00 My Dad had a belt, it was a real good leather belt, and it was like we used to call it the black snake, he never used to hit us much but if we did really play up you got one cut across the legs and that done you. That was something out of this world. After that

What sort of people were your parents?

33:30 Lovely. They were married very young and when they were married my father he was cutting cane in the old days up around Murwillumbah and my mother used to live up near Mount Warning up from New South Wales, up around Murwillumbah up in the cane fields. They got married and in those days

34:00 when they were first married they lived in a tent up near where they were working. Then he came to Kempsey and got his carrying business. He was a great old fella; he was a wonderful fisherman, the best in the whole place. He could never go out and not catch fish, always, in the river or at the beach everywhere

34:30 he went. A wonderful fisherman, he taught his sons how to fish and one of his grandsons, one of my sons, he's a great fisherman too. He's in Townsville here with me. I never had much to do with my brothers because they were fairly older than me, I was young, but my two younger sisters they used really spoilt me

35:00 they used to look after me. My youngest, next sister to me, she was a bit of a tom boy and they steered me along the right track I think.

As you were growing up what did you know about war? What did you think war was?

We used to play wars in those days, the goodies and baddies. We only thought it was shooting at you, we didn't really understand

35:30 when we were young like that. My Uncle Johnny he was an Anzac and we had a photo of him, a big photo of him, in those days they used to have the big photo with all his uniform on and I used to always adore it. We didn't think that much of it when

36:00 we were kids like that. I think they had the Spanish Civil War when we were at school and it was mainly the Christians against communists, the Germans, that was the first thing we really learned about war when that civil war was on. They used to tell us at school about

36:30 some of the things that used to go on.

Did your uncle ever talk to you about his war experience?

Some of the good things, they never tell you about, spoke about, I've never ever heard many of the old fellas from the first world war, you couldn't squeeze it out of them. They used to say, "Oh it was rough."

37:00 They'd tell you some good things and funny things, as we grew older we started to know what it was. During that time as I was getting older then, I was taken up with football mainly as I said in the winter time I used to play with West Kempsey and we had a very good team and won the competition, the last big competition that we were in,

37:30 we won the grand final which is good, I've still got a photo of it. Of course I went into the surf club and I was with the surf club from when I joined and got my bronze medallion I went through and became an instructor and I ended up on the board of examiners and I was still on the board of examiners

38:00 of Australia when I joined the army. I'd never gone back, I'd been to several reunions and that I've always been invited to the reunions but it's a long a way from Townsville to go to Kempsey. I have been to several of them and it was wonderful to meet the old fellas again. Then I joined the army.

I was just going to ask you before, what do you remember about the day war was declared?

38:30 I think I can vaguely remember when Menzies said that Germany had declared war on England and as England was at war with Germany,

39:00 and as England was at war against the Germans and the Italians, so Australia was at war. I can faintly remember that. Then we, at that stage I had been collecting pictures, I used to collect pictures of

- 39:30 aeroplanes I was bit crazy on aeroplanes in those days. It was when the, you wouldn't remember it, when the first big passenger plane crash we had in Australia, the Stinson crashed flying from Brisbane to Sydney, it was a mail plane. I can remember when Charles Kingsford Smith was flying with Southern Cross, they used to land, there was no aerodrome at Kempsey in
- 40:00 those days when I was at school, but they used to fly over, the planes used to come in and they'd fly over the Shell Oil Company's depot was just across from the convent school in Kempsey across the railway line and we used to see these plane and they'd come in and fly low over to tell the people that they were going to land. We used to see the planes first and sometimes we'd, if the planes landed, they used to land sometimes
- 40:30 just behind the railway sheds, Tiger Moths, and that, and that's what we used to get cuts of the cane for. If they landed and it was lunch time we'd duck down to have a look at the plane. I can remember they used to have in those days the Air Pageants and there was a big paddock on the lower Macleay down around the Belmore River on the lower Macleay
- 41:00 and they used to bring the Southern Cross, it came up, and they used to take people up for a ride in it. I think it was ten shillings in those days or a pound for each person. They used to just take off from this paddock, in an open paddock it was, all the planes used to land there. I'll never forget this beautiful Southern Cross because we used to see it when it used to fly
- 41:30 between Sydney and Brisbane, not like the planes that fly now at a thousand mile, they'd fly over the town and in those days the people used to get out and be waving sheets and they'd wave anything at the plane because they were so low they could see them. Sometimes the small plane if they'd come over, the old Gypsy Moths.

Tape 2

- 00:31 They'd wave sheets at them and they'd come back and dive over them, they'd think it was great; they'd play games with them. This Stinson airline, it was the modern one it took over from the Southern Cross and the Southern Cloud and the Southern Moon and the Southern Sun and a couple of them crashed and I think one of them they lost they never ever found out where
- 01:00 it went somewhere down, south Victoria somewhere. Of course Kingsford Smith's Southern Cross they've still got that and it still looks a lovely plane in the Brisbane Museum there, you've seen it there? Haven't you? It's just outside the airport up in the big hanger by itself. Beautiful old plane. Anyway we used to go down to these damned things, I had a few cuts
- 01:30 of the cane for sneaking out to the plane, it was a big carnival day if a plane landed in Kempsey, they'd go from everywhere the people from the shops, the whole lot. Things never happened much there.

When war broke out you wanted to join up. Why did you want to join up?

Well prior to the war breaking out they had the militia,

- 02:00 they'd started up the militia in Kempsey and we were actually still at school and they had just started and we were too young and they didn't want anything to do with us, but they'd just started to form a cadet unit and I think there was about sixteen of us and we went up and they couldn't give us
- 02:30 uniforms and they couldn't give us rifles to train with. We went to the training night when the soldiers were all there in their uniforms and they were 13th Battalion in those days, old Joe Leddie was the colonel. They'd be all with their uniforms spick and span and of course we thought this is great and we loved to go up there
- 03:00 and watch them. Anyway we started, we had to wear grey trousers, a long trouser, a white shirt and sandshoes and they used to give us pick handles. Pick handles and that's what they used to do rifle drill with us. We must have been going there for two or three months and war broke out and they said, "We don't want you, you're no good to us", that was it, cut. It hurt
- 03:30 us because we were good with these old pick handles and if one of the soldiers sometimes lent us his rifle when we were there and having a smoke and we used to think it was great to drill with a rifle. Anyway that was that and they disbanded us. I made application, mainly I wanted to join the navy and I've always loved the navy.
- 04:00 I wanted to join the navy and of course they said you can't do it, I made application to join, this was when I was with the railway. Anyway when they called everyone up it was compulsory. I thought, "This is great." I was happy because all my mates, my football mates and my surf club mates and we all went up to where we had to go and get tested and medical
- 04:30 and that and of course I went up with them and they were going and as soon as I got there they said, "No, you're out. Manpower." They didn't muck about, I said, "I don't want to, I won't go to work." They

said, "You go to work all right or you'll go into gaol," and they'd plonk you in too. Just outside of Kempsey they had this,

05:00 this was later on when the war started to get going, they had this big military police detachment it was like a penal camp, where the all...bad deserters used to...they'd put them in there and they were dreadful. They used to torture them with them, they'd

05:30 pack their haversacks with bricks and have them going up and down hills all day and moving a load of bricks from there to there, all that, it was a punishment camp. They said, "If you step out of line buster you go in." That was, for young people; that was frightening. What made me angry all my mates they'd gone in, they'd got called up and they were having the time, they'd come home on leave

06:00 and they'd be in uniform and they'd tell you they were having the time of their life. Half of them, three of my mates they were posted to Coff's Harbour just up from Kempsey and they spent the war years at Coff's Harbour protecting the coast line, they never went overseas. All I wanted was to go overseas anyway. A couple of them they went

06:30 and one fella was in the Shower Brigade, or something, they used to have portable showers and take around the blokes. There were necessary things in those days, but to make you stay there, I said, "Why can't a woman do my job?" In those days they didn't have that many women in the...and this bloody old excuse the language, this bloody old Pommy major he was an old

07:00 mongrel, he'd come and check on you all the time. He'd be ringing you up or sending one of his bloke around to see where you were. If you were off sick for one day, a doctor's certificate to say, oh it was disgusting.

Why were you so eager to join up and go overseas?

Well because everyone else was, I wanted to and always did.

07:30 I even tried to join the air force. I laugh today about that, some of the blokes said, "You'll be great in the air force you."

Why do you say that?

Oh I don't know they used to call them, what did they used to call them Blue, not bluebirds, some damned name.

08:00 They used to have some funny things and used to have some fights too, but I did love the navy I really loved the navy. I had a couple of my mates at school went into the navy; one was lost on the HMAS Australia when it was sunk and he was a great runner. I used to run against him in the school sports, Neville Anderson. Tremendous bloke.

08:30 I don't know, they wouldn't let us do this and wouldn't let us do that. Then, on top of that when you put these applications in you'd get one of the heads from head office and they'd come and burst hell out of you, they'd give a lecture then, "You know you can't do this, you know you can't do that"

09:00 "You're here for a special job," and they'd rave on and I'd say, "Well I don't like it," and they said, "You've got to love it and lump it and like it."

What was the job you were doing on the railways?

I was, there were many jobs, there was a shunter, signals and the main thing that they kept us there for...was to keep the troop trains running. They had to have the

09:30 staff there to, we used to get all these troop trains when they moving the Americans especially when they started coming into the war and they'd come through continuous practically one on the end of the other day and night when they were rushing the troops up north. That was the thing they had to keep these damned places open.

That must have been very frustrating for you to see all these troops?

It was. That's what I say

10:00 I used to hate it. I could have strangled this old Pommy major, not only myself but a lot of other fellas too.

How did the war change life in Kempsey?

I think a lot of the young fellas that joined the army they had been

10:30 in a country town and their father had been in a country town and their father's father. They'd all been doing the same job and same old monotonous thing and half of them had never been on a train or anything. Once they got out and got a taste of the city life and travelling and meeting other people a terrible lot of them

11:00 they spread out and got jobs in the city and around the place, excuse me for a second. Where were we?

You were talking about how life changed and how people left Kempsey?

A lot of them met girls, naturally they didn't have men and men in those days I don't think, but a lot of them met

11:30 their wives either in the army or at different places where they were training or posted around Australia and they moved out into the areas where they were. It really opened up a whole big broad band of things. We had a terrible lot of troops, strangers, they married Kempsey girls and came and settled on the Macleay River. Different

12:00 fellas from different, we had Pommy fellas and navy blokes came. I had a couple of good Pommy navy mates that came and married girls in Kempsey that I went to school with. They settled there and were good citizens. It opened up the whole big bale.

12:30 **How was life affected in any negative way during the war? Were things better or worse than during the Depression?**

We had, one of the things that affected everyone was the rationing; they had ration coupons of food and clothing and everything like that.

13:00 No I don't think it affected that much as far as the rationing, well that was all over Australia and that was understandable. People they used to do a lot of charitable work and that for the diggers, comfort funds and all that stuff.

13:30 We had we formed a theatrical group in Kempsey, we used to do shows and they were good shows too. Like those travelling shows they used to have in tents and we used to do them in the big theatre in Kempsey and we used to get packed houses too.

How much concern was there about the war coming to Australia?

Oh quite a bit, especially up to the Battle of the Coral Sea

14:00 when we expected, all the talk about the Brisbane line, they were going to draw a line across and take all of Australia and give it to the Japanese, that was a dreadful thing. We had a terrible lot of ships sunk off the coast off Crescent Head there were ships sunk off there, these

14:30 coastal ships, the Jap subs were up the coast here and they sunk ships there. We could always see destroyers and convoys going past when we were up there at the place. I know one ship that was sunk off Crescent Head they could see it, they had VDC [Volunteer Defence Corps] in those days, old blokes that used to have

15:00 little guard posts on some of the headlands they were all, some of them up to seventy and eighty years of age. They were just mainly eyes to watch out for things and they used to often see submarines come up in the bay and they'd come up of a night time. They saw a couple of ships getting torpedoed and one ship was torpedoed very close in

15:30 and some of our surf club fellas they tried to launch the surf boat to go out and pick them up but the seas were too rough they couldn't get the boat out. We used to get some big seas; we still get them on the coast there. These fellas were the prawn trawlers from Port Macquarie they come out and picked them up, they must have lost about fifteen

16:00 or twenty men on that ship. It was one of the north coast ships, because for weeks after there were sides of bacon and stuff that the ship was carrying all laying on the sand right along the beach at the ten mile beach at Crescent Head they were there for weeks. They'd all when the ship had been blown up had all come ashore a lot of debris.

16:30 I think the normal run of things.

Did Kempsey have special farewells for men going off to war?

They had just farewell parties mainly. In those days they had welcome home parades, oh yes,

17:00 I can remember on VP [Victory in the Pacific] Day they all went crazy, all the schools had holidays, all the people got out on the streets and yahoed and carried on.

What did you do that day?

What did I do that day? I think there was a couple of us might have got on the old amber liquid with the others.

17:30 It was just a great day. They used to have a lot of turn outs for the comfort funds and patriotic. The troop trains used to come through Kempsey and they used to generally have a meal there and all the women used to come in to serve the troops, the soldiers; all volunteers you know.

18:00 They'd have these big, long trestle tables along the platform on the railway station and the manageress of the refreshment room she was a lovely old lady, Gladys Riggs, she was an opera singer when she was young she had a beautiful voice and of course Glad used to get out and sing for the troops. She was like

Gracie Fields and they

18:30 used to love her. Some memorable times.

You ended up getting married in 1950? Can you tell us about how you met your wife?

Oh yes she was doing her nursing training, we went to school, she went to the Kempsey High School I went to Convent high school, but she was

19:00 doing nursing training and we just met and we went together for a couple of years and got married and she never went back to nursing again. When we were in New Guinea they had an outbreak of dengue fever up there with the native

19:30 troops and where we were in the barracks we had our own hospital in there, that was garrison headquarters and they had a doctor and a female sister, a European and they had a couple of native nurses there and of course they had a couple of

20:00 senior NCOs like the nursing sisters, staff sergeant and a couple of privates. But my wife went up and they had a lady doctor at the time and my wife knew her and she went up and volunteered and assisted them when they had this epidemic. They were very...the trouble is two weeks after the thing had got cleared she went down with it.

20:30 Instead of her having to go into the hospital at Lae they put her into hospital in the camp and they looked after her. She went back and filled in very quickly again. Like riding a bicycle, once you learn you never forget.

So she was a nurse, but how did you actually meet?

21:00 I think it was at a dance, that's in Kempsey, they used to have a Saturday night dance. The main social life there Saturday night was the Mayfair pictures, the beautiful big theatre they built brand new theatre, funny part of it my wife's father he was the first manager of it.

21:30 He come from managing a theatre in Sydney and the company that had built the theatre he was with them in Sydney at Chatswood and he was the first manager. He managed it for years. The people used to go and that was the big social event, Saturday night pictures everyone would go there and they had the downstairs and they had this dress circle.

22:00 If you went to the dress circle that was for social climbing and generally if you went to the pictures you could still go to the dance, the dance used to finish at twelve o'clock and you could go there. A lot of people used to go to the dance because it was very popular, they had all these competitions it was always packed, that was the big night.

22:30 That's where I met my wife. Of course she was also a member of the ladies surf club, in those days they used not swim, but they had an auxiliary and of course I was at that stage I was the secretary of the mid-north coast branch of the Surf Life Saving Association, which headquartered at Port Macquarie but it

23:00 covered from Coff's Harbour right down to Black Head and they all had their surf clubs women auxiliaries and I was the Secretary of the branch and I used to have to make applications for any money for the women, I was very popular. I was never

23:30 short of a date, I'm not boasting, but I was never short of a date. They were great people, they used to do a wonderful job for us, they used to run raffles, when our carnivals were on they used to put on a lunch for all the judges and officials and make a good day of it.

Can you tell us finally about joining the army?

24:00 Yes. I was with 13th Battalion and from when I joined that's when they first started up I joined the CMF, that was after the war they started up again. There was a terrible lot of ex-soldiers came into the CMF although after the war they said they'd had enough they came back in again because they look forward to the fortnight's camp, they used to go to Singleton. Well that was a holiday for them and

24:30 they got paid for it. They used to get let off and all the people used to let them go from their jobs. I used to go for my two weeks, I used to take my holidays, the railway wouldn't give us time off, I had to take my yearly holidays; it was a break for me. I went there and I started off as a private and finished up and went through and became a staff sergeant.

25:00 I was a CSM [Company Sergeant Major] of a company and

During the time that you were with the CMF what sort of training exercises had you done?

We done normal training exercises. I was with mortars and we done all the mortar drills and training

25:30 and we done live firing, it was very hard to do live firing in a country town. We used to fire the secondary charge mortars they were like blanks, they'd fire a bomb the same size as a mortar but they

never exploded. You'd go through the whole drill of

26:00 firing, you had to practice. When we went to Singleton we used to do the live firing. We done normal training.

How had you enjoyed being with the CMF?

Very much. That's why I wanted to join the regular army.

What did you like about it?

I always like doing, even when I was at school they used to have sports every year and all

26:30 Catholic schools used to come from different towns and they used to have a big sports gala day in Kempsey. They used to have in those days competitions of may pole dancing, have you ever seen the Maypoles. Well they have the one pole in the centre with all ribbons out and they'd dance around and make different things. Well that's what the girls used to do

27:00 the may pole. We used to have physical training like flag drill, the drill with flags you know how they this and up and this and up and wave them around, the normal drill, the Chinese do it a lot. We used to have special drill competitions and we used to get instructors that used to come to the school from Graham and Burroughs Physical Training

27:30 College and they used to train us and they'd pick out the best out of the squad and we'd get a bit of extra training and then we became the instructors and we'd train the others. Well I was one of them, I was the boys' instructor and girls there was Eileen Boyle she was the postmaster's daughter. She was good, she was the female instructor and we used to go around to the different schools like the Port Macquarie

28:00 Catholic schools, Macksville around the area and we'd go and instruct these kids. It was quite good, quite interesting.

So when you finally joined the actual regular army, can you tell us about the training that you underwent there?

I went straight to, when I signed on and done my medical and soon as I finished, when

28:30 I found I'd passed my examinations for a first or second lieutenant then I decided, well a mate and I were talking about we were both at that stage we were working for the PMG [Post Master General's Department], I was a storeman clerk to the supervising technician at the Kempsey Post Office, at the Exchange. A mate of mine,

29:00 Ted Wade, he was a technician and he was a technician on the main cable link between Brisbane and Sydney. We used to play football together and he used to come out to the surf club with us, he wasn't a Kempsey boy he came from down near Newcastle somewhere. He had been in the CMF down there and we got talking over a few beers

29:30 and we decided, right, I said, "I'm going to join," and he said, "I think I will too." Like that just like that. So we signed up and went off. When we went down we got to Sydney to Rushcutters Bay where we had to go and get sworn in and Tet and I were there and as we went up to get sworn in to get our numbers some young fella he got in

30:00 between us and instead of us being together his number was first then this fella and then mine. We went right through the army and I was always one rank ahead of him. He beat me, he became a lance-corporal and I've never had the pleasure of being a lance-corporal, it's the greatest rank of the army.

30:30 It's the lowest but the poor buggers they were the eyes, the ears, the everything. Everything with the buck going down the line, he was the last NCO, the poor old one he could only go crook at the privates. They didn't take any notice of him anyway.

You were married by the time you joined regular army?

Yes.

What did your wife think about you joining the army?

At that stage

31:00 I could see no, in the job that I was in, I had worked for my father-in-law in Kempsey we had two tremendous floods, one after the other and we used to get them nearly every April and in the '49 floods the whole town was early washed away. There were houses washed away and shops had

31:30 water right up to their ceilings and businesses went and farmers got washed out, there were was no money. He went into insolvency, well I said to him, "There's no good me hanging around I'll have to get out and get a job," so I got this job at the PMG and I could see there was nothing for me in the PMG because I wasn't a technician I was a technician's clerk, storeman clerk, and I would

- 32:00 have been a storeman's clerk now if I would have been there. It was a good job, but it wouldn't achieve anything. I decided I'd go in and my wife said, "Right," because when I explained to her I knew what it was, we had regular army instructors attached to the CMF in Kempsey and I knew what the
- 32:30 families were and what the wages were, even in those days it was a good solid job. The only thing if, well a fella can go to work in civvy street and a block of bricks can fall on him and kill him that's what I've always said because people say in the army you can get killed, I said, "You can walk outside your door and get killed too"; that's what I've always thought I've never been afraid of getting killed,
- 33:00 to be killed." You took your luck. Anyway Tet and I, Yvonne was quite happy when I explained it to her and we'd planned it all because once I'd finished my training and get posted, we'll get an army quarter, which we did. At that
- 33:30 stage I had two children and then when I joined the army I went away and did my recruit training and as you asked a moment ago what training did I do when I went to Kapooka. I went through the first two weeks I done exactly what this recruit training was because I wanted to
- 34:00 go from day one with the regular army because I'd been through the CMF, but I wanted to get the complete, everything right. After I'd been there for two, three weeks my old platoon sergeant Curly Lamb he said, "I think we might cut out this and that, I've got special job for you"
- 34:30 because the company that I was in, the company commander was Brian Heehan, a lovely bloke he was and ex-Korea and their corporal they had no one to relieve him to go on leave and because I'd been doing clerical on the thing when I joined from the post office it had clerks, which I was when I joined the army and
- 35:00 they got me and took me up and I relieved the corporal for his three weeks while he was, well I knew all about notebooks from the CMF, because I used to do them and the roll books I could do them. I was only a two finger typist, it was rough I can tell you. We had
- 35:30 a typist there and he was the pay clerk and I relieved Basil Hayes and he was a funny old fella. Then they told me that I agreed to relieve the pay clerk for his three weeks leave. That was six weeks there. Then they got me to relieve the corporal in the bar in the officers' mess.
- 36:00 I must have done six weeks there or something and I'd done the different jobs because I was up, Curly Lamb he was ex-Korea, a real rough'un but a good sergeant, a tremendous soldier and a good bloke too. He seen that I
- 36:30 was in front.

When you joined the army what was your expectation about the responsibility of going to Korea?

Yes, well we as I said we were posted from Kapooka to 4 RAR Holding Battalion and from there the reinforcements used to go to Korea. At that stage when we arrived there, there were a couple of

- 37:00 reinforcement drafts had got out to Mascot Airport all packed ready to go to Korea to get on the plane and then just drawn back again, and all fixed to get ready and back out and then they stopped them completely because at that stage they stopped sending reinforcements over and 2 RAR had come back from Korea and they were building it up
- 37:30 at Enoggera because Australia had decided to send a battalion of troops to Malaya and so Korea stopped and the next thing instead of our draft going to Korea, we were on the train and up to Enoggera.

What were your thoughts about going to go Korea?

Oh definitely I wanted to go. When I was at training at

- 38:00 4 Battalion I got out and done the normal field training, I done that and when we finished that we were just doing different duties waiting for drafts. So, they got me another clerk again and they wanted someone up in the Intelligence office at Battalion Headquarters,
- 38:30 so my platoon sergeant he got me up and fronted me up to the Intelligence sergeant and I got a job there. So instead of tramping around doing guard duties I was working in, I was working long hours in the Intelligence office. We were making maps with the old epidiascopes, you wouldn't know about them I don't think they were thumping big machines and you'd put the photo under one light and it would throw it
- 39:00 up and we would enlarge maps for different exercises and we used to do all the making and enlarging maps for army headquarters in Sydney, when they used to run the senior officer courses, all the colonels and majors, the army tutorials. They got Ross Smith and I we had to go
- 39:30 in to, we worked in at Victoria Barracks for nearly two weeks. We had to make one of those big cloth models out of papier mache for this big training, it was bigger than this room, and they had to put in all these little towns and the bridges the railway lines, the whole lot, made of this papier mache, we used

to get buckets of it and with wet newspaper and you'd make it up and they'd paint it.

40:00 It was really top class it was. I was a private rookie and I'll never forget the funny part of it we were there this day and we used to, where the changeover between winter and summer uniforms in those days in New South Wales the summers used to get quite hot and by the time

40:30 winter came, because they were taking from like Canberra, you'd be in battle dress, and they were hot by the time the changeover date came and we could go into the normal khaki. What we had we'd had khaki shirt and just cut the khaki shirt with a bib, just that much of the khaki shirt with the collar and

41:00 two bits of tape that used to go around there and then you'd put your jacket on. So you just had a singlet and this thing. Of course I'll never forget this day it was stinking hot.

Tape 3

00:38 They were so hot we had these bibs and this day the colonel in charge said, "Listen you fellas god it's too hot for you to have those jackets on, you can take them...while you're working here take them off." Both Ross and I, I looked at him and he looked at me and we both said, "Oh no sir, we're not hot, we'd much

01:00 rather go on like this." He said, "Please yourself, but if you feel like taking them off." As soon as he'd gone Ross said, "By Jesus we'll have shirts on tomorrow mate." We just had the bibs on. Anyway I was there with him and we used to do these job and whilst I was there I thought, "Well this I work is good, I don't mind it this intelligence thing."

01:30 I'm not boasting but I was getting good at enlarging them because I'd been there with them for about six weeks. So I spoke to Ross and he said, "Why don't you apply and see if you can change corps and get into the military intelligence." He told me what to do and got the papers and I put in for it. Then I forgot about it.

02:00 After that I got posted, the posting orders came through to 2 RAR and I was posted to 2 RAR at Enoggera; 2 was building up to go to Malaya. We were there and I was posted to Charlie Company and we went to do our training at Canungra and whilst I was there I was acting section commander

02:30 and went through Canungra with these blokes.

Before you go to Canungra can we back track a little bit and can you tell me a little about what was involved in enlarging the maps and learning about the Intelligence work?

Well mainly with enlarging the maps we'd just have an ordinary map 1:25,000 that's the little grids and on this big machine they

03:00 had the epidiascope whatever map square, or two or three map squares you wanted to do, you had to put that under this light, this lamp and this lamp showed out, focused out an enlarged exact replica of that up on whatever you were going to do it on and then you went

03:30 and just done all the contours and you had the next scale, you'd done it to a certain scale. After doing quite a few of them, because you had to be exact, and now these days they can do with photographs and all that, but we had to do these things by hand.

So you traced the map?

Yeah I eventually got good at it.

04:00 **What sort of maps were you tracing?**

Military maps.

Can you remember some of the important maps that you were tracing?

The ones that we were doing there for they weren't anything to do with military intelligence, these were just for a tute, they called them, for training of our troops

04:30 they were going to be used for these officer training tutes that we used to do. They were mainly maps they used to use for the training areas around Singleton or Sydney, something like that, they were Australian maps. There was no top secret stuff or like that, we never touched any of that, but we used to do some tremendous things in there.

05:00 **What was some of the other training things that you did in intelligence?**

What else did I do? We used to do signs and different things, we never done any like what the intelligence does, interpreters and interrogation and anything like that, it was mainly the work in that was just an ordinary

- 05:30 Intelligence office on the battalion level which doesn't carry too much especially in Australia. It was good training, but these maps they used to keep your nose to the grindstone. My sergeant, poor devil he's dead now, he died in a plane crash, he was a pilot, a civil pilot he used to fly from Bankstown.
- 06:00 He was a champion bloke, he was a bugger too sometimes, he'd play up, but he'd go off sometimes and lock the door and he'd clear out and go AWOL [AWL - Absent Without Official Leave] for an afternoon. He'd say, "If anyone comes in, comes knocking at the door and they want to get in just say, 'I'm sorry sir we're doing this special thing and we can't open up
- 06:30 because if we lose the light, if the light comes everything's finished." I said, "God what if the CO [Commanding Officer] comes in?" He said, "Doesn't matter, he can back off," he was a bugger. Someone would sing out and I'd start to sweat because I was only a recruit. Laugh yeah, but he was a good bloke. We used to go up and have some fun up there. There was one bloke used to come
- 07:00 up there, he was one of our platoon sergeants, he was a bit of a devil too and he was a great mate of this fella and they often used to get a bottle of rum and get in there and have a few rums. No one could get in, but god you could smell the rum I said, "Everyone would be able to smell it." He said, "Nah, you're not going to go and breathe on them." Anyway when we went through Canungra
- 07:30 when we done our training there we were the first battalion to go through Canungra 2 RAR when they reopened it up after the second world war and Colonel George Wall, "Jungle George" he was the commander and a wonderful soldier, he was a funny man and a good soldier too, one of Australia's best.
- 08:00 It was a hard lot there, by god it was, no but we were fit.

Can you describe some of that training in detail at Canungra?

There was so much of it, we used to go over the assault course every day they'd put you over the assault course and you'd go over the ropes, up ladders and climbing across ropes and under barbed wire and through

- 08:30 mud and out through a big, long tunnel and big drain pipe and into a ditch full of dirty water. When we went through it had half a dead kangaroo in it. Oh stink, and you used to come out with mud all over you and you used to go on the monkey bars, you'd go across these monkey bars, just a long piece of steel and you had to go across this and under it were
- 09:00 a lot of rocks. There was one of the monkey bars was loose and used to flip over and if you were unlucky enough to hit it especially when you were wet what coming out of this hole with the kangaroo in it and there'd be mud and slush and stink all over you and you had to jump up and get this and if you missed the grip on it you went onto the rocks below, which I did one day.
- 09:30 I had a bad fall, they picked me up, I wasn't knocked unconscious but I had the wind knocked out of me. I done my elbow, bruised it, they just took me up to the RAP [Regimental Aid Post] and gave me an aspro and sent me back to training. When I had my...
- 10:00 I'm sure that they found a broken rib that I'd had a cracked rib and I'd never had on my records a cracked rib but when I had my heart operation they found that one of my ribs had an old crack through it and I'd say to this day that could have been it. Anyway we done that and we used to do that every day and then we'd come up and they
- 10:30 had a tower, the river run through the camp and they had a dam built across and this tower, you had to climb up the tower and jump into the river. Some of the poor devils couldn't swim. I used to feel sorry for them. They had safety fellas in the water, a couple, ex-surf life savers and good swimmers and a rubber boat and if anyone couldn't swim they'd tell
- 11:00 them and they pick them out quick. We used to go up and we'd dive in, they'd get a shock because they had to push some fellas in, we'd go up the thing and then straight across and dive in. It was funny. I finished up I landed on top of one of the life savers, when they found
- 11:30 I was an ex-life saver. We used to get the poor buggers. They'd be terrified when they got up there, you can imagine non-swimmers it's a dreadful fear it must be I've seen them and...

Did you watch them standing on the edge?

Oh yeah waiting for a push. Oh some of them that could swim they'd go straight in, they had a go. We had that

- 12:00 we used to route marches at the double around the camp and we used to practically doubled everywhere. Then we went down to Wiangaree, we just had normal lectures on jungle. "The jungle is neutral", old George used to say quite often and he'd be giving you a lecture and we'd be out on the side of the jungle around
- 12:30 us and we'd be sitting on a bit of rise and he'd be there with all the jungle there behind him and half way through the lecture he'd put his hand behind a stag horn and bring out a bottle of rum, he said, "The jungle is neutral and it's your friend too." He had a good sense of humour, yes quite good. He was

- an excellent soldier, if someone wasn't up to the
- 13:00 mark he'd sack them. He sacked quite a few.
- You were a bit older than the other men?**
- Yes.
- Did you see some of the older men struggle at Canungra?**
- Oh no I don't think I did. They were all keen, by the time we got to the battalion
- 13:30 they were all keen to go and if any of them got in and they got very upset if they couldn't carry on because by the time we finished through Canungra we were pretty bound together. We were in sections going through and we stuck together from then. You became a team and you didn't want to go anywhere else.
- 14:00 A lot of young fellas we had old fellas there too. I don't think I ever saw any young fellas except some of the swimmers as I said some of them might just go back, but they always done what they were supposed. Sometime if some of them couldn't do something, but they had a go and eventually they done it. They
- 14:30 might have to have two or three goes but it was wonderful training.
- What sort of weapons training did you do at Canungra?**
- We done weapons training yes, we had weapons with us all the time and we used to do exercises where they'd fire over the top of us with live rounds, they had the old Vickers machine guns there
- 15:00 and they had special ex-machine gunners from the second world war and from Korea. Jack Morrison he was one of them and they used to fire on fixed lines, live rounds over us when we were doing certain exercises. Then they used to fire into bunkers just to give you battle simulation and they'd be pelting damned grenades at you and
- 15:30 battle simulation sounds and you'd be crawling under barbed wire and trying to get through it in the mud. Then we'd have ambush drills, we'd practice ambush drills we had the, they had a special team of ex-
- 16:00 Korean blokes there that they were on staff and they used to ambush us, oh god yes mate they were good too.
- What was involved in an ambush?**
- Ambush you'd be going along a track and they'd be in certain positions in dug in positions along the edges away a bit from the track. They'd be all camouflaged and that
- 16:30 and they'd open fire on you, or if you were lucky if your forward scout or someone sighted them that sort of thing. You had to look all the time, the forward scout in a section his eyes look to the front and then he had a second scout and he was looking and then there was the section commander and then the Bren gun and then the private soldiers they were behind.
- 17:00 Each man he had an arc to search; the first one was searching an arc that side and the second was searching an arc that side and the third one was that side so that they were covering an area on the side of the trail besides if the scout missed something on the front, they used to search all the time, but these were extra ones and they had a tailing
- 17:30 Charlie and he used to practically walk backwards and he used to watch the rear because they used to have special drills, ambush front, ambush rear, ambush side.
- What would happen in those drills, they'd be different would they?**
- Contact they had different drills. How they used to, what they had to do. The section commander or if it was a platoon in ambush
- 18:00 the section would know where to put his Bren gun and send his troops to swing around and try and clear them out. They had all these drills and we practiced them and practiced them and then we tried them, we used to practice them without the enemy and then we'd go against the enemy, they'd go and set up ambushes. We'd go and come along and they'd attack us.
- 18:30 **What was your position in there, section commander?**
- Acting section commander most of the time then. That's why I'll come to something in a moment. Then we went to Wiangaree and that was down just over the New South Wales border and it was very deep jungle there. At Canungra we were in rough country, but that was jungle down at Wiangaree.
- 19:00 We used to have air drops there, food drops; it was really jungle you've got to cut your way through it half the time. You went all the time from either sweat or the water. It was good jungle training. We

always took an air drop there and in those days they used to drop, the food used to come down in big canisters,

- 19:30 it was like you know the front of a sky rocket how they have the cone like that and the big well this used to be a big cylinder, it would be about five foot round and about ten foot long. They used to pack all the rations in those and that would come down through the jungle by parachute. Sometimes it'd get hung up and it would be there,
- 20:00 sometimes it would hit the ground and bust open and stuff would be everywhere, bully beef tins and that in those days bully beef and biscuits. That's what you lived on generally. From Wiangaree that was the finale when we finished there we went back to the battalion then. I'd just got back to the battalion and we were training then for
- 20:30 2 RAR to receive their colours, General Slim was coming, and I got called up to the adjutant and he said, "You'll be leaving us." I said, "Why?" He said, "You applied for a change of corps didn't you?" This was when I applied to go to intelligence. He said, "You've been accepted by the Corps of Military Intelligence
- 21:00 and you've been posted to Seoul in Korea." I said, "As a matter of fact, sir, I don't want to go to Intelligence now." "Why?" he said. "You've gone through all this." This was the adjutant, Donald Ramsay, and one of the best soldiers they had in the Australian Army. He said, "Well you'll just have to go." I said, "I don't want to go, I want to stay with infantry, that was only...I'd forgotten about it." He said, "If you really want
- 21:30 we'll see what we can do." I had a good record and I got word then that I could stay with the battalion. At that stage the company I was in we were packing and getting ready to do the colours and getting gear ready to go to Malaya and company stores and that.
- 22:00 They had no orderly room corporal, back again they looked through the bloody file, clerk, so they dragged me into the orderly room because I could do roll books and I didn't like that because I wanted to stay with my section. At that stage I'd been put in for a promotion to corporal and because I was lucky enough to become a lance corporal
- 22:30 they took me straight to a corporal. Anyway I went to Malaya and I was a company clerk right from then on until we got to Malaya and I didn't get my section til we'd been, we'd gone to the mainland and I was in the company at Sungei Siput and

- 23:00 they posted in a company clerk and was I pleased and then I got back to my section in 9 Platoon Charlie Company. That was when I got to Malaya.

Why were you so keen on staying in the infantry rather than going to Intelligence? What was it about the infantry that you liked?

Well I had gone with all my mates practically since Kapooka

- 23:30 and gone through, I knew them all when we went to the holding company and then the ones that were posted to Charlie Company had gone through Canungra and I had this all section of my mates and they were good mates too and I didn't want to go anywhere else.

Who were some of the blokes that were some of your mates?

- 24:00 There was Ted Wade and Abdul Lynch, Sammy Farmer, Charlie McKay and White McKay we used to call him, all the fellas that I went through Canungra with, numerous ones I could rattle off.

Can you tell us a bit about the characters that were in that group?

- 24:30 Oh god yes. We used to have Abdul Lynch he was a tremendous footballer, top grade, he ended up, the last I heard of him he was a major. Sammy Farmer he was a major and Teddy Wade he ended up a WO, he was a warrant officer he was the
- 25:00 bloke that I joined the army with and we went right through the lot and we were still together, but at that stage we'd gone into different companies but we were still in the battalion we used to still go and have our beers everyday at the canteen after work. We were still good mates. I had fellas like Teddy Barwick and Brucey Warnes these are fellas that we went through Kapooka and they were all the same company. They were good
- 25:30 characters. Brucey Warnes ended up the battalion's pay sergeant and he got the MBE, he would have been the best pay sergeant in the Australian Army I think old Bruce, he was a funny man. When he got full he used to sing, he couldn't sing, but he used to sing this "Streets of Laredo" oh god it was funny. As soon as we got him in the mess sometimes
- 26:00 you'd get him there and before he was a corporal we'd get him in the canteen as soon as he got a few we'd ask him to sing the old "Streets of Laredo." He was a mighty bloke, Dollar Bill they used to call him. He was worth a lot of money. He came from South Australia his people had sheep stations there I think; he

26:30 only had one brother but he always used to tell us that he was going to inherit a lot of money, Dollar Bill.

How important was the drinking together?

We used to do a lot in the canteen we used to generally go the same blokes would go together and we would discuss what we were

27:00 training. We would discuss the training always and especially NCO training, if we were on an NCO charter we would sit around and discuss all the training, our lectures or if we had to give lectures or military law. We'd over a few beers, we never used, oh sometimes they used to discuss,

27:30 women were always on their minds. I was a bit off because I was an old marriedy. I didn't mind. They were footballers too, we used to discuss the football, some of them played league not with the army because you weren't ever allowed to play league with the army,

28:00 they used to play with clubs outside at different places where we were stationed. They played rugby union and we had some tremendous players, Sammy Farmer and Teddy Wade, Abdul Lynch they were top grade they used to always be in the battalion team. I used to go crook when we were in operations in Malaya sometimes Sammy was my 2IC [Second in Command] and when he was a lance-corporal

28:30 and half the time I had to have an acting because he'd be away training with the battalion football team. We didn't mind they used to win. They were a good mob of men.

How difficult was it to start out in a marriage and be training?

29:00 Very difficult. I never saw my wife when I went to Kapooka I took the train home once I think it was, for the three months that I was at Kapooka. From Ingleburn I think I came home once and then I had leave when I

29:30 went to Enoggera, pre-embarkation leave and that was all I saw of her before I went to Malaya. I didn't see her until she flew over the next year, by this time she was pregnant with my third son and when he was born he was six weeks old when she flew over to Malaya to Penang with a

30:00 six month old baby and two children. Yes she was well looked after on the trip though, but she'd had a hard trip over in those days and she had to fly from Kempsey to Brisbane in a small plane, it only carried four passengers and it was rough. My father-in-law he

30:30 flew down with her and helped her with the kids like on the small plane and then she got to Singapore and she was met there at Singapore, she was the only one with such a new baby and two little kids and the funny thing the commander of the Australian force in Singapore, the colonel, I just forget his

31:00 name now, him and his wife they helped her, they put her up, they had her stay overnight at Raffles Hotel and they come up next day on a plane to Penang. I remember I went out, they sent us home, we were on operations, but the people whose wives were arriving they sent us home to greet them, they gave us two days leave to go home.

31:30 I drove out to the airport to meet her when she got off the plane, she was buggered. Mrs Oggaltry the CO's wife she was there and she had the staff car and she used to always meet the plane and they took all the wives and the big kids and she said, "You get your wife

32:00 and we'll take her," so she drove us out. They stayed in an Australian hostel, a beautiful big brand new hotel they'd built around the beach line at Penang and it was a beautiful spot, just walked outside the hotel and they had, it was three storey building, each room was just like

32:30 this and each family had a room if you had one or two kids. Then they had a big meal room like a big café, restaurant and a bar that was down between the building and the beach, it was right on the beach it was and you could go and swim in the beach. That's where they used to...

33:00 families went and had their meals there and beautiful meals they were too. You could have a drink of an afternoon in the bar which was good. I'll never forget it because right across the front of the bar they had a big photo of Marilyn Munro lounging, someone had put it up the manager at the time, Bert someone I forget his second name, but every Sunday they used to invite, Bert the manager used to invite

33:30 Australians from around Penang, we used to get jockeys out there all the top jockeys that used to ride they used to come out because the beer was cheap and they always used to put on a buffet lunch for them. It was like a sports day they used to put on for them there. The RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] fellas used to come over from Butterworth Air Base. They used to drive their speed boats and come and land on the beach and come up and have a drink with us.

34:00 We used to have a great time there we used to get all the tips off these jockeys too. I wasn't a race horse man but some of the blokes used to get good tips and made a few bucks out of them. The beautiful cars they had, big Buicks, all these big American cars they had. You could go and touch them like that and they'd spring. They

34:30 were like those big models, top grade American cars. All these jockeys they were getting good money.

When you first told your wife that you were going to Malaya how did she react?

When I told her that they could go?

No, when you first told her that you were going without them?

She wasn't

35:00 real happy, but that time I'd told her that they'd been coming too, I'd spoken to her I'd written to her about it when they told us the wives looked as though they'd be going and she knew and had spoken to several people about it and at that stage they were feeding us things in to send home to our wives that they wouldn't be coming straight with us, but they'd be coming over later and she was

35:30 happy with it. Well she knew she couldn't go until the baby was born, until young Mark was born. A funny thing happened there because we were on operations and there was another Tilbrook in the battalion, Laurie Tilbrook he was a good soldier Laurie, a big fella, no relation to me and he was in Support Company and I was in Charlie Company and this is when we were

36:00 on our first operations in Kedda and Support Company were on one side of the big ridge in the jungle and Charlie Company was on the other side of the ridge in the jungle. In those days they used to drop mail in to us; a little Cessna plane used to come over and they'd drop mail or they might drop some axes or machetes; just in the Cessna they'd fly down low and every day one would come over and give us our

36:30 grid reference to where we were on the ground the pilot because you couldn't see to take a compass bearing you couldn't see far enough in the jungle to make out where you were right on you had to pace, count your paces and make sure you were on a compass bearing. These fellas used to drop the mail in, in a sugar bag a sand bag. Anyway,

37:00 Laurie was on one side they had a camp on one side and we were on the other and I found out later Laurie told me the mail was given out, "Tilbrook a cablegram for you," and the cablegram I've still got it as a matter of fact, "Son born. All well. Love Yvonne," and Laurie read it and he said, "You beauty," because his wife was expecting a baby see and, "You beauty

37:30 I've got a son. Who the bloody hell's Yvonne?" I can just imagine it. So eventually when they had a closer look they saw another Corporal Tilbrook, Laurie was a corporal. I eventually got this cablegram about three weeks after Yvonne landed in, after

38:00 it would have been nine weeks I got it nine weeks later when Yvonne landed in, she was there when I got the cablegram. I didn't still didn't know that I had a son. Doesn't matter.

Can you talk about when you first found out you were going to Malaya and why you were going there?

Yes. We were told we were going to Malaya

38:30 that the emergency was on and that communist terrorists were attacking the population, they'd done some dreadful things. We were to join the British Far East Strategic Brigade and that we were going to go first

39:00 of all to Penang and we were going to be held there at the barracks in Penang, that we wouldn't be on the mainland. They hadn't got permission to go to the mainland. We were there for a couple of months and then we got permission to go and we were on the mainland and we left on new year's day over into the jungle.

39:30 We wanted to go all the time it was just the political thing and we weren't very happy.

Initially you were supposed to go to Korea weren't you?

I was yeah that's where I wanted to go but that's when they changed it, the Korean War was ending as I said the drafts were going from 4 Battalion, they were going from 4 Battalion, from Mascot they were flying them over to Korea,

40:00 to Japan and then to Korea and then with 2 Battalion they changed it because they were raising two battalion because this was the first one that was going to Malaya. They changed the draft then all the draft enforcements went to 2 Battalion.

Tape 4

00:39 **Can you tell us about how you got to Malaya?**

Yes. We went on the first trip we went over when we came from Canungra on 2 RAR we sailed on the

motor vessel Georgic and it

- 01:00 went from Brisbane it didn't come into the wharf we had to go out in barges and load, it couldn't come into the wharf it was big ex-troop ship I think from what they told us the crew the thing had been sunk several times and had been bombed and sunk a couple of times and they had to pull her up again because there was a terrible lot of, you could see where things were buckled and they hadn't really, the steel
- 01:30 side of the ship on the cabin on some on them were buckled. We didn't know what it was but the crew could tell us. It was used for a troop ship and the last people that were on it before us was the French Foreign Legion, they'd taken them from France up to Indo-China, that's what it was called then and
- 02:00 Vietnam now and they'd taken the French Foreign Legion up there and then come down to pick us up. After they'd dropped us off at Penang they were going to Hong Kong to the break up, where they break the ships up. We were the last ones on that. It was a beautiful old ship. We had fellas everywhere; lots of us were in hammocks.

How long did it take you to get there?

Oh god about

02:30 Was it longer than a week?

Oh I think it was. We went from Brisbane, when we loaded on the Georgic we went up through the straits here because I remember when we got to Thursday Island that's when the pilot got off and he left us about one o'clock in the morning because when the pilot boat came out to pick him up it was,

- 03:00 everyone was up because we'd just been up through the Whitsundays and through coral and you saw the same thing, must have taken us a week or so to get there, I'm sure it did. It did I'm positive I can't say exactly the amount of days, but we got there and this always sticks in my mind because we were all over the side watching and the boat come out and it's got this, it was the first time we'd seen a woman with a sarong on. It was the pilot, he was only
- 03:30 a young bloke and here's this beautiful island woman with this sarong on, you can imagine, "Yahoo" all the, but that stuck in my mind because it was about one o'clock in the morning and they had all the spotlights down on it as the pilot left the ship as we went from Thursday Island. Then we went from Thursday Island,
- 04:00 we went up through, I remember when we first went into the Straits of Malacca because while we were on the ship we had civilian staff, they were giving us Malay lessons, you know just fundamental stuff how to count and hello, thank you, I still remember.
- 04:30 They were telling us all about their customs and they always used to say I can remember this very British fella used to say, "Penang, the jewel something in the sea," and he spoke very British.
- 05:00 They used to give us excellent yarns on the place, we knew all about it by the time, what to do, what not to do and they hated wet dogs and all this Malay and you had to be careful they were all religious. The majority of our people they really respected them too.
- 05:30 **What about the sex industry and training? Did they talk to you about prostitutes and VD?**
- Oh all that, we got that all the time, which was a good thing. They told us all about, when we were there they had the different districts, they had black districts and grey districts where you were forbidden to go. The terrorists were still there, terrorist were on Penang Island all the time we were there, there were a couple of murders, British troops
- 06:00 of course we had British troops on Penang while we were there. A couple of them around, they got one British sergeant they got him and murdered him and strangled him with barbed wire. They got his body days after along the bloody beach. They were bad there in Penang. I know I was there when they had the race riots, they hacked people around terribly when the
- 06:30 Chinese and Malays clashed. With the Georgic we came in and coming up through the Malacca Straits it was, the seas were so flat after being used to our Australian seas, the Georgic practically went like that all the way. It looked beautiful all up through there, the real tropical and blue skies
- 07:00 and then you'd get a bit of a shock if you got a quick tropic storm come over, cloud would come over you'd think you'd been in a storm and it was just the cloud going over, the sun would be out ten minutes later and everything would be dry. We pulled into the wharf there and they had one of the British bands
- 07:30 and they played all the old Australians "Waltzing Matilda" and all that as we disembarked. We went out to not Ingham Barracks, yes not that was in New Guinea, anyway the barracks there we went out there and we went into
- 08:00 they had these old Indian tents they were tents the British Army had in India and they were all, the weren't a canvas, they were a cloth tent, but we had double tents and they had big cement slabs and

they had tents over. They used to have four blokes would sleep in those tents. Then they'd have the officers and sergeant's mess, but we were

08:30 in those and they had special shower blocks and you had to keep an eye out for cobras, several of them were found in after the water. They had the char wallahs there and the gift shop; all Indians making a quid for themselves. We trained there and we used to train

09:00 around the island, we were still keeping our ambush drills up and our ambush drills and there was a little bit of jungle about some parts of the island.

What was your first impressions of the conditions and the area?

It was a shock because it was the first oriental place I'd seen. Well Penang itself was beautiful

09:30 All the beaches around Penang Island and they had all these Chinese temples and the snake temple and these were all tourist things and we were on a free ride. Penang itself was really beautiful, had all the old buildings there and the old cemeteries and they had the Penang railway and

10:00 all the beach, the different beach places around Penang, the Chinese swimming club they used to call it, it was just a baths. When we were there we could go to it. The people in Penang were quite reasonable, the shopkeeper and that. They loved our money,

10:30 we went there although we weren't getting money like the Yanks, but the majority of British soldiers there were English national servicemen and they weren't getting much money at all. We were like to the British national service what the Yanks were to or soldiers in Second World War in Australia. Miles and miles of money and you fellas on a couple

11:00 of bob a day. That's what the poor young Brits were up against, we had plenty of money or the single blokes had plenty of money. They used to spend it too. Everything was so damned cheap you could go and get a shirt, they tailor it in the barracks, the Indian tailors, you could order a shirt if you get time to measure it in the morning

11:30 they'd have it ready for you to wear into Penang in the afternoon. No worries at all.

What did you hear about the terrorist communists before you got there?

We heard that they were trying to take the country over. You see the history the Chinese communist terrorist through the war they were on our side

12:00 they were the anti-Japanese army and they were fighting the Japanese and they were trained by our special forces. That's true. We had special men even when Chin Peng when he came down. They had this big peace conference

12:30 he came down and met the, where was that up on the Thailand border of course he had gone over and that's why we were chasing him and we chased him over into Thailand. He was still there with all his blokes and they called a peace conference and they met

13:00 in the school at Betong, I'm sure it was Betong, but anyway it was up near the Thailand border. He come down, all his body guards come down and he had miles of machine guns and everything and all the troops had to withdraw back to a certain thing for a couple of days while they were in the thing which they carried out the conference . Then they gave them a certain time

13:30 so they could get back again that was in the whatsaname. They had, all our troops had to withdraw back and wait for this time and when time was up you'd try and get them, they didn't get them. Chin Peng he was the head, they were fighting the

14:00 Japanese and the fellow that wrote The Jungle is Neutral, that's him, he was over there and he was one of the main ones and he was a contact and

14:30 he assisted with the peace conference and contact the CTs [Communist Terrorists]. They were supplied by the British by air drops when they were fighting the Japanese and they caused a lot of havoc. They wanted to take over Malaya,

15:00 they wanted to take over South East Asia and near the end of the war the arms they were stashing them away because they had planned the uprising for when the Brits went back after the war. They had it all planned when they started. That thing started in Sungei Siput

15:30 they just murdered these plantation managers and owners and that started the terrorists off and they were really bad then. They were going and hacking the people the kids and everything in all the rubber plantations and the villages. If they didn't supply them with stuff they just knocked them off. Or if they were against them they did some terrible things there.

16:00 That's how we come about.

What was your role, did you know anything about what you would be doing?

Over there?

Yes.

I was a section commander.

What was the point of the Australians going into that situation?

Just to assist the British, to give them they'd been there for quite a few years the Brits and they wanted more, we had Kiwis

16:30 there we had South Africans there, all Commonwealth troops, it was the Commonwealth Brigade and all the Commonwealth had battalions there assisting the British because the majority of the British Forces when we were there were national service, especially the private soldiers, some of them were officers national

17:00 servicemen, but the majority of them were private soldiers, young national servicemen that was just a token force. We had also navy boats and we had air force too. They forget about them to a certain extent but they're still Australia troops. They were there for the emergency.

After your initial training what did you do?

17:30 When we went to the mainland?

Yeah when you went to the mainland?

We did platoon patrolling. We started off in a company patrol and then platoon patrolled and then

18:00 sometimes, mainly it was platoon patrol, but lots of times it was section patrols too. We were out by ourselves, I enjoyed it myself because we were our commanders you were only a corporal but you commanded your section they were your men. You were responsible for them and you knew whether they liked you or not.

What was some of the bigger experiences that you had in that time?

18:30 One night I was the corporal on guard at Sungei Siput and we had these scout cars they were camped just opposite our camp and they had a canteen just along

19:00 from where the entrance to our camp where our guard room was, like a guard tent it was. They used to get, like a tin shed it was, they used to get in there and get on the slosh mainly of a pay night if they weren't out on operations. One night I was there and I heard this noise and I looked out and the lights were on the road

19:30 and there was a bitumen road running up just near where the guard tent was and I looked out and here's this young English soldier with a Sten gun and he's swearing and going on and staggering up the road and, "I'm going to kill that so and so," it suddenly struck me and I thought, "Good god," this place was bulging at the boards this tin shed

20:00 and I walked out and started to follow him and in those days the guard commander we had an old 38 pistol you used to go and draw it when you were on guard. You had this 38 pistol and you'd draw six rounds from the Q store and they were highly polished these rounds. Anyway

20:30 I had this thing on my holster and I started to walk after him and I could see what he was going to do and I just undone the flap and I just pulled the gun out, I was going to shoot him, and this figure shot out from just in the dark, one of these soldiers had gone out to have a wee and seen him at the same time I had and he shot out and he tackled him. When we got him he had a fully loaded magazine

21:00 on the weapon; if he would've given it a burst he would have killed our people. I thought, "Good god," this fellow just saved him, not only him but me. I'd hate to think I'd kill one of me own, one of our blokes there. Anyway he was court marshalled, I think he was discharged.

What was he angry about?

He was just angry about the army and some of his NCOs or

21:30 something or some of his mates. Some of the young fellas used to get some of that soup into them they couldn't take it, and especially with the young Brits, our fellas were too and some of the old fellas too. Just some of them couldn't take it. It appears it had been brewing for quite a while and just gone off.

22:00 It would have been absolutely terrible you know, the tin hut wasn't much bigger than this and it was jammed up like that and some of them were outside. Now this fellow must have been out to have a leak and thank god he tackled him and got him. That was one of them. Anyway I got the CSM

22:30 old Spike Jones, the next day I said, "I wouldn't mind, seeing that we've got to wear this 38 pistol I don't get any practice with a pistol on the range." I said, "I'd like to make sure that I can use it properly." I knew how to use it. I said, "How about we get some rounds and we come down," and he said, "Yes right oh."

- 23:00 So we went down and I remember we go a scout car and we went down to this little range they had and I fired these six shots off and only one of them was any good. They'd been in there and they'd been handed on from each unit, they had an arms coat that the guns had to be put in of a night if you weren't on duty and they had been handing
- 23:30 them over from one unit to another because they had to be highly polished because they were on guard, they weren't any good. I thought, "Good god," makes you think sometimes. That was one of them. I don't know what the other ones were. Oh we had a bit of a problem once where we had to go from,
- 24:00 was that was the second time I think a helicopter crashed over there with one mob we were coming out with a company and no one was really hurt it just came down in a paddy field. It was a double ender helicopter.

What was involved in a patrol?

Oh we just had to go out and look for

- 24:30 signs, the camps or where they'd been camping. You could find something. I remember at Sungei Siput there was a doctor there and he used to look after the CTs and his house was on a big hill just outside Sungei Siput, but everyone knew he was tied up but they could never catch him. They used to bring the wounded ones in there and get them in somehow and get them out.
- 25:00 We'd ambush the place and we'd patrol around and we went there and ambushed it once and we patrolled and cleared an area and we found old bandages, blood stained bandages and stuff where someone had been wounded. They were old, but he was well known to be one that looked after them.
- 25:30 Another night there I was on guard again and the whole area had been warned there was going to be, Intelligence had found at it was some special day in Malaya one of their big special days and it meant a lot to these CTs and Intelligence had found out there was going to be an incident, they used to call anything an incident,
- 26:00 but they didn't know where it was. It was either going to be a camp, we had to prepare for it, a camp a grenade thrown into a camp or a shot fired into a camp or a government building, a police station or something like that. So Sungei Siput was out, when the troops were all in camp in Sungei Siput they could get leave
- 26:30 on certain nights to go into Sungei Siput and buy stuff or have a couple of beers. They could only go for a couple of hours. This night when they got, the camp was closed, I was guard commander on this night but I had six good rounds in my 38 pistol and I also used to carry I had my own OMC [Owen Machine Carbine].
- 27:00 Anyway about, everything was as quiet as anything we thought our camp we thought our blokes were up having a beer and the next thing we heard 'boom' and I said, "That's a grenade," and someone must have got hit in there. I remember standing at the gate with another fella and we were looking out and next thing up to the gate
- 27:30 comes about six of our blokes and two or three of them were bleeding and they had the hankies out and the buggers had got out of camp, broke camp and they went into Sungei Siput and they went in this little coffee shop and it was one about two nights
- 28:00 before, I'd been in there with the CSM and our CQ and the place was jammed packed with Australian soldiers, but this night there had been a police inspector and his daughter and about half a dozen of our fellas were in there and this CT he'd ridden past on a bicycle
- 28:30 and threw a 36 grenade into the café. The café there have these big marble tops thick marble top tables on the cement and then the chairs around them. Three of our fellas were wounded and the police inspector and his daughter they were wounded, there was no one killed.
- 29:00 It was lucky that the thing had gone under one of these tables and when it blew the main shrapnel went up into this big heavy table. That was a bit of a shock to me because two of them were out of my section. One of them, I'll never forget him he was very lucky, a piece of shrapnel was in his neck and he only
- 29:30 had one piece in his neck and the medics when they got in they said, "If it would have been a fraction of an inch it would have cut his jugular vein"; he was lucky. He never went AWOL again. That was

What did you do in that situation when they came out?

We just got the medics and got them to the hospital.

30:00 Did you go into the café?

No. We had to stay on the guard, but they got one of our officers, they got some blokes and they took them into the police station and the police had everything under control at the time. After that we had a stand by in the camp when we were in camp we always had a

30:30 three-ton truck and a driver with the guard and we used to have a stand by section they used to call it and we used to have our gear when we went on guard we used to take all our field gear with a couple of rations and that used to be in the truck and if anything, if we got word that anything was

31:00 on somewhere we used to just hop in the truck and they'd drive straight to it. We only had to use it once and it was a false alarm in the town, they got there quick enough,

You said the communist terrorists did some cruel things to the townspeople, did you ever see any evidence of that?

31:30 Actually we saw a lot of it, but you could tell it was just fright mainly. I'd seen some of the bodies where they killed them and that, but

How did you come to see the bodies?

Oh we'd just arrive there where they'd done something at one stage or another.

32:00 Generally they got the bodies and they got them away fairly quickly, you don't go around staring at them all the time. Some of the fellas they found it dreadful, but they done some

32:30 dreadful things to the planters and to their own people

What sort of things did you hear that they had done?

Oh they were dreadful you know. They'd get the family and they used to go for the head man of the village a lot and they'd get someone who they might say was helping the British or

33:00 someone they'd say had dobbed them in and they get a family and take them out into the rubber and tie them up to a rubber tree and they would kill the mother or father in front of them or kill the kids in front of the mother and father and then kill the, dreadful things.

33:30 Makes one think. There was worse things happen, that's in the old days worse things happen these days. Eventually we pushed them out.

Did you see any direct conflict at that time?

Yeah.

Can you tell us about that?

34:00 Generally we went to do a reconnaissance at Kuala Kangsar and our company commander, we were going to do a recce to do an ambush in the back of the cemetery and when we

34:30 got half way through the whatsaname there was a pack of CTs had come down, the ones we were supposed to ambush, and they come early and they were down and they were collecting money and they opened fire on our fellas there and we fired back at them.

35:00 We had in those days we so many OMCs in the bloody company and when the main part, our scouts were fired on by the time the main part got up, these fellas had hoofed it off. I think there were blood trails but I think they got away too quick. We were lucky we didn't lose anyone because we walked right into it. They

35:30 were up getting the money collecting it and of course there were tappers running everywhere when we were returned the fire and you'd wouldn't know if it was a tapper or a CT. But anyway they eventually got away and found, I think they got a couple of packs. They had a follow up, another section went for follow up and

36:00 I think they got a couple of blood trails and they got a couple of the packs. These fellas were the ones we were going to ambush, that was on good information too.

How did you react in the first, you'd done a lot of training and you really wanted to be in a war situation for a very long time, how did it compare to what you had thought?

36:30 I wasn't in that ambush I wasn't in the first when they first opened fire because I was in my section was down about the centre, a little behind the centre and by the time we swung around to put in a sweep we just fired well we fired

37:00 as madly as possible because we wanted to hit something. Well I had an OMC, you wanted rifles to get the distance, by that stage, they don't hang around and wait, they get the first bang in and that's it.

37:30 **Was it difficult to know who the communist terrorists were?**

That's what's wrong and the same in Vietnam. With South East Asians, if you're fighting the South East Asians in a South East Asian country it only means taking this hat off and putting another hat on or digging with a hoe in rice paddy and dropping the hoe and picking

- 38:00 up a rifle. You don't know who is a CT and who is not. The same as you never knew who the VC [Viet Cong] was and who wasn't. They all look the same. A little kid that big can put two wires together and blow a bomb up,
- 38:30 my oath. It's very hard, I'd say if you fight an enemy that you know, if you're fighting, it's different in a war you're fighting Japanese say for instance if you were fighting Japanese in New Guinea you'd know if you were going to shoot something you know you weren't going to shoot a Papua New Guinea
- 39:00 and it was the same in the First and Second World War you knew that the fellas in front of you were enemies. Against South East Asians you never knew who the enemy were. You could have, well you did have some of them serving your meals in the mess and they could be a CT.
- 39:30 You could have one of the shopkeepers serving you of a day time of a night time they'd be out carrying a mortar base plate. That used to happen you know. It makes you think, but that's what I think to a lot it was a war of nerves because you never knew when you had someone,
- 40:00 had you in their sights. At one stage I remember when we were at Lin Tang they had some of these fellas they were giving them a good big reward if they surrendered, this was getting near the end of the emergency. Some of them were surrendering and getting good money
- 40:30 and they were coming and they were big shots in the thing too and they were taking them around the different company positions to the base camps and they'd talk on different things on what these fellas would do. They had one fella there at one stage he was a commander
- 41:00 of the area where they'd picked him, but he'd come in our area and they asked him, "Have you seen any of these before?" My section had walked through an ambush they had three times, the others had too because we were spaced out properly and right on the pill, they didn't fire at us.
- 41:30 Just lucky and that was the mouth of the surrendered terrorist commander. He recognised the fellas' faces.

That must have been unnerving?

Well you knew all the time, it was natural, it's the same as if we were out there and they were, you could have your sights on someone and you might not be able to fire.

Tape 5

- 00:33 **Can you just start that again? You were saying the difference between Malaya and Vietnam for you?**

I was a section commander in Malaya and the main section patrols and platoon patrols that was the main thing in Malaya. Whereas in Vietnam I was CSM of Support Company and I was the

- 01:00 assistant to the RSM and I had different funny jobs when I first went there, when we first went out on operations. When the fire support base I was in charge of the helicopter pad and had to make a helipad in every base we had, then I had to look after the helipads and helicopters and anything that came in
- 01:30 or went out. Then when I was back in the base camp at Vung Tau, not Vung Tau, Nui Dat I had different jobs there with headquarters where some nights I'd be duty officer down the hole as they called it, Operations Command Post, I'd do midnight to dawn shift there
- 02:00 and relieve the officers and I was a warrant officer and also I was in charge of , when the RSM was out front, I was in charge of getting the defence of the base to make sure the wire was manned all the time, that was the hardest job in the world because you had no soldiers. When our battalion went forward every available soldier, the companies took every available
- 02:30 soldier there and we still had to protect the base all the time.

So just staying in Malaya then for a while longer, could you give us an idea of what the daily routine was like for the platoon?

How do you mean?

What was a typical day like for you?

- 03:00 Depending on where you were.

When you were doing patrols?

If you were out on a patrol you'd always, when you based up, you'd go into a harbour position before it was dark.

The problem here is you're speaking to people who don't understand, I'm trying to get you to

explain to someone who doesn't understand what the army does, so explaining to an ordinary person?

- 03:30 Right oh. We'd leave our base camp if we were, say a section of us going out. I'll take it as a section, a section is going out. You could walk out on the whatever job you were going to do you could walk out, you could be driven out by a vehicle or
- 04:00 you could be taken out and dropped in by helicopter. We didn't have many helicopters in Malaya at that stage I think we only had two drops at the last. If we went by vehicle you were driven to the edge of the jungle and if we walked out it was generally in close jungle. We'd start off and we'd be well spread out,
- 04:30 that was one of the great things with the Australians in Malaya at all times, as a jungle fighter they had good spacing they were never jammed up and quiet, they weren't like certain armies in the world that get around with guns over the shoulder and wirelasses on their back and smoking big cigars and
- 05:00 all that rot making a lot of noise. Ours was all silent signals and when you moved through the bush you couldn't hear a thing. We were trained that way through George Wall in Canungra. We carried out right through Malaya and in Vietnam and helped save a lot of our lives. They'd go off into the jungle and they'd be well spread out.
- 05:30 They'd go all day depending on what the country was like. Some of the country was dreadful which you called 'lau lang' which is the big tall guinea grass that grows out in this tall grass and the heat is terrific and it sort of drags the oxygen out of the ground and it's very easy for people to get heat stroke.
- 06:00 I've seen people with heat stroke in it, good strong healthy people because it's dreadful over there, it's one of the hottest parts of Malaya in 'lau lang' especially between eleven o'clock and three o'clock in the afternoon; it's simply horrendous. We'd be spread out whatever type of country we were going through and you'd be searching and
- 06:30 in the jungle you'd go through the jungle and you'd be looking for any sign you might find and we tried at all times not to go on tracks because of booby tracks and we'd generally have to cut a way or move through it if it was thick enough. We'd look for sign or look for camps places like that.
- 07:00 Depending on how things went they'd go, they'd travel for half an hour or so they might have a bit of a spell, have a cigarette if anyone smoked in those days, they used to some of them and then they'd go on until about, sometimes if we were out at six o'clock
- 07:30 in the morning had started off we'd stop with the little stove and if they wanted to stop and have a brew of tea they'd stop and have a brew of tea. Then we'd go then until about lunch
- 08:00 time. Then they'd stop and have another brew of tea or they might have a tin of meat or something like that between a couple of blokes if nothing's happened. Then they'd go off in the afternoon, searching all the time searching through all this. Sometimes they'd, if they had mad tea drinkers, they might stop in the middle of the afternoon.
- 08:30 Then if you were on a more than a day patrol you would roughly about four o'clock you would try to look for a place to base up just for the night to sleep, you'd go into a little harbour. Once you got to the place you'd go in and the platoon
- 09:00 or section commander would be in the middle and then you'd put your troops out in strategic places, generally two men together. When you'd gone in, you'd put them out in a circle and you'd send
- 09:30 out a quick clearing patrol, two or three fellas and they'd go out and around the perimeter of what you called, they used to have a perimeter and they'd go around and make sure there was no enemy or that in the perimeter they'd go out about twenty yards or so and come around. Then they'd generally dig a shell spray for the night or they could
- 10:00 dig deeper if they wanted to. They'd put their hootchies up, just a little tent thing, there'd be two men to a hootchie and then they make the evening meal and two fellas would cook together a tin of bully beef between two blokes
- 10:30 and more than likely cook up some rice, sometimes they wouldn't but generally they did. Then as it got dark they'd stand to just before last light that's every man would have his gear on and his weapon and they'd stand to where their pit was facing out.
- 11:00 As it got darker and when it was pitched black dark that's when they had a sentry and that's when the sentry went on for the night and they had to do two hours on and four hours off through the night. That would be one person sometimes two people awake all night. The others would try and get some sleep.
- 11:30 Of course the wireless was always on in contact when they could back to the main company headquarters and that was on all night and about generally daylight used to come about five o'clock but they used to stand to about half past four
- 12:00 whoever was on duty would go around and they'd wake everyone up and they had to be up straight

away and standing to with their gear on again ready to go into action. Then after first light as soon as first light came they'd send another patrol out and they'd go out, a clearing patrol and clear around the extreme of the perimeter

- 12:30 when they come back if there was nothing there then they'd have a shave and have breakfast Then when they'd finished that that would be roughly about six o'clock, about half past six and they'd head off and do the same thing again.

What sort of equipment were you using and carrying?

Too much.

- 13:00 We had to have our normal basic pouches and in those days we used to carry a bayonet and an OMC, Owen machine gun, the Australian style machine gun it was one from the second world war Australian made and Australian invented. A good one too.
- 13:30 We had that and a Mark V rifle a British Mark V rifle the first trip we were in Malaya and a Bren machine gun. Then besides that we had to carry we had our sig, a wireless
- 14:00 and we had to carry air panels if we were going to get an air drop, we had to carry grenades we used to have a couple of grenades each, old 36 grenades they were and we had smoke grenades, colour smoke and white phosphorous.
- 14:30 Of course the ammunition for our weapons and then we had to carry extra ammunition for the Bren and extra batteries for the wireless because the poor old sig couldn't carry all the batteries. The poor old section commander sometimes he had to carry a pair of binoculars which were very good if
- 15:00 you were out across open country but they were mongrel of things to get them through the jungle, best if you had them around your neck they were good binoculars but they used to catch on everything. Then they had map cases and maps and compasses and what else did they have?

What about food and bedding?

Then on top of that you had

- 15:30 your backpack with your bed roll and your rations, how many days you were out for. We used to get rations, say if we got rations for ten days we used to take rations for ten days not ten days rations, because the ration packs used to come we used to get mainly British rations and the British rations used to
- 16:00 come they used to be a tin of Spam or a tin of meat and gravy, god it was vile, M&V [meat and vegetables] rations they were oh god, shudder. We used
- 16:30 try and get a tin of bully beef between two blokes for every day. Then they had Mars bars and they had biscuits and they had sugar, tea, a small tube of condensed milk which was generally caramelised. Then they had
- 17:00 Mars bars and some other lolly I think it was. We used to tip half of them out and we used to take the tins out and the tea and the sugar and the milk, the rest we couldn't hack it. Half the time we wouldn't take all the tins we'd buy some of our own and especially if we could get a tin of bully, a tin of
- 17:30 bully was between two blokes that was good because it didn't take up much room. We got used to living on rice, we liked rice, I still like rice. We used to get our own we'd get it off the cook house and we the Brits used to issue you with a water proof bag
- 18:00 I suppose if you want to put lettuce or anything in it, but we used to get the rice and put that in a bag enough rice for each man to carry a bit of rice that would last for ten days nearly and its two men cooking and tin of bully beef one fella would cook the bully beef and the other fella would cook a dixie of rice. Then you got half of that. We weren't gusting ourselves,
- 18:30 you couldn't, you didn't want to anyway. The rations were dreadful, the British rations and especially if you were out for ten days and you got the same rations all the time. They had A, B and C rations and D rations and they were supposed to be different. Sometimes you'd get an air drop and they'd be all 'A' rations or they'd be all 'C' rations.
- 19:00 But they would try.

How did you keep up your spirits under those conditions?

The fellas they were generally fairly, sometimes you'd get someone who would growl a bit, but it went in this ear and out the other. You were all right especially if you got stuck in amongst with leeches hanging off you everywhere or if you had to go through

- 19:30 swamp you'd be up to here and bloody keeping your rifle up and a big pack on your back. You'd get up of a morning what we tried to do especially to look after our feet was to carry your, tried to carry a pair of dry socks. You'd put them in a bit of plastic bag because that was the greatest thing and we had the

canvas style British Army

20:00 jungle boots, they were canvass boots you could go through water and that they'd dry out fairly quickly. Whereas when we first went there we had the Australian boots that were studded and gaiters and once they get full of water your feet sweat and you're wet right through, they don't dry out very quickly. We used to try if it was possible if

20:30 everything was quiet when we were got in of a night, is to take the wet socks off because you were wet once you started patrolling even if it wasn't raining you were wet from sweat from when you started to when you finished or the end of the day. What we used to try to do if we could get in of a night time take our wet socks off put the dry socks on

21:00 to sleep of a night to have dry feet. The worst part of it was next day, when you got up next morning to get ready to go on patrol again at half past four pulling on wet socks and at one stage if we were lucky we used to take an old pair of football shorts and used to get into them of a night and then

21:30 take the wet trousers off and you'd pull on the wet trousers. They were wet again with sweat or rain after you got going again. Oh god, but sometimes they'd go crook, but it's the same with everyone. I mean what mob of blokes you get you'll always find some of them will have a bit of whinge.

22:00 They used to put up with it and as soon as they, they might be growling today and we'd get out and get home that night and the trucks would come and pick us up from the jungle edge in and have a shower and into some dry clothes up to the canteen and get a good feed into you, up the canteen for a few beers and everything's forgotten. "Ready to go When are we going?" It's true.

22:30 Some of the blokes used to love, liked it better out in the jungle than in the base camp. There was no mucking about out there because you had to be on your toes all the time, back at base camp there'd be certain times they'd have certain people for spit and polish and all that stuff. At least you got out of that out in the bush.

With all that equipment that you were carrying how much would each soldier have been carrying in weight?

23:00 Oh god love I just couldn't tell you. It was a damned lot. Depending on how many rations you were carrying too. I just can't remember they had a special weight they used to have, it depended on who you are and what you are and what you were carrying.

How hard was it?

23:30 Bloody hard. Yes it was, especially to go through bamboo you generally had to cut your way. To go through a real thick bamboo forest and all the bamboo would be falling, old bamboo and young bamboo. Then you'd get the dry,

24:00 they had big droughts over there and the drought was just dry or if it was cyclone or monsoon had gone through, I remember at one stage and we had to go through all these trees that were smashed down. Like a big hurricane had gone through. All these big trees were smashed down and we had to go through these up

24:30 amongst the old roots and the branches and nothing was chopped off, oh Christ, that was a bad time that one. That was the second time we were in Malaya. We weren't chasing terrorists then we were normal exercises. Where were we?

You were talking about going through bamboo.

Oh bamboo yeah that was one of the worst things I've ever gone through.

25:00 Sometimes too with leeches they could smell you coming, well anyone could smell us coming if we'd been out for ten days you know, or longer. We couldn't smell each other, but if we were out for ten days and we came back into the base camp the fellas that had been back there for ten days, "Oh Christ go and have a shower."

25:30 Oh yes we were rotten, but that's nothing.

And the leeches they could smell you coming?

Ooh yes. You couldn't shower out there and sometimes you had trouble getting water, I've seen a whole battalion without water and get water dropped into us, in where I told you went through this big bush we had to take an air drop of water in

26:00 the middle of this thing and had been through bamboo and everything. We were out and had to get water in. You never had enough water, to take an air drop you had, we used to have a special balloon, we used to send up so the plane would come along and drop through the jungle. When the plane seen

26:30 where the thing was they'd know that's where you were, we want the air drop. The only way you could get this balloon up you had to put this special bag with this chemical in it and you had to pour water into it so that it would inflate this great big yellow balloon, a monster like this. Of course the whole battalion we had no water to put in the things,

27:00 So what they had to do was get the blokes to go and urinate in it. They had hardly any urine because they'd had no water. It took nearly the whole battalion to get this thing up; it was a laugh that one was. We eventually got the water thank god though. This was going through, I'll never forget it, where these trees where like a typhoon had come through and uprooted all these trees and everything just

27:30 as though bombs had gone off, bombers had come through and we had to go through it.

All the time you were doing that you had to be quiet?

Oh yeah. We weren't making any noise that was the main thing. When the air drop was on, well you couldn't be quiet with that. Any time you were out wouldn't matter if the leeches were into you or what

28:00 or the cobras were into you, oh yes snakes used to be around. They had big pythons.

How close did you come to those?

Very close a couple of times. I had my section was patrolling up on the Thailand border one day and we got the sign "Obstruction Ahead"

28:30 and for Sunray, I was Sunray, if you were commander that's what you were called, come forward, I got the signal to come forward so I went up to the forward scout and it was one of the Iban trackers that we had as forward scout. Adjee his name was, and my 2IC, Charlie McKay, he was just walking behind him

29:00 and when I got up there he said, "Hey look at this," and I looked and here's this piece of jungle a limb of a tree and there's two of these green vipers they're about that long and they've got a diamond head and here's two of them just about eye level where this Iban was. Of course some of the snakes are like gods

29:30 to them see and he wouldn't kill them and he wouldn't go past them. So I had to get Charlie McKay to get rid of them and we went on.

How did you do that?

Oh they disappeared.

How did he get rid of them?

That might be cruelty to animals.

No tell us, we're interested to know.

I think

30:00 he got rid of them with a machete. They weren't there when the rest of us passed. I remember another time this was the second time we were there we were on an exercise this time and the whole battalion was out and we were going along in single file, all the battalion was going along. I'll never forget it, we go word

30:30 coming along from the line, we weren't real quiet at that stage but just quietly they'd say, "Watch the snake on the right hand side. Snake on the right hand side," and when we came past and there was a snake on the right hand side and here's this great big python it must have been about that round and it's wound around and it was nearly as big as the top of this table here and it's just on the side of the track

31:00 with it's big spade head and just near and the eyes looking at you. The whole battalion walked past and we were going down on the side of this hill at the bottom there was a creek and I was with mortars at that stage and the company commander at you headquarters they just pulled up and were filling their water bottles in this creek and next thing someone yelled out, "Snake!" and there were fellas going

31:30 everywhere. One of the diggers in the Mortars Platoon, big Tom Bourke, a great bloke he was, as Tom was going past he had a stick and he went and this old snake woke up and went. It went straight down the line and went straight to where these fellas were sitting in the water thing and they went everywhere, fell over into the water; the snake got away anyway. It was a big one it would

32:00 have been about twenty foot. Oh god yeah it was a big snake.

Had there been any CTs around they would have known you were there that day?

We weren't looking for them, this was after the emergency. We were down doing this extra training in Malaysia at that time. My god I'll never forget it, made the company commander, Major Alan Powell, he was a great bloke

32:30 but he always...poor devil he got his leg blown off in Vietnam with a mine.

Snakes and leeches and other kinds of things were more of a worry to some of the soldiers than the CTs?

Oh god yes. You slept on the ground, the second time we started to put hammocks up just to

- 33:00 get off the ground, you know, scorpions they always around you had to shake your boot out, different ones got bitten by scorpions. Snakes yes I remember one of our fellows, Johnno, one of the mortar men they had out in the bush, this was in the second trip, we were up at he Thailand order that's when I was platoon
- 33:30 commander and he'd gone to bed in the night and left his socks on and he woke in the night and there was a terrible crashing and smashing going on and anyway they got a torch out and this snake, he woke up and put the torch on and he had, they used to issue them with army grey socks British Army hospital socks they were they were thick and good for the jungle and he had the socks on and this
- 34:00 one of those green vipers it had, it was on his toe, but what happened the fangs had gone each side of his toe and the venom had gone into the sock. That's how his toe was there. We had to evacuate him and he went right into shock. Poor old
- 34:30 Johnno we got him out. This green, it's the funniest thing I don't know what happened to it, I heard it ended up in six pieces, someone had carried it back. I remember another night when we were up there, we were in hammocks at this stage we used to make up and do our base where we'd hootchie it up and
- 35:00 put hammocks through our lilos and you'd be about that high off the ground and this night it had poured rained and this night I was in the platoon headquarters I was the acting platoon commander and I had Aussie Dawson he was my acting platoon sergeant Corporal Ossie Dawson and sig. He had his hootchie just over from me
- 35:30 about six feet away and I heard this commotion about midnight and we had our mosquito nets up around us, up off the ground, and I looked out and I put the torch, I had a big torch and I put my torch out and I looked and here's this fella just in a pair of underpants no shoes or anything slashing around with a machete.
- 36:00 I put it out and here's this cobra about that high and it had come up under his bed and he'd put the torch on it and he hopped out and had a swing at it. He got it in the finish. It would have been one about that long. The old snakes were there. They'd go into anything.

What sort of health problems did the men develop?

One of the main ones

- 36:30 was tinea. The fellas that looked after their feet, we were always trying to get them to look after their feet we used to supply like the Condor's crystal in the showers to harden the feet up after a shower because the jungle boots were inclined to make your feet spongy if you were we all the time. A lot of the blokes including myself we used to try and carry a dry bit
- 37:00 of towel, but even if you couldn't change your socks you'd dry your feet of a night time and dry out between your toes and a thing we used to do too when we were back in base camp in the showers we used to always try to wear flip flops that's the only good thing I hate those things because they're so dangerous, but just to wear them in the shower
- 37:30 and that stopped the spread of tinea. Some of the fellas they got very bad tinea and of course one of the other things was heat rash. A lot of the fellas got heat rash. We didn't have too many cases of malaria because we were very strict on taking our tablets.
- 38:00 Often dysentery that was one of the things that come up, because in the base camps they had the old Chinese with night carts and although they used to wash all the cans and that out their hygiene wasn't up to the thing and of course in the base camps there were many flies and you had to
- 38:30 watch everything. I went through Kuala Kangsar and I went through there on the way to Penang from Lin Tang and I arrived there just before lunch time and I had lunch this was a salad, I'll never forget it, and of course they had the serving tables
- 39:00 just with a Malay fella or an Indian fella with a whisk thing supposed to be keeping the flies off but they'd be there like this and you'd look and you see about twenty flies and they had the cold meats and that cut, but that's one salad I ate but I never ate another one. I get amoebic
- 39:30 dysentery, I was crook. I was in Taiping Hospital nearly dying, oh it can kill you. It's a killer.

When was that, on your second tour?

No the first time.

So what happened? You were rushed to hospital?

No I was going through to Penang I had a couple of days leave and

- 40:00 I'd got to Penang and I got crook and straight away the wife seen it that I was crook. I had terrible fever and she said, "I think you should see the doctor, you've got something you might have malaria." Also I had these trots I was going to the toilet about ten times more in a day and there was hardly anything

there.

- 40:30 I was crook. I couldn't keep anything down. They got me out to the doctor at the barracks and straight away he said, "We'll get a specimen and get it tested I think you've got something we don't like." They got it done straight away and it was amoebic dysentery. I was rushed to the hospital then down to Taiping.
- 41:00 On my back there for weeks, injecting some special stuff into you, you couldn't move, you couldn't do anything you just had to lay there on your back because it lowered, was it Amatine, a special name for this drug but it lowered your heart beats down so much that this amoeba couldn't live
- 41:30 on it and that killed it. You see that's the thing if you don't get treated it can kill you. The amoebae eats from what I'm told it used to eat the lining of your stomach. That's what so many fellas died with in the POW camps in Malaya. I was the second one that got it. The Intelligence officer he was the first

Tape 6

- 00:31 A race riot.

Yeah can you tell us about that?

The race riots they were fairly bad over there. At the time the Chinese and the Malaysians and we had one occasion that became

- 01:00 we were my company was at barracks on Penang Island as we used to have a company back there sometimes. We were doing training there and garrison duties. We used to go to work of a morning because we were living around the island and we used to go by car I used to get a lift in with my platoon

- 01:30 commander and come back. Anyway when the race riots were getting bad and this day they must have got word so they sent us home early to be back in where the families lived. We took a short cut and went around back through this village and there were military police and police everywhere and pulling us up. They were on the Penang

- 02:00 as they call it in Malaya it's like a big park, a big football field and bodies everywhere. They'd got stuck in to one another and they were using machetes and some of them had like spears and there were bodies laying everywhere and the military police got us and said, "Get out of here quickly, get through we don't want any white faces found here." We had

- 02:30 shoot through we were lucky because we could have got caught in there. They had some bad ones there.

Do you know how it started or why?

I think it was on account of religious tension and they were a bit funny, some people used to say it was the phase of the moon.

- 03:00 The people used to believe that, some of the Malays there sometimes of on the full moon they'd go out of their mind. They were always hacking each other to pieces just for nothing in the villages, they just in with those machetes, like a cane knife. They can do a lot of damage with them. They'd go out of their minds. They can't understand what it's for, they're not lunatics

- 03:30 but they're just crazy. We had to keep away where there were big crowds in case they break up.

How come the army didn't get involved in that?

Well they tried to keep us out of it as much as possible, that was political.

- 04:00 They had their own riot police and all that they thought they could handle it. The generally were good. We hadn't been trained for riot crowd control and that, but we were lucky we never had to do any of it.

- 04:30 I think we were very lucky we didn't have to work something out with the lot of them.

How did your wife and family adjust to being in Malaya?

They loved it. They had an amah [housemaid] and the old amah we had she was an old grandmother

- 05:00 an old Chinese woman, she was lovely. We treated her like one of the family and with the new baby...she had a big family herself. We used to drive her home sometimes she would get a day off each week and we'd drive her home to her kampong and we met the family, my wife and myself and she was wonderful.

- 05:30 She used to get young Mark and he could speak Chinese before he could speak English. She get him of an afternoon when she'd finished her work she'd put her rice on and, they have rice every day, and they can cook rice too there's no doubt about it, well I suppose they've been using it for years and years.

- 06:00 She used to have a shower and get all cleaned up in her walking out clothes, all the amah used to take the babies for a walk. They'd all meet and have a yarn and all the women would gossip, they used to wheel the kids away in the prams and go and sit and talk to their friends that they knew and look after the kids. She used to treat young Mark...
- 06:30 she didn't like it when Mum used to come and get the baby. Oh she loved him. She liked the whole lot of us. I know we were very good to her though. My wife used to, any clothes that the kids had grown out of she used to give them to her and if she had some of her dresses like that she used to give them to her daughters. She used to always
- 07:00 look after her clothes. We used to give them food, big parcels of food at Christmas. They paid us back because they looked after us. My wife used to help her, she was the amah but some of them used to treat them like nobodies. Not all the Australian women but other
- 07:30 people that were there had amahs, they used to treat them fairly rough and not treat them like human beings. The Chinese were especially wonderful people. Once you got to be friends with them you were friends for life. They were very nice.

Did your wife befriend any of the other wives?

Oh yes she knew all the other wives.

- 08:00 One of her very best friends, her husband got killed up there on the border up there it was a tragedy.

What happened?

He got shot by one of our fellas, they came in and they thought he was an enemy and just, it can happen very easy in the jungle because you can't see far enough and we're all dressed the same they dressed the

- 08:30 same as us in green. That's what I say you don't know your enemy. He was a lovely chap too. He was a young Pommy bloke and he come out and joined the Australian Army, Joe Wilson, and we lost him on the Thailand border. Very sad, but these things happen.

- 09:00 **Were there many casualties?**

Oh yes. We lost quite a few blokes over there and quite a few from malaria and different things like that, car accidents. We lost two out of our company with car accidents, good

- 09:30 soldiers too they were.

What was the most difficult loss for you?

I lost a good mate in

- 10:00 the big pipe line ambush they had there. He got killed. He was a good bloke Corporal Jack Allen. We used to have the odd cold beer together when we were on leave. We were lucky that we didn't lose more men; I think it was mainly on account of

- 10:30 the good jungle training we had and we were always on the pill.

Were you at that ambush when he was killed?

No. We had been in their area, in that area and we had just been relieved A Company were in the Sungei Siput area and that's the blackest areas of Malaya.

- 11:00 The pipe line they were killed on our fellas used to patrol on that all the time and when our company moved from Sungei Siput back to the garrison to do our turn, they rotated A Company to take over from us and they were only there about a week and they got hit. Very well, it was a wonder more of them didn't get killed. They were very lucky.

- 11:30 It could have been our company the week before or two weeks beforehand because we used to patrol up on the pipe line.

Did you have a ceremony for him?

Oh yeah they buried him there in Taiping cemetery. There were a few of the boys buried over there in Taiping and

- 12:00 then they started to bring them home, from Vietnam some of them. We buried a few of the fellas from Vietnam, we buried them in Malaya, they flew them over to Malaya and Peter Badcoe VC we buried him in the Malacca War Grave Cemetery. After that they started to bring them home to Australia.

- 12:30 **How did your boys adjust to a different culture?**

Oh they done well there. They went to the British schools; the Brits had schools in Penang and in Malacca.

- 13:00 My kids went there they had the different streams; it was a different education stream to our stream here in Australia. That was in the lower classes, but the higher classes the Brits education system is quite good and the high school, the two eldest boys they went to boarding school in Singapore
- 13:30 and the British school at Malacca they were really high class schools and the education was good. I always put it down what my boys lost in our good education in Australia they gained in this extra knowledge, worldly knowledge because it was an adventure to them,
- 14:00 young fellows for some kids had never been out of the street that they live in all their live and my fellas had had three trips overseas. That's three service trips to foreign countries. Some of them had four.

Did any of the boys adjust less or not like the experience?

- 14:30 No they loved it. Well we had a beautiful beach just down from where we lived at Penang and at Malacca we had the ORs [Other Ranks] beach club and swimming pool. We had a beach club for the ORs and we had a sergeant's beach club and we had an officer's beach club. They had a boat club, a sailing club they could join
- 15:00 and beautiful beaches and we used to go and swim all the time. In Malacca we had a beautiful swimming pool an Olympic pool it was. They're all buggered now they tell me. I don't know for sure but some had mentioned, people that had been back that they're not the places they're just skeletons now.

15:30 Who did he boys make friends with?

There were all the Brits kids our own kids, they had Malay kid friends oh yes they loved it. One of my boys when we were in Penang, in Malacca young Mark that's the baby that went over at six weeks old, he's the good fisherman.

- 16:00 He used to go down with the people in Penang and he used to go down with the fishermen there and they taught him how to throw those cast nets, I've never been able to throw one and I've tried and tried and tried, but he can throw it like a beauty but they taught him how to throw nets and how to fish and
- 16:30 he used to go down and fish with them. He got on well with them, loved it. They all loved it as a matter of fact.

You were there for a year without your family, was it a year?

It's close...it would have been nearly a year I think.

Was it difficult to adjust to having them there after not having them there?

- 17:00 No. I never played on being a married man, I think some people did, but I done everything. There was a bit of animosity at one stage as they said, "Oh the marriedies get this and that." Well I never played on it, I wouldn't, I knew a couple of fellas that did, "Oh we can't do that we're married." We were soldiers
- 17:30 and that was it and you had to deal with it, the army was first in my book at that stage. We still looked after our families and they were looked after well. They had the best of medical treatment and I think the Australian government looked after the families well. As I said with the education I was quite pleased with their education and all my boys have
- 18:00 done well. They'd never lost out on anything. Not too many what would I say ten year old boys would steer a passenger cargo ship the size of the
- 18:30 Forstrad past Krakatoa up on the bridge steering the wheel, first mate, that's what my eldest son done. Not only travelled by ship but he was on the wheel. I couldn't get over it when they told me. When we first went on the ship the first officer he had a child
- 19:00 about the same age as my eldest boy and he hadn't seen him, he hadn't been home to Sweden for about eighteen months or two years and he said to my wife, "I'll look after him, if you let me you won't have to worry." He used to come and get him and take him everywhere, took him for the, I call it the front of the ship every part of
- 19:30 the ship right down to the very back end the rear of the ship. He was even down and he showed him the propeller shaft, right in the bowels of the ship, the engine room, wherever you saw the first mate he was right beside him. Always look after him all the way. He had a wonderful time.

Did you get to spend much time with the family?

- 20:00 We used to get when we were on operations on the mainland we used to get about sometimes depending on operations we got about two days off a month, it might be a little bit longer sometimes. We'd go home on the Friday afternoon and we'd go up by vehicle and they'd get us back to Penang
- 20:30 by about five o'clock on Friday afternoon and we were on the trucks on Sunday afternoon at five o'clock again to go back. That was all right because I was in Australia and hadn't seen the family time and time again for months. I done, being so far away, when I done my warrant officer class 2 course in

21:00 those old days they used to do eighteen weeks solid and it was rough. It was hard going you either done it hard or you failed. That was one eighteen weeks I done away. When I done warrant officer class 1 course, I done another, it was the last course they run in Australia that long, another eighteen weeks.

21:30 **Was that before you went to Malaya?**

No that was after I came back from Malaya.

Was that before Vietnam?

One was before Vietnam, the second one was after I come back from Vietnam.

There was a different legal system in Malaya?

They had funny

22:00 court systems. It was a British system but where we were camped at Sungei Siput the local courthouse was in our company area and the old judge they used to hold the court, the courthouse was about as big, just a little bit larger than this room and it was built like wire cage, it had a roof and all the sides had this

22:30 big wire about his big square and when they'd have the court if we were in camp on stand down we could all go around watch this thing, the old Malay judge he used to think it was lovely. People used to clap him and everything. They had terrorists up sometimes and they'd be up for death sentence.

23:00 He used to knock them off too. We used to see the courts; it was great. At that stage I never thought that I'd be working in a court. It was quite interesting. It was the same...it was like the British system, but practically, nearly

23:30 all was spoken Malay. We couldn't understand a lot of the proceedings, a lot of them were spoken in English. They used to go up, if they caught them with a bullet, round of ammunition or something, in any of their pockets or any of their bags they were gone. That was, they were getting it out.

24:00 We used to do food checks on the village when they were locked in their villages and we used to do the gate checks at six o'clock in the morning they'd let the rubber tappers out and they knew how to search them to make sure they weren't taking any food out. One of the worst things we had to do they used to have

24:30 these honey pots they used to call them and they were big like a half forty four gallon drum. That's when they used to empty all the excreta in the night cart and they'd come along with these things and god you could smell them coming a mile away you know. The cart would have about four of these drums on and be splashing everywhere. What we had to do the Australians had big long bamboo sticks and we had to

25:00 go in and stir them up because that's how they used to get food out to the CTs tinned stuff. A lot of the young Brits didn't like the smell of them and wouldn't do it. We had the old stick and used to go into them, thank god I didn't I used to be in charge of them and stand on a big thing in case any of them turned. I was lucky to be section commander at that stage

25:30 you were in charge of the gate patrol then you had to have someone guarding the fellas while they were searching because they had to put their weapons down. We used to stand on this knoll. That was one of the bad things. They used to put rice, they'd fill their bicycle handles up and they found them that they fill it up with rice. When they got out in the rubber they'd pour the rice out and that was enough for a man for a couple of days. They

26:00 used to come to funny things and hide things in their hair and you'd have to go through them and you'd never know what they were going to do.

Can you remember an incident where you found a lot of food?

No I can't say I found a lot of food. We found bits and pieces they were trying to get out, that's what I say they used to smuggle it out

26:30 in only dribs and drabs, so many would take out so many grains of rice so we used to have, you could have one or two thousand people go through the gates all morning out to the rubber tappers, well if every person took six grains of rice and they got there they put it in a tin that's six thousand grains of rice.

27:00 That's how, I never saw it when they got it back, but that's what they used to do. That's why we used to have to go through those things with the big stick, the night carters used to get out and they'd empty it out in the thing and then these fellas would come along in the night and get the tins, well everything was right, you just had to wash the tins and there was the food you see. That was a very bright idea I thought.

27:30 They had wonderful ways, all the tricks of the trade. We used to have to search, they had a funeral that was a way of getting stuff out in the big Malay coffins, they were great big, I don't know if you've ever seen them or not they're big cumbersome with big ends on them and they come up and they used to

- 28:00 have that and the body and have the funeral procession and they'd come through the village when they'd lay in state for quite a while and then they'd take it outside the village to bury it and it was found that at certain times they even had arms that were under the corpse and ammunition and food they used to take it out that way too. I never had it, but
- 28:30 I've been in one village where I had to go down with the platoon sergeant we had to go down and search a coffin, it wasn't real good, I don't know how many days it had been dead, that's their customs and you had to respect their customs because you never knew when they were fair dinkum, you couldn't just go in
- 29:00 and do this and do that, because a lot of the people were genuine. You had to respect their belief and their religion. It was very touchy, but it still had to be done.

Were the British respectful of their culture?

The British? Oh yes, you always get a bad apple somewhere, but the majority of them were yes.

- 29:30 We had a couple bad apples but they soon got out. We never had that many. I must say that our fellas always respected the old people and the kids they loved the kids, the little Malays they were always giving them lollies and god knows what, they loved them.

30:00 What about the night life in Malaya? What sort of things did your soldiers get up to in town?

Oh come on. They had plenty of night life, too much sometimes. They had dance halls and they had all the restaurants and beer hall, every second place after the troops got there were beer halls and

- 30:30 the fellas used to go in when they were on leave if they were garrison duties and not on duties they used to get leave from five o'clock in the afternoon and they had to be in by midnight. Some of them used to stay out later sometimes. There were some quite nice places to go to, a lot of the dances they used to have
- 31:00 they used to call them taxi girls the had to go and buy a ticket and they had these special big dance halls and the diggers had to get a ticket if they wanted to dance with a girl they had to give her a ticket, that's how they got paid by commission from their tickets. There were some good places. Then they had the red light
- 31:30 districts too. Well a lot of those places were out of bounds, the provos [Provosts - Military Police] were always down dragging our fellas out and getting them away. The old saying, "The best way to get an Australian soldier to go to some places, tell him it's out of bounds." I'd believe it sometimes. They used to have...they've all got a bit of larrikinism in them
- 32:00 they get a few of those cold cans into them and they get the rickshaw blokes in town and they'd have rickshaw races. Oh god yes. You'd have these fellas racing each other through the streets of Malacca and through the streets of Penang.

Did you see any of the red light district yourself?

- 32:30 Well I had, we used to have a special guard they put on the garrison club and sometimes they'd have a sergeant and a guard and they'd go in and you report to the police headquarters and you had that guard in there and when the time come for that to be closing time you went along and made sure our fellas got out. If anyone was
- 33:00 playing up you went and got them. Sometimes we'd get them down there. I'd see the old red light districts yes, I'd gone down to get people out. They were dangerous because they had terrorists in them, CTs used to hang out. The police used to try and warn the blokes. We never had many...we didn't have that much trouble
- 33:30 with them there I don't think, I don't recollect having any big problems. The odd one or two would get out and go around and they'd get lumbered, they'd be on the charge sheet the next thing you'd have provos charge sheets and they'd get fined and get a talking to.

34:00 That was the punishment for going to a brothel?

Not for going to a brothel, it was just getting out of bounds, because they'd say that that brothel is out of bounds and that brothel is out of bounds and that brothel is out of bounds. At one stage they tried to get some of the medical blokes some of our doctors, they tried to get some of the brothels to be registered as brothels under medical supervision

- 34:30 so they could be inspected, because they were worried about the evidence of VD, because soldiers couldn't go the jungle with VD in them. That's a thing you can't stop, but they done everything possible to make sure they didn't they issued them with all the necessary
- 35:00 medicine they gave them plenty of lectures. They were pretty good, but we had some several people that we heard of that had had recurring...they kept on going back, they had no tincture at all. You can

take a horse to water, but you can't make it drink, can you? They tried to get them registered

35:30 but the padres were against it and it was political see. The only thing done that news would get back to Australia and that was a rebound straight away if anyone got into trouble over there, that was a black mark against the battalion. We didn't want that. I think they behaved themselves pretty good.

36:00 **Did any of the men in the battalion end up having relationships with women in the town?**

Marry them? Oh god yes. We had quite a few. As a matter of fact we've got a few here in Townsville they're wonderful people with big families and they're really wonderful wives. I've had a couple of them are very good friends with my wife and myself over the years.

36:30 Yes quite a few of them. I went to several weddings over there, my fellas got married. I had one fella that got married there and the poor little bugger was killed in Vietnam after that. Oh yes a terrible lot of fellas married Malaysian girls and Malaysian Chinese girls.

37:00 They were good citizens.

How did the families of those girls generally react?

I don't think there were any problems. They were generally pretty good. They knew that if they were married to an Australian soldier and they were coming back to this country, brought them back to Australia, that's pretty

37:30 good you know. I can't remember any of that I knew of that were broken up. You read a lot about these fellas go and get wives from over there and they come here, not from Malaya or Vietnam, they go to the Philippines and that and a terrible lot of them come here and the next thing they dump them once they

38:00 marry them. Different circumstances because a lot of these fellas were married over there and they knew their families well. They used to have wonderful weddings, my god yeah. All, with all the pomp and ceremony in the world, they really get dressed up and the Malay weddings are something else, they're out of this world. My wife and I went to

38:30 one of our house boys got married, the young gardener and he had very pretty little Malay wife, he was a Malay and this was in Malacca and we were invited to the wedding. We gave them a nice present and it was a tremendous turn out. There were drums and crackers going off and cymbals and the bride and the groom they were dressed

39:00 up, you'd think they were the prince and the princess. Magnificent the feast, all the Malay food and they really turn it on. That's a big thing. It was quite enjoyable.

What kind of food did you eat over there?

Same as you eat here.

39:30 They had the big British stores in Penang and Malaya, Burns Philp and different ones like that, they had all these big firms and they had all the big frozen food, any frozen food that you can get here. Of course we had the British Army NAAFI [Navy Army Air Force Institute] shops and they had all the

40:00 British stuff. Penang and Malacca they had their markets and you could go there if you could put up with them and get all this seafood, beautiful big prawns, green prawns and crabs and numerous kinds of fish, strange looking fish and funny looking fish. If you could put up with where they had the butcher shops

40:30 they were hideous, and all this meat hanging around, whole bullocks and half bullocks and quarter bullocks and they were hacking things off and hacking heads off and there'd be a whole head there still with the horns on it and the hooves. Everything they never wasted a thing, all the blood and guts and they'd chop them up and you'd have all the flies and

41:00 the smell of the blood. Used to be a bit high sometimes. They used to have goats, they used to kill their goats, mainly goats and pigs and they ate every bit of it, none of it was wasted.

Tape 7

00:36 We relieved 3 Battalion Royal Australian Regiment we took over from 3 Battalion and we were there 4 Battalion was there until the end of confrontation. Confrontation ended and then we came back to Malaya. Peace was declared.

01:00 **What was the most significant aspect of your experience in Borneo?**

I was a CQ mess in Borneo, I was the company quartermaster so for half of Borneo and then I was acting CSM.

- 01:30 I think the most, one of the most I was in the advance party to Borneo and we took over from the Ghurkhas the area that we took over from was the Ghurkhas and we were attached to the advanced party was attached to the Ghurkhas for two or three weeks
- 02:00 and that was very interesting. We were at Fort Bokha and the little Ghurkhas' CO he was giving me all the hints because we use to be supplied by air; over there all our supplies were by air drops and we had to make requisitions and send in and order the stores and the rations that we wanted, or anything. Then the Brits and Kiwis would come over and drop them from the air.
- 02:30 I think the most spectacular ones was the first air drop that I saw when this little young Ghurkha, he wasn't young but he was younger than I was, but they look young and he was mighty little bloke and very friendly and especially when he got a few Ghurkha rums into him. They'd drink Ghurkha rum and it was
- 03:00 like drinking water, to them it's like drinking water, it would knock our heads off, strong. Anyway he was taking this air drop and I was out in the field and counting the shoots as they come out and the next thing I saw this parachute come out and it's got a big box on it, a bit crate on it, and the next thing this like a flock of pigeons come out of it. They started to land all around us. They weren't
- 03:30 pigeons they were WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s. The loose thing on this crate, see they, a lot of them the Ghurkhas, get live chickens to make their curries, I think they go through some ceremony where they've got to cut their throat with some bloody thing. Anyhow that was in their, I thought that was one of the funnies things I'd seen for quite a while. You see these parachutes coming down and all a sudden all these WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s were out. That was
- 04:00 funny that. I was there the night we thought the Indonesians had come over, all the Ghurkhas were down, they had a canteen where they used to go and have their beer and rum of a night the same as our fellas in our camp. We could go there if we wanted to; I was up the Ghurkha NCO and they
- 04:30 had a big fridge where we used to have beer and a couple bottles of Ghurkha rum if you wanted it, if you could hack it. Next thing we'd just got to bed and the next thing there was all this rifle fire and grenades going off and I thought we were under full attack. The next thing we heard then they started to cheer and it was one of the young Ghurkhas,
- 05:00 a lance-corporal, he had been awarded the VC [Victoria Cross]; it was the last VC that had been awarded to the Ghurkhas at that stage. He was a lance-corporal and it was a sad story because his little wife, she was dying in hospital, she had TB and she died while he was over there.
- 05:30 As soon as they got the signal through that he'd been awarded the VC they all rushed down to the wire and fired their weapons over the wire and threw grenades over, it was tremendous. It stirred us up, the next thing we're standing to. That was the advance party I was in with the Ghurkhas. They were a wonderful little mob.
- 06:00 They were wonderful blokes. They only used to have two meals a day, they used to get up early of a morning and they'd have a cup of cha [tea] and then they'd have a breakfast at ten o'clock and then they'd have an evening meal about five o'clock
- 06:30 and that was about it. They used to cook up beautiful curries, god they were hot but that's what they live on there. They really know how to cook the curry chicken. I enjoyed the couple of weeks with the Ghurkhas. We used to get all our supplies by air drop at the different forts.

What about action in Borneo? What did you see of any action?

No, I saw no

- 07:00 action because I was in base all the time. I had to do the resupplies. The only time I had to go from one base to another was in the helicopter but the only one problem in Borneo I had a fall from a helicopter in Borneo. We had British navy helicopters over there they're a big
- 07:30 thing and they had no seats in them they just had the inside cabin and where the pilot and the co-pilot they used to go up through a hole they used to go into the plane to go up into the cockpit, they went through this kind of a hole and the pilots used to sit over
- 08:00 and his legs used to dangle down and whenever you had troops, four or five people on the helicopter, they carried about five or six sometimes. One was in charge of the helicopter and generally be an NCO or a senior NCO, but he was the last man out of the chopper when the chopper used to come down to this helipad they'd just
- 08:30 touch down on the helipad and then they used to give you five seconds to get off and the fella, the commander of the thing had to, they used to get the troops off and when the last fella was off he had go and give a couple of tugs on the leg of the pilot and then they'd give you three seconds or five seconds to get off. I was the last one
- 09:00 I had a big rucksack on, I'd been down to headquarters to get some special equipment and I had ruck sack on and had my ammunition and all my gear got the blokes out and a couple of tugs and I was on

my way out and one of my bits of webbing caught and I stopped for a while and

09:30 I'd given the tug and I fell from about twenty foot in the air and I hit this knee and I was in a mess it come out like that. That was nasty and I've still got the repercussion of that. That was just from one little sheer accident. Only an accident.

Were you hospitalised?

10:00 They flew me down to Bau and they had me hospital for one night. They tried to take x-rays of it but they couldn't; the x-ray machine wasn't good and for years after this thing used to swell up and sometimes I would be walking along and I would go, just click and you'd hear it click. I could feel it click.

10:30 Anyway at the finish I got to this orthopaedic surgeon and he was our doctor in Vietnam and I went to see him and he had it x-rayed and he said, "I can see what's wrong with it." There had been some bone chips and of course the x-ray never found it and one of them was floating around

11:00 the kneecap and now and then one of them would get stuck between the bone and that would cause the inflammation. So he operated on this to get rid of that. Instead of having to cut the whole knee which they used to do, this new operation they bored four holes in it and put this special thing in and vacuumed them out. It's never been a hundred percent; he told me it wouldn't be a hundred percent.

11:30 That was a nasty fall that one. I had, I was bruised quite heavily bruised, if you could breathe you were right.

When you arrived in Vietnam what was the situation as far as the war in Vietnam was concerned. Where were things heading at that point?

In Vietnam?

Yes.

Well we got there around

12:00 about Tet [Vietnamese New Year] and it was fairly hyped up at the time and they'd just a couple of big battles at the Fire Support Bases Balmoral and Coral and we got there just after that.

What were your first impressions of Vietnam when you arrived?

Bloody awful. We arrived off the HMAS Sydney and we went by road, we didn't go by chopper up to Vung Tau, we went in these open trucks and

12:30 we went through, after all these people telling us about all these places, what the VC [Viet Cong] had done and we went through all these little villages and rice paddies and every second one was dressed in black with a conical hat on. That's what they said the VC used to wear and we thought there were VC everywhere. We had the choppers they flew overhead all the way up with gun ships flying along.

13:00 It was just like South East Asian village they had the rice paddies the same as Malaya. The only thing was nearly all of them were dressed in black out in the rice fields and the conical hats on them.

When you say it was awful, what was awful?

Just to be struck with it after being told all the

13:30 VC wore black; we were expecting to be shot at straight away when you see all these VC on either side of the thing, what's going on. Anyway we got there and into Nui Dat and when we got there it was a red mud or red dust and the red dust from the drive

14:00 the dust got into everything. It was in your weapons, into your clothes, into your food and then when the wet came, the monsoons it was red mud. Red mud and mildew. It wasn't a nice place. It wasn't as

14:30 nowhere near as far as the soldiers were concerned it wasn't near as happy a place as Malaya was. You never got a break.

What was the atmosphere like in Nui Dat?

We were only just

15:00 settling in and we had to get acclimatised.

What did you observe of what was happening there, you said it wasn't such a happy place? What was going on?

Nothing except fellas getting ready to go on patrol and coming off patrol at that stage. We had to acclimatise first too and settle in

15:30 and then we started to go out and we had a first battalion exercise we went out on a helicopter getting used to going and being picked up by a whole fleet of helicopters, the whole battalion, going out and

being put into an area and then patrolling there all day and then picked up that night and brought back again. That was to show us how helicopters moved in one batch.

16:00 That was quite successful and then they just started then doing the normal company exercises, not exercises

Patrols? Operations?

Well then they started going out and we used to go out and they'd go out into an area and make a fire support base and they used to take artillery with them

16:30 and engineers and a fire support place generally the company would protect the fire support base and then the other companies would patrol in company lots or platoon lots out into the AO, area of operation. It wasn't on exercise it was on operations.

And your responsibility in those operations was?

17:00 When I first went over I was in charge of the helicopters, organising the helipads in the fire support bases and anything to do with ins and outs of helipads.

You must have been seeing people coming and going from patrols. What happened at a fire support base?

17:30 The fire support base had artillery. The artillery used, our own artillery was attached to us the Australian or the Kiwi and they used to support the rifle companies if they were out patrolling and if they called for fire or were being attacked our artillery

18:00 could fire and give them support to get them out of trouble. You had to have someone there to protect the guns and you had to protect the battalion command post and of course we had a helicopter pad there for our helicopter that we had all the time, the CO's helicopter and the casualvac, medivac.

18:30 They were funny things.

Can you describe the most significant operations that were happening while you were at that fire support base?

Which one?

19:00 **Can you describe for us a typical operation or the most significant operation?**

When I was at Fire Support Base Dyke that was on the patrol if that comes back to memory I'm pretty sure that was the Dyke. We had I think we had a company or two companies of 1 RAR

19:30 that were attached to us for this operation and they found, they came across this big bunker system full of Vietnamese and they decided they were going to put in a battalion attack on it. They had these two companies came in with our companies to put in a battalion attack.

20:00 Something happened but I know we had after the thing finished there was I think there was one or two Kiwis were killed or wounded, I forget now, but this mob that was in these bunkers, this big Viet Cong mob got

20:30 away and they withdrew the troops and they all came back through our fire support base. I had helicopters coming in and they picked up not only barbed wire, stuff for fencing things and they were landing and this was at night time and they come back and they brought wounded back and these other soldiers through our base.

21:00 One lot come in and they had all these claymore mines and they were all still wired up. They were coming out of the helicopter and I got our pioneers to defuse them. There were masses of helicopters left right and centre. Another time we had at Fire Support Base Wattle I had my

21:30 helipad there and it wasn't a real big one but one of our companies was out and they had gone into and found this big patch of enemy bunkers and there was the Viet Cong had gone and they went into the bunkers and one of the air strike plane

22:00 one of the, what do they call them? Anyway an air spotter that used to call in the jets to bomb these fellas he saw our troops and though they were Viet Cong and they put in this attack. Luckily they only got a couple of bombs in on them because he 2IC of the company he was a pilot and he grabbed the wireless set and called off the

22:30 attack. We had several fellas wounded badly in that and if they wouldn't have called it off, when they called for the dust offs, the casualvac choppers I think I had about eight of them lined up like taxis. They came in because they couldn't go in at that stage to pick these fellas up and they were all sitting on this path on this pad and half

23:00 of this pad and it was like main street in Brisbane.

That was an Australian unit that was responsible for calling that attack?

No, American spotter.

An American spotter.

It was only just an accident.

I realise it was an accident. What sort of relationship did you have with the Americans in Vietnam?

23:30 The ones we dealt with, I didn't deal with them much, but the few that I dealt with they were reasonable.

Your observations of the Americans in action there?

24:00 No we mainly fought separate from them. We were supported by their air strikes and by their big artillery. When we were out we went right up when they were expecting a big Tet attack on Saigon our battalion went and relieved an American Battalion between Long Binh and Binh Hoa and where they had everything on top of the ground when we got there we bulldozed it all down,

24:30 we dug down and one Yank said, "Like bloody rabbits," they couldn't understand why we were digging down and putting over head cover in. As we soon as we got there we started to dig and everything was underground.

You were involved in that?

Yeah. I had to put up two helipads there, I had a big helipad

25:00 we were in a big fire support base and we had our RAP, our pioneers had dug that underground and sandbagged it all over well I had to make a helipad for the RAP for the doctor and casualvac and then I had

25:30 the normal ins and outs. Whilst we were there we had a big demonstration of a certain new bomb, or new shell the Yanks had out and when this shell used to drop that used to spill out like a cluster bomb, spill out dozens of

26:00 little round bombs and they'd all come down and explode. They...all these top brass, American Generals were coming there. I had the whole top of this, the middle of this base this big cleared area where we'd bulldozed everything down. I had to direct these helicopters they were coming in a general in each one bringing his staff in. I had all these helicopters lined up like a taxi rank.

26:30 Jeez it was funny.

Were you there in Saigon as part of the Tet Offensive?

No not in Saigon. We had our battalion was Binh Hoa and Long Binh they were both big bases, big towns and Americans had bases there

27:00 and overlooking the airfield where we were we were overlooking one of these big Yankee planes the first time they came in and we were all standing to just on dusk and the next thing this big shadow came across and here's this great big, we thought it was crashing, these wings were moving.

27:30 This biggest bomber it is and it's a monstrous thing. Their wings do move, and it came right in over low to get in on to the landing. Frightened hell out of us the first night, we got used to it. We had several fellas wounded there from that

28:00 area, Delta Company they got a couple of high rankers they were coming in to have a look to set up mortars and rockets to mortar our base and they got them, they captured these things that they were doing. They thought they were officers. It was a busy place there, all the Yank

28:30 fighter planes that were taking off, they used to take off in pairs about every ten minutes. You'd see them and they'd go up on their jet and up in to the sky. All the time there must have been hundreds of them, they were big bases. It would take you half a day to travel around one. They even had a dump there where they dumped all of their old things. They used to

29:00 dump old refrigerator or what we'd call good model cars, once anything was wrong with them they'd just dump there. There were just acres and acres and acres, I had to go down there on an investigation one day onto this base and we had a unit down there and this other warrant officer, he took

29:30 me for a drive around while I was waiting for a chopper to get back to the base and I got the shock of my life all these things. Some of our fellas were up there and they traded a slouch hat and got a couple of beautiful big fridges just with a bit of a dent in them. We didn't have any. Next thing back at base we had a couple of fridges. We used

30:00 trade things over there, they used to love to get a slouch hat.

What were your living conditions like in Vietnam?

We were living in tents in Nui Dat. Up in the Sergeant Mess there were two men to a tent and we were built up off the ground, the floors were that high off the ground and we

30:30 had to sandbag them up, sandbag around the tents and then sandbag them up to about that height and in the tents we had beds like the hospital beds the iron beds and two beds and a table and two chairs and rubber foam mattress on them. It was like out of this world. If you come off operations

31:00 and just go and have a shower we had the old shower we were a bit short of water but you used to get allowed so much and you could have a shower, we had canvass buckets you had to get the bucket of water and put it in the canvass bucket pull it up on the rope and then you let a little bit of water all over you and you soaped yourself up and made sure

31:30 you got enough soap, but it was great you could get all the red dust off you.

In what sense do you think the Vietnam War was different from your experience in Malaya?

Altogether. It was a different type of country.

Can you explain how it was different?

32:00 Some of the jungle was practically the same as Malaya but I don't know some of the country had different kind of vegetation. I don't know what you could say it was.

What about the type of war; how was that different?

32:30 In Vietnam?

How was the war itself different from Malaya?

Well I think that they were fighting in large quantities there, the Americans were fighting and they had divisions and Malaya was fought mainly on a platoon level

33:00 or section level. Vietnam they had company patrols the whole company was out they'd go out with a whole company and patrol the whole company. The terrain was different but you still had the rice paddies

33:30 and spots of jungle and the old bamboo. You didn't know who the enemy were.

What methods did you personally use to deal with the tension that you must have been under?

34:00 I don't know I think, we always said, "You've got to die some time," and even in Malaya once we went to an orders group and we were told what our mission was

34:30 you never knew once you set one foot outside to go on patrol you had chances of not coming back, you knew that all the time. You didn't become blasé about it, but you couldn't worry about it all the time otherwise you'd be no good. In Vietnam

35:00 I don't say you weren't frightened all the time, you've got to fight some time but you didn't get paid to be frightened. I don't care who it is if anyone says they've never been frightened they're liars. It's natural to get a bit of a fright.

35:30 When you're time's up your time's up and that's it. I never thought I'd reach thirty; here I am eighty one, nearly, and touch wood I've been lucky.

Were you a religious person?

I once used to be I was brought up in a very strict religious family.

36:00 Taught by the nuns all my life and then I went a bit astray.

Was your religion important to you during your time in Malaya and Vietnam?

I've always, I've never said, "There's no god," or, "I'm a heretic," or, "I don't believe in god." I'd say I never

36:30 said a prayer, of course I've said a prayer, bloody oath. I don't go around waving my arms around and laying it on. If someone else does it I don't say, "You shouldn't be doing that", You've got to get some religion into you.

In what situations did you pray?

37:00 Different times. I prayed a couple of times at fire support bases I might have slipped a little bit in. It's a thing you do, even if you're not religious people are taught religion and some time or another they've

37:30 always got a little bit and don't forget it. Some say they do but I've seen a lot of them say they do and then suddenly they become all religious. I've seen that happen.

What role did the Kiwis have while you were in Vietnam?

They were the same as us. We were the, 2 RAR and 4 RAR,

38:00 were the Anzac Battalions. We had the Kiwi companies with us. And we had a Kiwi major 2IC of the Battalion and we had in Support Company with 4 RAR we had a Kiwi captain as our 2IC because our OC [Officer Commanding] was the Ops Officer. Great officers too they were too.

38:30 The Kiwis, we had some magnificent Kiwis and they were good soldiers, like ours a bit tricky sometimes play up a little bit.

To what extent was there a sense of there being an Anzac tradition among the Kiwis and Australians together?

Oh yes. The Kiwis and the Australians always got on all together, bloody oath they did.

39:00 If we were in off operations we used to invite them over to our place for a barbecue and they used to invite us over for a barbecue. We didn't have many but it was, good blokes and they were always having a shot at us and we were always having shot of them.

Tape 8

00:30 **So how did you come to leave Vietnam? How did that come about?**

Me?

Yep.

At the time I left the 4 RAR were back in Australia, they'd just started it up and they had to

01:00 start getting the new battalion together because when old 4 RAR come back they had to start getting to build the battalion up because all the national service fellas and that were going to go out. Our CO had to send back a warrant officer back to Enoggera to be acting RSM to build up the new force. At that stage

01:30 I wasn't a Rifle Company warrant officer, I was the highest warrant officer in Support Company, I didn't have a Rifle Company I just had Support Company and I was assisting the RSM. Also at that time my wife become very ill, they would have had to

02:00 send me home only for a couple of days, which I was going to come back again, see. But the CO said to me, "I'm going to kill two birds with the one stone. You're the new acting RSM you go back there and that saves me having to dig one of my fellas out of the Rifle Company. We'll get another fella promoted here, one of the senior sergeants and we'll give him a chance

02:30 and he can be Support Company and take your place and that won't effect the companies. You can fix your wife up and then start on the thing." Well I wasn't happy with it because I still wanted to stay with the battalion, but I was a bit worried about my wife because I didn't know how sick she was. She was very sick. So I was

03:00 sent back to Australia and straight into Enoggera and we started to build up all these soldiers were coming in and the battalion was still in Vietnam. God I said, "I wished I was back in Vietnam."

Why was that?

We had all these young fellas coming in and I was the RSM of the area and we had all new young officers

03:30 coming and although we had a tremendous bloke, the adjutant was a tremendous bloke and he was great. I worked with him, we worked well in the finish, in the finish I can understand why the CO sent me back. By the time they got back the battalion was well and truly on the way up again.

04:00 At that stage I didn't know what was going to happen to me when they come home because I was due for reposting and I didn't want to leave the battalion because I knew they were going back to Vietnam and I wanted to stay with the battalion. Once you've been with one, I'd been with the regiment for nine years or more, no eventually sixteen years, I was nine with 2RAR.

04:30 It's like leaving a family. So I was offered a job in Victoria Barracks in Brisbane as a Family Liaison Officer going around looking after families and that. It was a good job, never in uniform you were just in civvy clothes and you went and helped people, as Liaison Officer, family welfare it was.

05:00 Two blokes, you went two blokes together and sorted everything out if there was any strife. Anyway I could have had that but when the CO came back and found out they'd tried to get me to go in there he called me up and didn't he blow the pants off me, "What the hell. I've been down in Canberra to get you to stay with the battalion." Anyway I stayed with the battalion.

- 05:30 Then from there we had to get the advance party in once the battalion had settled back in again and the RSM got home the advance party we had to take it up to Townsville so I was the bloke that brought the advance party up here. Captain Sayce and myself, he was the officer but I brought the motor convoy up
- 06:00 and he flew up. I came up here and I was made the Regimental RQMS Increment, RQ of housing. Well I had been posted as RQM Housing [Regimental Quartermaster] when the RSM came back down there and that was looking after all the buildings and everything, I'm handing them over and being like a caretaker, all the repairs you had to make
- 06:30 sure that everything was done. I done that down there and I come up and had to take over the buildings up here. The battalion marched out I looked for any repairs and made sure they didn't charge us. The CO at the time told me at the time I was going back to Vietnam and I was quite happy because then I would be going to take over the helicopter supply from the other end. Instead of being out that end receiving
- 07:00 I was going to have this helicopter resupply in Nui Dat to get out to all the companies, not one company but all. It was a big job and an interesting job. So I wanted it and I thought, "Well that will do me," at least I'll be with the battalion. I was called up and the CO said, "You're not going to Vietnam." He said, "You're going to be RSM of 31 RQR."
- 07:30 I said, "I'd like to put that aside." "You haven't got a chance, that's it." So I was posted then to 31 Battalion at Jezzine Barracks. I spent about twelve months there.

In New Guinea?

- 08:00 No, out here at Townsville at Kissing Point. It was my first touch, after sixteen years in a regular battalion it was my first touch back with a CMF unit. I wasn't happy. I got on to a friend of mine who at that stage was in Canberra and he'd gone up well in rank and I said, "Get me out of this place I don't care where you send me. Get me overseas, anywhere."
- 08:30 "Oh," he said, "We'll see." He rang me the next day he said, "How would you like to go to New Guinea?" "Oh," I said, "New Guinea." "Yes," he said. I said, "Can I have just time to go home tonight and speak to Yvonne?" That's my wife; he knew her well and his wife knew her. He said, "Certainly, go home and see the girl." He said, "And
- 09:00 find out if she wants to go or not." I rang her before I went home and she said, "Of course we'll go." She liked overseas too and she hadn't been to New Guinea

Was she well by this stage?

Yes.

What was the sickness that she had?

When she was sick, it was kind of a hepatitis. She had a couple of recurrences of it actually.

- 09:30 She was very sick and she was run down too because two of my teenagers they were playing up a bit they were just at that stage and she was worried about them. Generally she wasn't, she'd been a real good wife, army wife, gone wherever we'd been told to go.

Were you in Vietnam when they were playing up?

- 10:00 Yep.

That must have been difficult to be away from the family in that situation?

It was, but we overcome that. I got posted and she said, "Yes we'll go," so I rang the next day and he said, "Good." I left on Australia Day, 26 January we flew out, but over the Christmas period

- 10:30 we went on leave down to see you people in Kempsey before we went to take the kids down to see the grandparents. Whilst we were away cyclone struck Townsville and we didn't know if we had a house or what. We had already had our stuff packed to go to New Guinea because when we come back from leave we were going to get on the plane practically straight away. When we found out that our house had been
- 11:00 blown away, eventually we came home a bit early and got home and the water had been all in the house and everything. Brand new homes they were too, lovely home. I had all my uniforms packed in my army trunk under the house ready for us to go and put it on to be transhipped up to New Guinea. It had been under a foot of water and all my uniforms
- 11:30 were all starched and pulled them out and they had just had it. I had to get reissued again. We got on the plane eventually and got to New Guinea on the 26 January, Australia Day, I'll never forget it. I was RSM of PNGVR then from the 26th January until...I didn't quite do the two years; we closed it down and I was
- 12:00 transferred to the Combined Services Officers Training College and we started it up. I was RSM of that until we had our first march out parade in December I think it was and I finished on the 26th, I left New

Guinea on the 26th January. Posted back to 31 Battalion

12:30 Royal Queensland Regiment at Jezzine Barracks again. I was there for another couple of years.

Did you take all the family to New Guinea?

No only, we started off with the youngest two and took them up and my other fella he'd started work down here and he'd gone out to be a jackeroo, you know how kids get the adventure thing, he's always been adventurous. He went out to

13:00 people we knew out to their station and done a jackeroo for a few months. Eventually he got a bit homesick and he wanted to be with his brothers and my wife so he spoke to us and I wrote back to him and told him who to see and we were still eligible to have him sent up there with us see. He ended up there and he spent about six months there with us.

13:30 He joined the Australian Regular Army there and I think he was the last European to join in Papua New Guinea and done three years with 1 RAR up here, but he gave it away after three years. There was nothing doing. They were only going around picking up papers and painting white stones and going up to high rains and

14:00 at one stage they had to drive their own vehicle to go up to high rain they had no transport I think the army was going through a bit of a soft trot at that stage as far as finance. Anyway he enjoyed the three years he was in there. As I said to him you've had more overseas service than a lot of the soldiers.

What was your responsibility in Papua New Guinea?

I was RSM.

Can you explain what they involved for you when you got there?

14:30 Let's see. RSM of the battalion, you're the senior warrant officer and the CO and the adjutant and the RSM, they the three main ones in the battalion. You're responsible for all the discipline and the co-operation between the officers and the NCOs.

15:00 Your duties are discipline, dress and drill, also parades, all offences, all charge sheets, all orderly rooms which is like an army court where if someone's acting

15:30 against the army act or against military law and they're charged they go before their company commander and they might charge...a company commander, it might be too big for him to hear and they have to go up to the CO, you have to handle the orderly room, the court; march them in march them out. You'd check all the charge sheets before they're sent away.

16:00 **How many charges did you see at that time? Were there many? What sort of charges would go before the court?**

We never had many charges, PNGVR was the CMF Battalion, a CMF Battalion in Papua New Guinea it was still on the order of battle it was in a different situation

16:30 to an ordinary Australian CMF Battalion. I had to go in, we used to have to go on inspections, our headquarters was at Lae and we had companies at Rabaul, we had companies at Port Moresby, headquarters of the Aust component of PNG force was

17:00 and we had others at Wewak, up at what's the name I'll think of it in a minute. We had three others. We had to go and visit them. I used to go either with the

17:30 CO or the adjutant, one of those and the quartermaster we used to go and visit one of the outstations at least about once a month, try and get to at least one of them at least once a month and go and see them and check up on them and get around and talk to them. You were in charge of all ammunition, ordering the ammunition and different

18:00 things like that.

What was the worst incident that happened in Papua New Guinea ?

It was a private one the worst thing that happened. I was only a month or so before I came, I used to go into town of a Saturday morning take my wife in shopping and I had a little Hitler's revenge Volkswagen

18:30 and I was driving into town and we were always warned that if anything happened with the natives or anything you weren't to do anything, don't stop and go straight to the police station. I got a rock thrown through the window of my car at ten o'clock on a Saturday morning in the middle of Lae, things were getting a bit bad then, they had some bad 'scallywags'

19:00 they use to call them up there. Of course old stupid I didn't like it because my wife was sitting in the front seat next to me and my youngest son David was sitting in the middle of the back seat and this rock came through the window and splattered glass all over my wife and fell into the back seat and took glass in there on David. If it would've hit my wife on the head it would have killed her. It was a rock like that. I pulled the car up and I

19:30 after him, lucky he got away the bugger, I tell you. I went straight to the police station and reported him but they never found him. If I'd have got him, well, I think he would have lost his shirt tail. That was one of the worst things that happened up there I think.

Did you like living there?

Yes I did. And then after I'd

20:00 been there for three years, well mainly I wanted to get the kids back to Australia, they were starting to become a bit native; well they had all their native friends, my eldest boy we had there he was in the scouts and he used look after these kids and they used to go up in the jungle and they'd find old Jap helmets

20:30 there. I was afraid they might pick up some unexploded mines because they were still around and we always had that over us around the villages and they were always out in the garden hacking away and the next thing some one would go up like that. We enjoyed it, my wife enjoyed it up there and she was very ill there with that she got that hepatitis again.

21:00 She went and helped them out in the hospital when they had this damned hepatitis outbreak and, or was it dengue fever I've forgotten; she contracted it and they kept her in the hospital there and looked after her. She had to go into hospital and have an operation in Lae.

21:30 We were worried they thought she might have had cancer, but she didn't. It was something to do with her pancreas. She got over that okay and when we came back to Townsville here and we were living out at Jezzine Barracks and at that stage I'd been posted from Jezzine Barracks out to headquarters at Lavarack Barracks.

22:00 When I was on my last legs, I was due out in September '78 I was due out to retire. We were living out of suitcases and boxes, we'd packed everything up ready to move out and go into our own house and she got a bit off colour and

22:30 I drove her down to the doctors on the Friday and the doctor he gave her a bit of a check up and said, "We'll have to book you into the hospital for further checks and anyway we came home and they couldn't get her into the hospital on the Saturday that was the next day, the didn't have a bed until Monday. We were quite happy with that, she was just going in for this check up and she had her port packed

23:00 to go to the hospital, I was laying in the bed, one of my boys he'd gone up to Pallarenda somewhere with a couple of his mates, one of then was an army medical corporal and they'd gone up there for a swim on the Sunday and my younger son had gone over to Magnetic Island fishing.

23:30 Both the wife and I were laying on the bed after we had dinner reading the Sunday paper. She got up and I said, "Where are you going?" and she said, "Got to go to the toilet," and I never took any notice. She walked from here to where that stove is, just outside the bedroom door into the lounge room and I heard bang and this awful, "Whaa"

24:00 and she was dead before she hit the floor. She had this monstrous heart attack. She was only seven stone ten when she died, she was only tiny. Anyway these things happen, that knocked me about a little bit. We worked out everything, what we were going to do, you know, and that was in August when she died, the 7th August and I

24:30 retired from the army on the 27th September. We were going to, the kids were off our hands practically and we were going to go to Kempsey and look after her mother and father, they were very old then. Then she was talking about going back doing part-time nursing which the matron at the hospital at that

25:00 stage she trained with her when they were girls, well she was the matron Peggy Gray, and she said, "Yes we'll get you a job," relieving. It wasn't to happen though.

How did the boys go at that time?

Oh they were upset; because David had never saw his mother, he never got back. She was in the ambulance I called the ambulance straight away,

25:30 by the time, no I tried to give her mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and the old surf club resuscitation and mouth-to-mouth had just come in, but she had no pulse. Just as I was doing it Richard landed back and he had his mate I yelled out to them when the car pulled up and they raced in. This fella was a corporal in the medical corps and straight away he knew she'd gone.

26:00 I rang the ambulance and it come out and they took her into the hospital and that was it. She was dead on arrival. The doctor said she would have been dead before she it the floor. I was, it was hard but I thought later on I didn't have to see her lying dying of cancer or something like that.

26:30 She was only forty eight when she died. These things happen.

After that was it difficult for you to adjust to not being in the army?

Yes. It was a big shock. It is. When I got out I didn't do anything for a couple of months and then I decided, my son

27:00 he was a representative of Webster Biscuits up here around the north coast and he asked me if I wanted a job packing biscuits and I said, "God," and he said, "Just to keep your mind on things." Well at that stage he couldn't get me to do it, they had a couple in but they were useless, they wouldn't work. So to help him out and to get my mind on off things, I done it for about a month.

27:30 I couldn't hack it. I said, "No." A mate of mine he was working in at the court, he was a bailiff in there and he'd been offered the job as Judges Clerk and he rang me up and said, "How about coming to see us?" He said, "I've mentioned your name and we

28:00 could get you the job of bailiff." I said, "Yeah, I'll try it." I went in and had a couple trial by error things and he went as the judge's clerk and I went as the bailiff. It was a permanent, temporary bailiff. Funny position it was and I done seventeen years there, relieving

28:30 not only doing the bailiff's job but relieving if they wanted a bailiff; I was on call twenty four hours a day and then in the last two years I relieved the judge's clerks if they had to go and study or if they were sick. I used to go out on circuit with one of the judges.

To the smaller towns?

29:00 Either to Mackay or up to Innisfail. I had several trips away to those places. It was good too.

What does the bailiff do?

They open the court and swear all witnesses in, and they swear all the jurors in and they pick the jury and they take charge of the jury, well they have

29:30 swear an oath to take charge of the jury, they're in charge of the jury until they reach a verdict and look after them and go do certain things. They handle all the, during a court case they handle all the evidence, any evidence and all hand ups to the judge, they're the go between the

30:00 barristers and the bar table and the judge or the judges clerk and they hand it up to him. That's what they do.

Did you miss the army?

Oh yes, still miss it. I've kept in touch and I always go to 2 RAR Association. The army was good to me

30:30 and I was good to the army, yes I miss...everyone misses it when they get out.

What did you miss about it?

Certain mateship and you've got to think, "What's on tomorrow? What have I got to do tomorrow?" and you can't just become lackadaisical, you've got to be on the pill all the time. That's one of the things I liked

31:00 about it. I think it's a great thing that's what I liked about national service it made young fellas get up and get out of bed early, they were showered, they were shaved, their personal hygiene, some of them improved a thousand percent. Not all of them, but certain personal hygiene fellas come in and they'd nearly have to get the old scrubbing brush to them. But they

31:30 learnt, their mates told them and you could see them change overnight and they took pride in themselves and in their dress they had to be dressed correctly and properly and I think liked it.

What were you most proud of with your service?

Let me see.

32:00 Being a soldier. Yes I think I was very proud to be a soldier all my life. I don't think there is much more I can tell you.

Did you enjoy being a father?

Oh of course. I enjoyed being a father and I enjoyed being a

32:30 grandfather and I enjoyed being a great-grandfather. These days all I enjoy is being able to breathe.

I just want to ask you do you have any final comments?

33:00 Yeah well if I had my life over again I'd do it all again. On war, I'd say I'd like to see the whole world at peace.

Thank you very much for talking to us today.

It's been a pleasure.

INTERVIEW ENDS